

Brandeis University Ombuds

Supporting an ethical and civil culture encouraging mutual understanding and resolution through respectful dialogue and fair practices.

Spring Semester Report: January-May 2022

The Spring 2022 Semester Report contains various trends, highlights, and considerations arising from visits to the Ombuds Office from January to May 2022. This report includes data from the Spring Semester 2021 (January-May), Summer Session 2021 (June-July), Fall Semester 2021 (August-December), and Spring Semester 2022 (January-May).

Ombuds Office reports are posted on the [Ombuds Office website](#), and this is our third semester report, as reporting prior to Spring Semester 2021 had been done on a quarterly and annual basis. Subsequent reports will continue to be released on a semesterly basis, and our annual report for the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 will be released at the end of the summer.

Quick Links to Trends, Highlights & Considerations

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Current Ombuds Office Team

The Ombuds Office is a campus resource that serves as an outlet to process any type of challenging situation, a bridge to navigate campus resources, and to serve as a coach to help, support, and empower community members, offices, and teams. We like to think of it as a place to go when you don't know where to go!

The Ombuds team is available to all students, faculty, staff, alumni, and anyone who has a situation, related issue, or conflict involving Brandeis University or anyone having an affiliation with Brandeis. The current Ombuds team includes [Don Greenstein](#), [Esther Lin](#), and [Mike Rozinsky](#).

Visit our [website](#) to learn more about our [standards of practice](#) of confidentiality, impartiality, informality, and independence in the [Policy Statement](#) on the Brandeis Ombuds Office. The Ombuds are not mandatory reporters, nor an office of notice for Brandeis University. This makes the Ombuds Office a good place to start when you don't know where to go or when you have experienced something, and you want an informal space to explore your options before you potentially involve others.

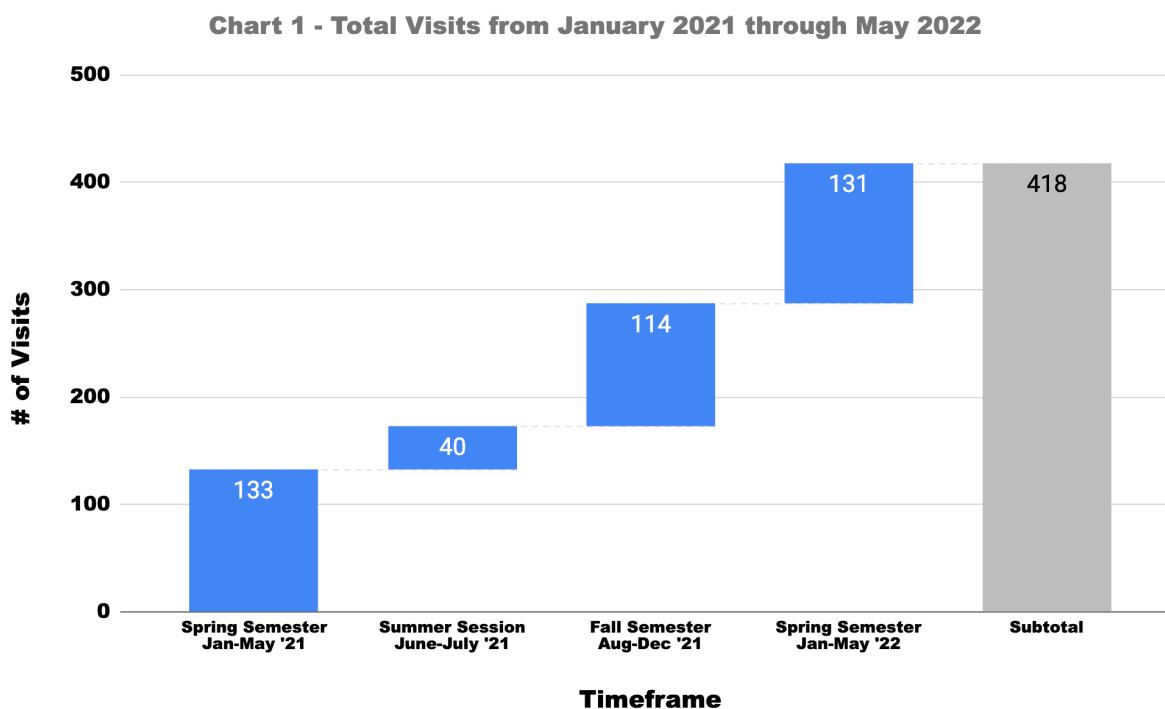
Contact Us

For information on how to schedule appointments, ways we work with visitors, and access our online resources, visit our [website](#) or call the confidential Ombuds Office phone line 781.736.2265. We are available to meet with visitors remotely by phone, Zoom, or in person with social distancing at a time that works best for the individual. At this time please schedule an appointment by emailing brandeisombuds@brandeis.edu to meet with an Ombuds. You may request a specific individual or one will be assigned to contact you. Visiting the Ombuds Office is always voluntary, and each visitor may choose which Ombuds they would like to meet.

Defining “Trends”

“Trends” are informed by our data and the topics and issues raised voluntarily by visitors during visits which we believe either signal the need and/or present an opportunity for intervention or action by campus leadership and the Brandeis community. Individual issues become “trends” when we recognize that multiple visitors from one or more offices, departments, or schools throughout the University community are visiting us about the same problem/topic/concern.

Trends, Highlights & Considerations



The total number of visits from January 1, 2022 until May 31, 2022 was 131.

Total visits increased during this time period as compared to the last semester. We had 114 visits in the fall semester. The slight increase may be related to a number of community concerns and campus-wide changes:

- The Fall 2021 return to campus, supervisor decision-making on flexible work arrangements, and the fact that some managers were allowing some to work virtually while others were making staff return to the office on a full time basis;
- The changes in policies surrounding COVID-19 (testing, masks, and passports);
- Concern about policies and retaliation for using formal processes to report harassment, bullying and discriminatory concerns;
- Concern about how people in places of power (supervisors, tenured professors, and leadership) treat staff and students with disrespect, sense of hazing, and many inappropriate ways;
- Students, staff and faculty have found the Ombuds as a valuable resource. Visitors come to think through issues that they are uncertain how to resolve on their own and choose to do so in a confidential and informal manner.

54% of the visitors this semester were returning individuals who have visited the office previously for a different or the same concern. This is positive, meaning people who have used the Ombuds Office in the past feel comfortable returning to discuss their concerns or find appropriate resources. New visitors made up 46% which reflects that there are plenty of individuals still learning about the Ombuds Office. [See a tabular view of Chart 1](#)

Chart 2 - Total Visitors from January 2021 through May 2022

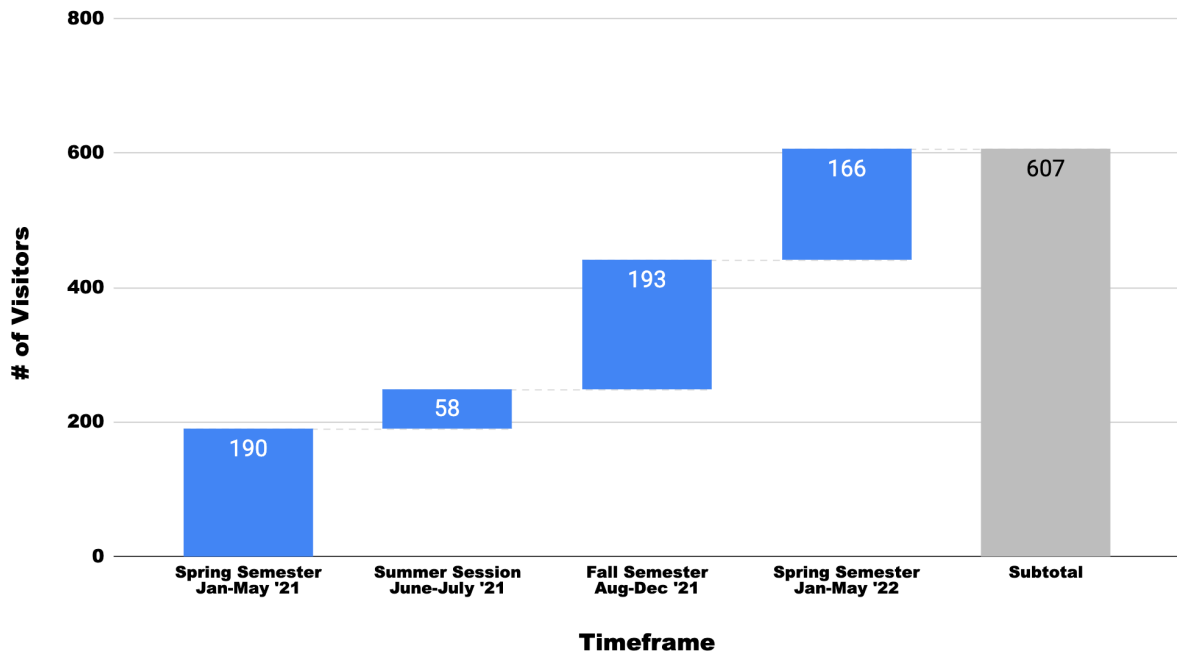


Chart 2 shows the total number of visitors who met with an Ombuds. There are more visitors than visits in each semester ([Chart 1](#)), as an Ombuds may meet with multiple visitors for a facilitated dialogue and other kinds of group work furthering the conflict management capability building across the community. [See a tabular view of Chart 2](#)

The time included in Chart 3 below reflects time spent with visitors helping and supporting their ongoing concerns and issues, as well as identifying resources and individual priorities and goals. It is not inclusive of time by the Ombuds coordinating a visit, reviewing policy, and/or exploring possible options independently from the visitor(s). It also does not include time spent conducting training and informational/marketing sessions or meeting with various leaders and committees across campus to learn about ongoing needs. [See tabular view of Chart 3](#)

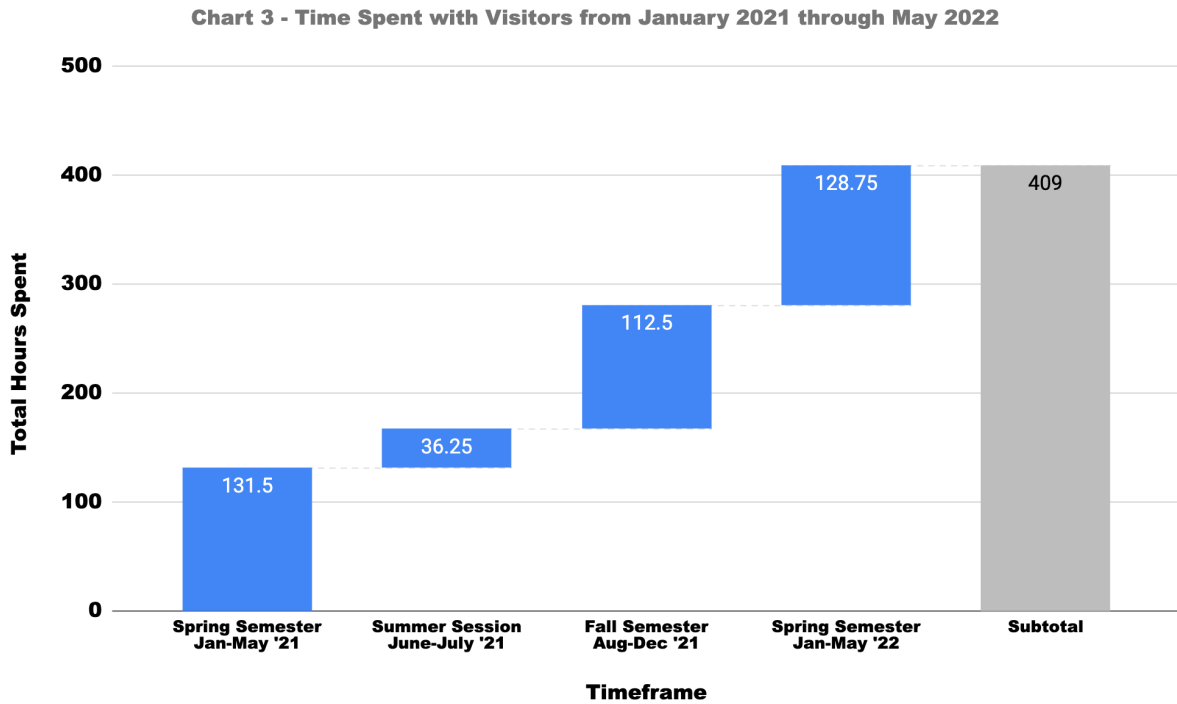
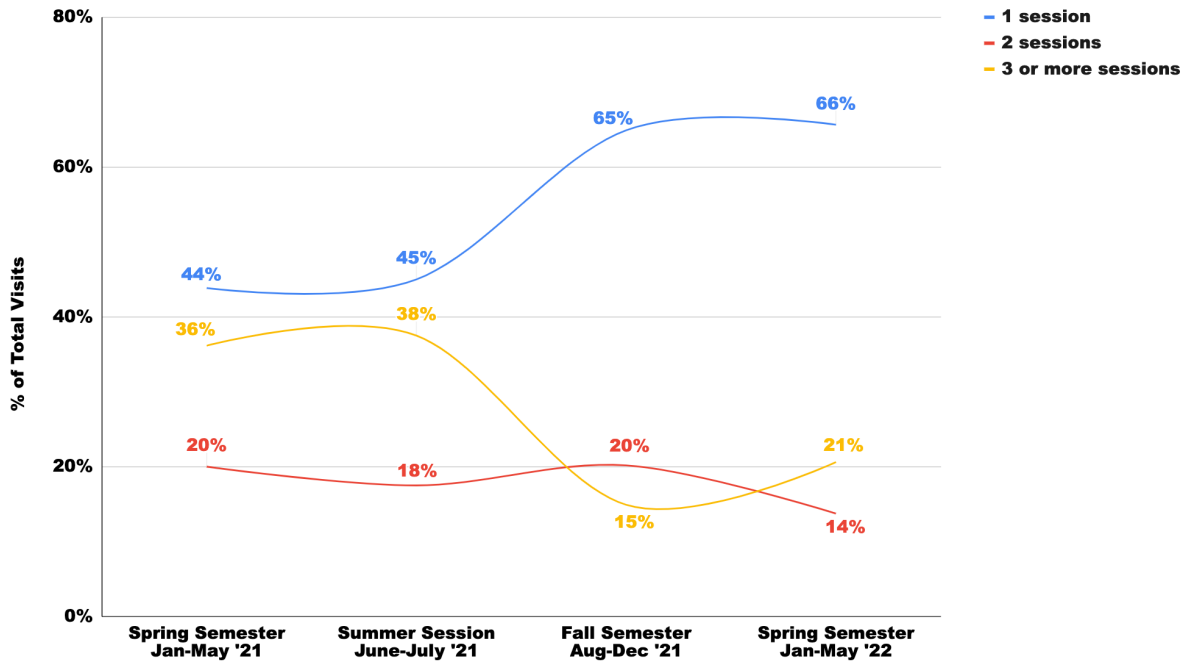


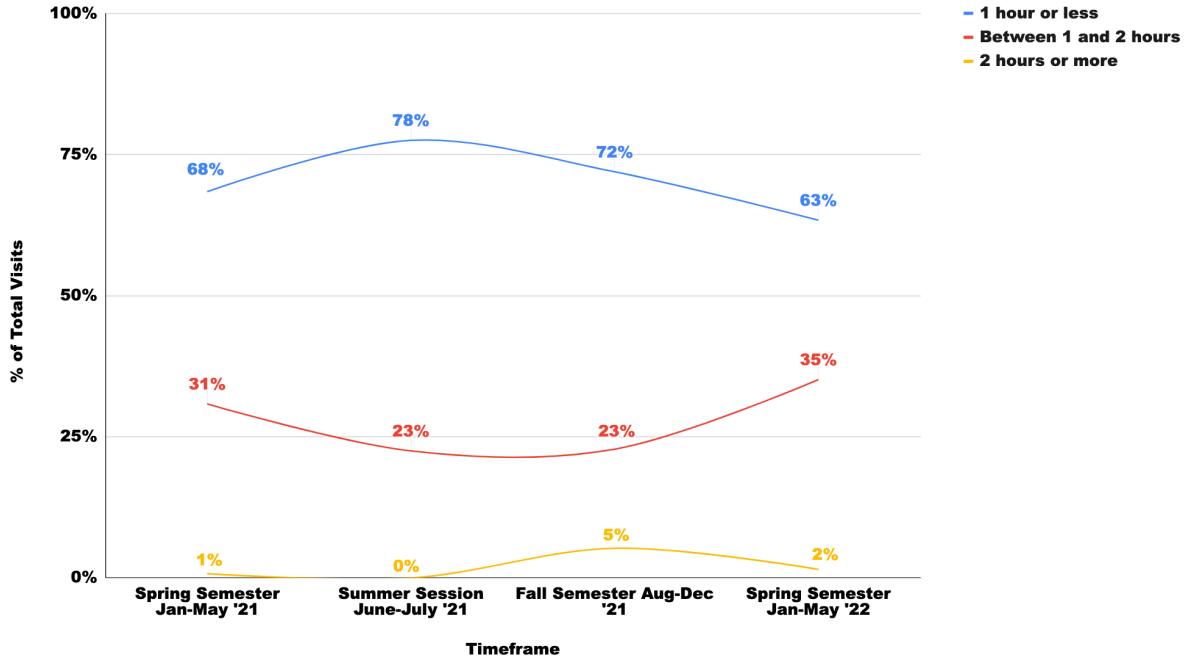
Chart 4 - Percentage of Number of Sessions across Visits from January 2021 through May 2022



It is apparent that most visitors come for a single visit (66%). Visitors who came for two sessions dropped from 20% to 14% this past semester, and three or more visits has increased from 15% to 21%. The increase in three or more visits is likely related to the complexity of concerns and desire for further support from the Ombuds team/office. Many of the issues this past semester did require visitors to do some homework or needed further research by the Ombuds team and/or the visitor.

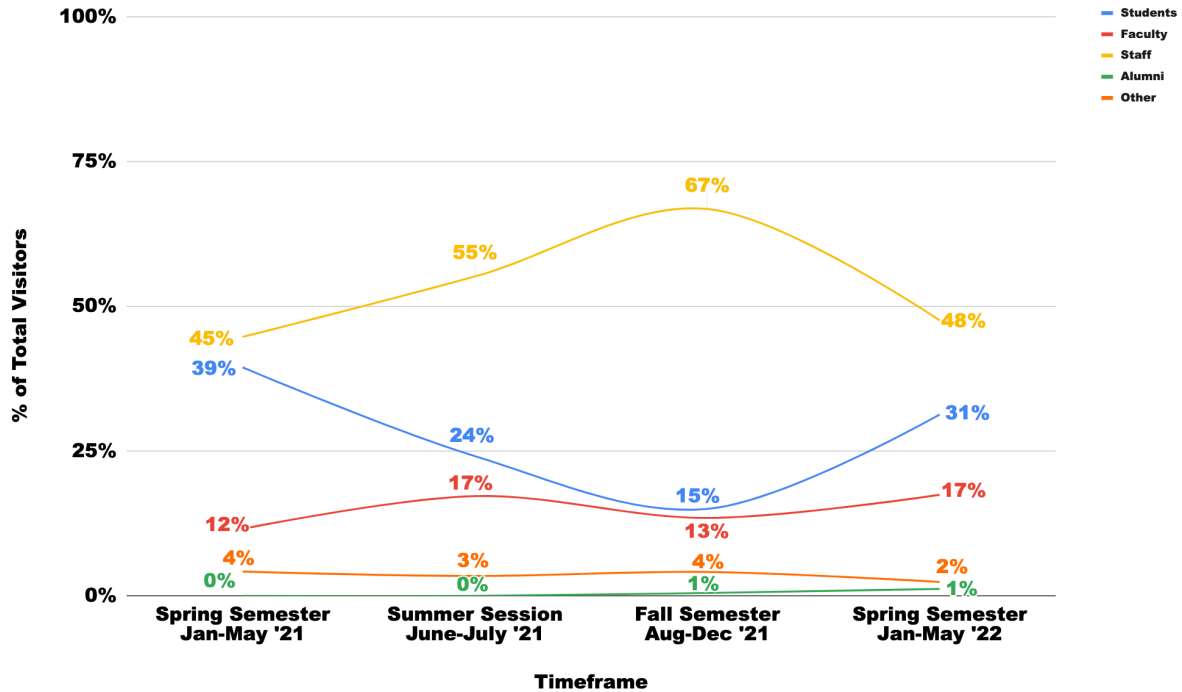
[See tabular view of Chart 4](#)

Chart 5 - Percentage of Mix of Time Spent across Visits from January 2021 through May 2022



It is clear that most visitors meet with an Ombuds for 1 hour or shorter. Visits of this duration decreased this past semester by 9% (72% to 63%). Visitors spending between 1-2 hours increased by 12% (23% to 35%), and those spending 2 hours or more decreased by 3% (5% to 2%). The slight changes in time spent with visitors is solely dependent on the needs of the visitor. We design our initial meetings to last no more than 90 minutes, and since this is a voluntary meeting, the visitors generally control how long they choose to spend in a meeting with the Ombuds. [See tabular view of Chart 5](#)

Chart 6 - Percentage of Visitor Populations from January 2021 through May 2022



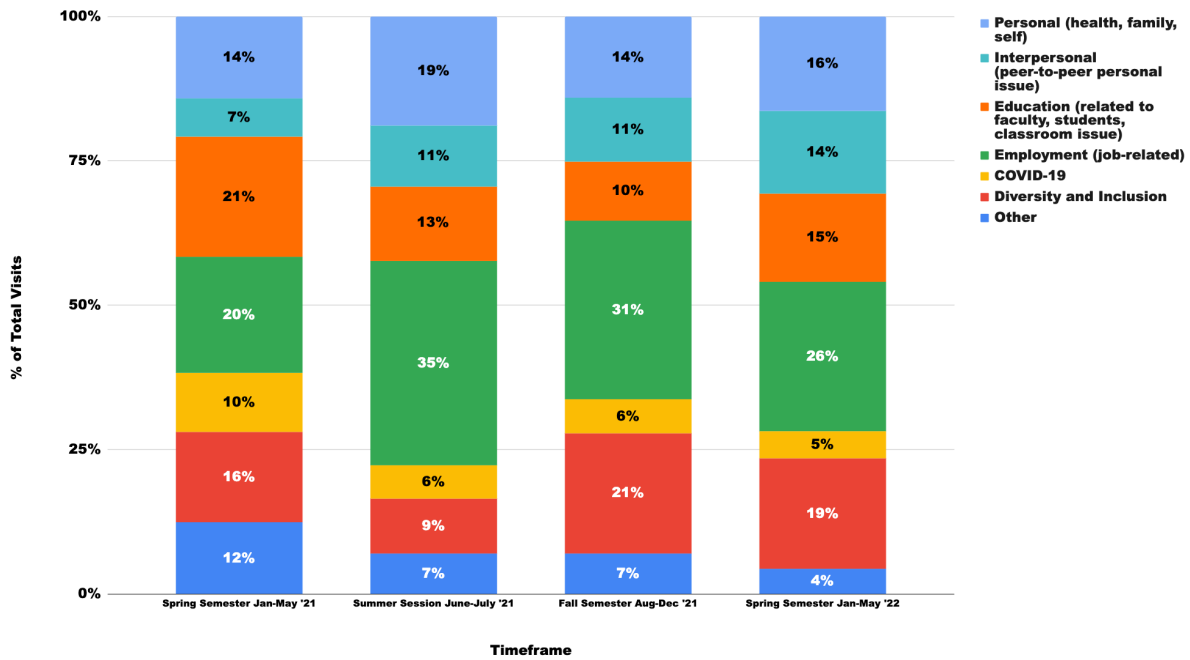
This past semester, Staff visitors have decreased by 19% (67% to 48%) while Student visitors doubled from 15% to 31%. Faculty slightly increased (by 4%), due in part to Ombuds reporting at the Faculty Senate meeting on a regular basis this past semester. Alumni and Others have stayed pretty constant. “Other” reflects a non-Brandesian visitor (parent, landlord, community member with a Brandeis related concern, etc.).

Topics raised by Staff and Faculty visitors range from policy concerns, adherence to policy, discriminatory practices, communication issues, ineffective and inappropriate management styles and practices, civility, stress in the workplace, and return to campus concerns. Bullying and concern about retaliation also remain rampant, and individuals are unwilling to file a formal grievance.

Topics raised by Student visitors include housing and roommate conflicts, health and accessibility, lack of civility and respect in the classroom and on campus, bullying, and concerns about retaliation if a formal action is filed.

These concerns have grown for all visitors as many people in leadership roles on campus have recently announced their departures. [See tabular view of Chart 6](#)

Chart 7 - Percentage of Primary Issues across Visits from January 2021 through May 2022



The primary issues as discussed in the comments associated with Chart 6 above are reflected in Chart 7. The percentage of primary issues across visits has remained relatively constant since the prior semester. Still, there are four primary issue categories to highlight:

- The job-related employment concerns, although the largest topic area, decreased this semester by 5% (from 31% to 26%), but remain significantly higher than a year ago, in spring 2021 (20%). We still regularly hear about concerns related to poor management styles, lack of performance reviews, and people having to cover for others' departure and feeling as if they are handling twice as much work with little or no recognition for the extra workload they are carrying above and beyond their job description.
- Diversity and Inclusion concerns account for 19% of the primary issues across visits this semester. Visitors described their experiences of the impact of cultural differences on communication and working relationships, disparate treatment on the basis of various identities, microaggressions, power dynamics, and the need for more training and representation across campus.
- Education/classroom concerns increased by 5% (10% to 15%) as students shared issues relating to accessibility and accommodation issues, grading, and communication concerns.
- Interpersonal concerns increased by 3% (11% to 14%), which is double the percentage from a year ago in spring 2021, and could be related to increased in-person interactions.

“Other” reflects visitors with concerns relating to housing, landlord/tenant issues off-campus, legal issues relating to visas of international students, and parents with concerns about their child/student. [See tabular view of Chart 7](#)

Appendix – Tabular View of Charts within the Report

Table View of Chart 1: Total Visits from January 2021 through May 2022

Total Number of Visitors	Spring Semester Jan-May 2021	Summer Session June-July 2021	Fall Semester Aug-Dec 2021	Spring Semester Jan-May 2022	Total
<i>Total Number of Visits</i>	133	40	114	131	418

Table View of Chart 2: Total Visitors from January 2021 through May 2022

Total Number of Visitors	Spring Semester Jan-May 2021	Summer Session June-July 2021	Fall Semester Aug-Dec 2021	Spring Semester Jan-May 2022	Total
<i>Total Visitors</i>	190	58	193	166	607

Table View of Chart 3: Time Spent with Visitors from January 2021 through May 2022

Total Hours Spent with Visitors	Spring Semester Jan-May 2021	Summer Session June-July 2021	Fall Semester Aug-Dec 2021	Spring Semester Jan-May 2022	Total
<i>Total Hours Spent with Visitors</i>	131.5	36.25	112.5	128.75	409

Table View of Chart 4: Percentage of Number of Sessions across Visits from January 2021 through May 2022

Percentage of Number of Sessions across Visits	Spring Semester Jan-May 2021	Summer Session June-July 2021	Fall Semester Aug-Dec 2021	Spring Semester Jan-May 2022
<i>Percentage of Number of Sessions across Visits with 1 Session</i>	44%	45%	65%	66%
<i>Percentage of Number of Sessions across Visits with 2 Sessions</i>	20%	18%	20%	14%
<i>Percentage of Number of Sessions across Visits with 3 or More Sessions</i>	36%	38%	15%	21%

Table View of Chart 5: Percentage of Mix of Time Spent across Visits from January 2021 through May 2022

Percentage of Mix of Time Spent with Visitors	Spring Semester Jan-May 2021	Summer Session June-July 2021	Fall Semester Aug-Dec 2021	Spring Semester Jan-May 2022
<i>Percentage of Mix of Time Spent across Visits of Up to 1 Hour</i>	68%	78%	72%	63%
<i>Percentage of Mix of Time Spent across Visits of 1-2 Hours</i>	31%	23%	23%	35%
<i>Percentage of Mix of Time Spent across Visits of 2 or More Hours</i>	1%	0%	5%	2%

Table View of Chart 6: Percentage of Visitor Populations from January 2021 through May 2022

Percentage of Visitor Populations	Spring Semester Jan-May 2021	Summer Session June-July 2021	Fall Semester Aug-Dec 2021	Spring Semester Jan-May 2022
<i>Students</i>	39%	24%	15%	31%
<i>Faculty</i>	12%	17%	13%	17%
<i>Staff</i>	45%	55%	67%	48%
<i>Alumni</i>	0%	0%	1%	1%
<i>Other</i>	4%	3%	4%	2%

Table View of Chart 7: Percentage of Primary Issues across Visits from January 2021 through May 2022

Percentage of Primary Visitor Issues	Spring Semester Jan-May 2021	Summer Session June-July 2021	Fall Semester Aug-Dec 2021	Spring Semester Jan-May 2022
<i>Personal (health, family, self)</i>	14%	19%	14%	16%
<i>Interpersonal (peer-to-peer personal issue)</i>	7%	11%	11%	14%
<i>Education (related to faculty, students, classroom issue)</i>	21%	13%	10%	15%
<i>Employment (job-related)</i>	25%	35%	31%	26%
<i>COVID-19</i>	10%	6%	6%	5%
<i>Diversity and Inclusion</i>	16%	9%	21%	19%
<i>Other</i>	12%	7%	7%	4%