

Baylor
College of
Medicine

OMBUDS OFFICE



2025

ANNUAL REPORT

January 1 - December 31, 2025

A comprehensive analysis of visitor concerns, organizational trends, and efforts to promote informal conflict resolution

Confidentiality Notice: Visitor confidentiality is the highest priority of the Ombuds Office. All scenarios are generalized and based upon common themes observed throughout the year. No identifying information or individual case details are disclosed.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OMBUDS OFFICE | 2025

The Ombuds Office is pleased to share this 2025 annual report, reflecting our ongoing commitment to serve as a trusted and helpful resource for all members of the Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) community.

This report highlights the people we helped, the services we provided, the themes we observed, and the ways we continue to contribute to a healthier, more collaborative organizational culture.

OUR ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY

The Ombuds Office offers a **safe space** where community members can talk through concerns. We listen, help people think through options, and support problem-solving.

We do not conduct investigations, keep formal records for the organization, or advocate for any individual or group. Instead, we focus on fairness, clarity, and empowering people to navigate challenges in ways that align with their goals and the organization's values.

Our work is guided by four core principles:



Independence

The office is positioned outside formal channels, enabling us to receive concerns and provide guidance in an unbiased manner.



Impartiality

We do not take sides. We support fair processes that encourage people to clarify goals, understand options, and express perspectives.



Informality

Conversations with an ombuds are voluntary and off the record. Meeting with an Ombuds does not trigger any formal action by the organization.



Confidentiality

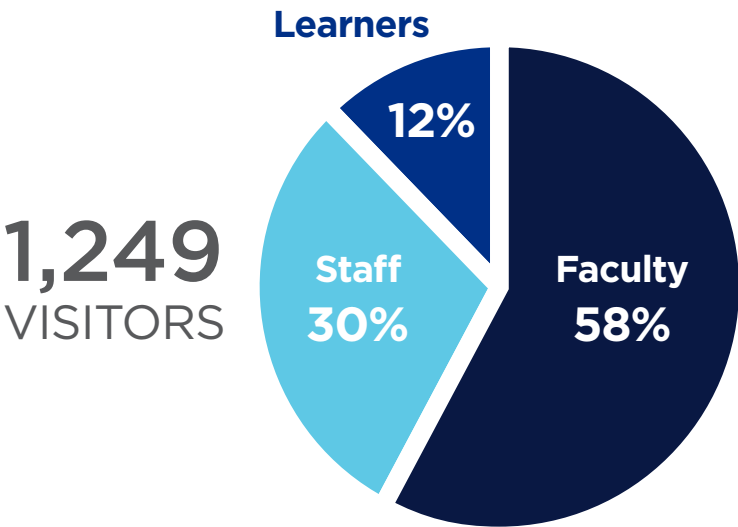
We do not share information without permission, except when there is an imminent risk of serious harm, like life at risk.



These principles allow us to serve as a trusted resource.

OUR SERVICES IN THE COMMUNITY

In 2025, the Ombuds Office engaged with 1,249 faculty, staff, and learners (students, residents, fellows, postdocs) across the College’s locations, affiliates, departments, and mission areas.



Visitors consulted with us for many reasons, including:

- Supervisory relationship concerns
- Team communication challenges
- Understanding policies or expectations
- Interpersonal tension between colleagues
- Navigating change, uncertainty, or transitions
- Confidential sounding board before taking action

Illustrative Scenario
Navigating Shifting Expectations

A staff member was upset by changing priorities and unclear direction in her role. Through confidential coaching, she clarified her concerns, identified communication strategies, and prepared for a constructive conversation with her supervisor. Her work with an ombuds helped her reengage with her supervisor, reduce stress, and reset expectations.

Highlighting the value of a
CONFIDENTIAL, IMPARTIAL SPACE
for community members to think through challenges and
prepare a plan.

OMBUDS APPROACHES

We tailor our approach to your need.



Illustrative Scenario Project Miscommunication

A cross-functional team was stuck in a cycle of misunderstanding and frustration. Team members each met individually with an ombuds to share their experiences and get some confidential guidance. Later, the ombuds facilitated a safe space for the team members to articulate their assumptions, rebuild shared norms, and agree on clearer communication practices.

Listening and Coaching

We helped clarify goals, understand options, and prepare for difficult conversations.

Facilitating Conversations

We helped people rebuild communication and mutual understanding.

Mediating

We helped people resolve conflicts they were unable to resolve on their own.

Analyzing Conflict

We identified underlying causes or dynamics contributing to conflicts, illuminating a path forward.

Providing Systemic Feedback

We shared with leadership de-identified patterns that would benefit from attention.

HOW THE OMBUDS SUPPORT THE COMMUNITY

MEDIATIONS



15 VISITORS

gained mutually acceptable outcomes in mediation

REFERRALS



35 VISITORS

received information or referrals to other BCM offices

CASES



297 VISITORS

benefited from sustained, confidential coaching and problem-solving

ORGANIZATIONAL SERVICES



902 VISITORS

engaged in facilitated discussions, team-building sessions, skills training, and workshops

UNIFORM REPORTING CATEGORIES

The BCM Ombuds adapted the Uniform Reporting Categories (URC) from those established by the International Ombuds Association (IOA) to assess concerns unique to the BCM community.

The BCM Ombuds categorize cases in a consistent, standardized manner, supporting the ability to generate reliable reports of visitor concerns and derive relevant themes.

EXAMPLE

Visitor concern:
Manager is not addressing issues

CATEGORY

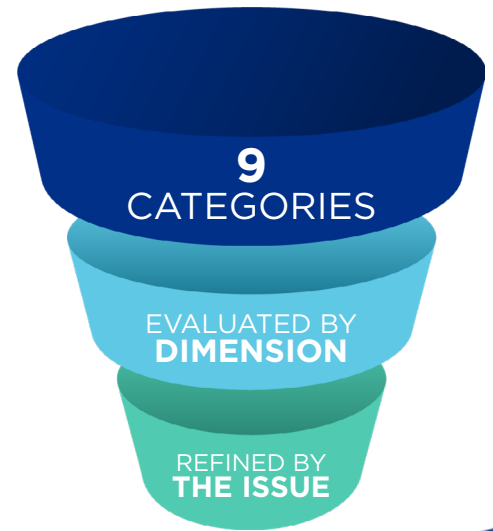
Supervisory Relationships

DIMENSION

Supervisor Effectiveness

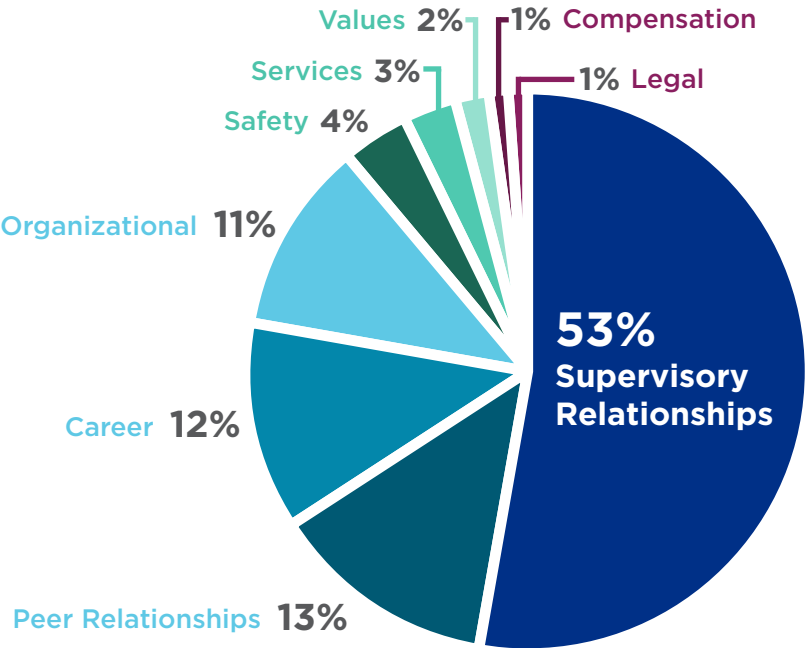
ISSUE

Failure to Address Issues



CATEGORY DEFINITIONS

- 1. Compensation** and Benefits
Concerning equity, appropriateness, or competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits and other benefit programs
- 2. Supervisory Relationships**
Concerning people in supervisory relationships (e.g., supervisor-employee, faculty-student, PI-post-doc)
- 3. Peer** and Colleague **Relationships**
Concerning peers or colleagues who do not have a supervisory relationship
- 4. Career** or Academic Progression and Development
Concerning career or academic progression, or development
- 5. Legal**, Regulatory, Financial, and Compliance
Concerning potential legal or financial risk
- 6. Safety**, Health, and Physical Environment
Concerning safety, health, or infrastructure
- 7. Services** and Administration
Concerning services or administrative offices
- 8. Organizational**, Strategic, and Mission-Related
Concerning the whole or some part of the organization
- 9. Values**, Ethics, Policies, and Standards
Concerning values, ethics, standards, policies, or procedures



VISITOR CONCERNS BY CATEGORY

Supervisory Relationships consistently leads the categories of concerns, revealing the importance of these relationships in healthy, productive work and learning environments.

THEMES AND INSIGHTS

Communication Gaps

A frequent source of stress, particularly among supervisory relationships, expectations, feedback, and decision-making

Workload and Change-Related Pressures

Continued to affect individuals and teams

Policy Clarity

Recurred as a topic as new initiatives and structures were introduced

Early Engagement

With the Ombuds Office increased, suggesting growing awareness of the value of informal problem-solving

ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

Growth in early intervention, greater interest in conflict-management skills, increase in engagement from leaders, and stronger collaboration among support offices.



Illustrative Scenario **Policy Uncertainty**

A faculty member was uncertain about how a recently updated policy applied to his situation. The ombuds helped him understand the policy's intent, identify a contact for clarifications, and prepare questions to support a productive conversation. As a result, the faculty member gained clarity about how the policy applied to him personally.

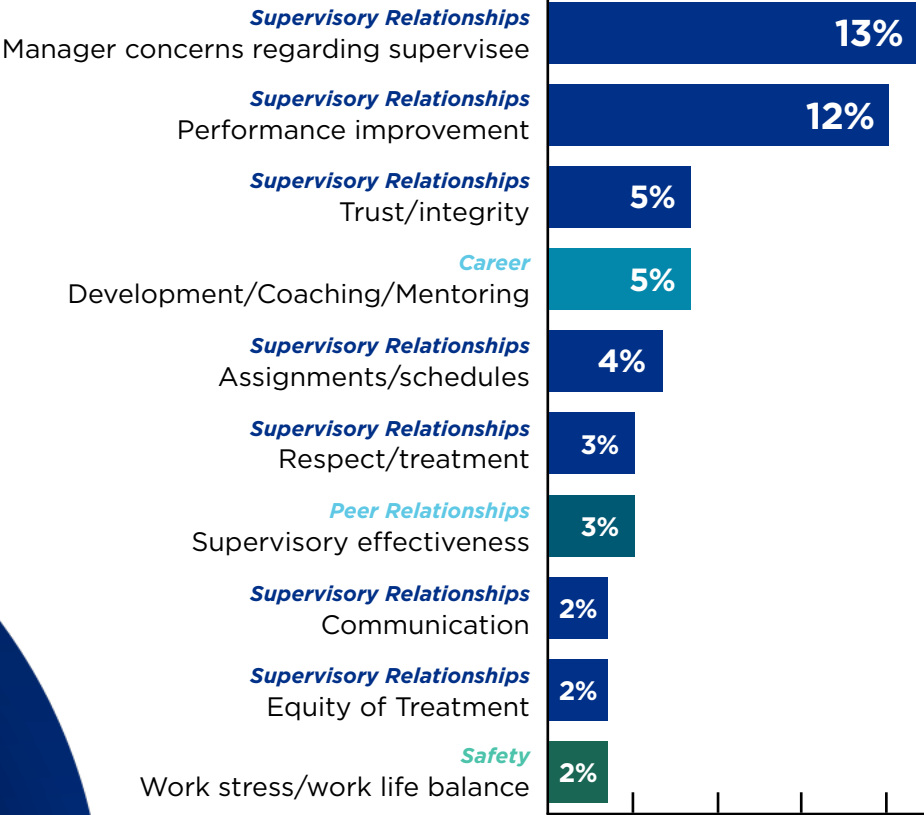
TOP TEN DIMENSIONS

The top ten dimensions accounted for **51%** of all questions, concerns, issues, and inquiries shared with the Ombuds Office in 2025.



Illustrative Scenario Escalating Tension

Two peers were experiencing a breakdown in their relationship at work. An ombuds provided confidential, one-on-one coaching to each person to help them reflect on the situation and consider new approaches. Once both felt prepared, the ombuds facilitated a conversation that allowed them to talk openly, understand one another better, and rebuild an effective working relationship.



OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Beyond individual consultations, the Ombuds Office engaged in a range of outreach efforts:

- **Workshops** on conflict competence, navigating difficult conversations, and building psychologically safe teams
- **Presentations** to departments, learner groups, and leadership teams
- **Resource materials** to help people communicate more effectively
- **Collaborations** across departments, and other support units to ensure consistent, accessible guidance

These efforts strengthen BCM’s capacity for healthy communication, collaboration and conflict resolution.

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Among our most frequently requested offerings are three courses that help strengthen communication and conflict-management skills across the community.

CONFLICT STYLES

This course introduces participants to their preferred approaches to handling conflict, helping them recognize patterns and expand their range of responses.

CONFLICT SKILLS

This course builds on the foundation of the Conflict Styles course through a blend of lecture and role-play, giving participants practical tools to navigate challenging interactions more effectively.

LEADING WITH INFLUENCE

This course focuses on enhancing participants' ability to work productively in all directions--upward with supervisors, laterally with peers, downward with supervisees--by developing strategies that foster clarity, collaboration, and trust.

LOOKING AHEAD

We remain committed to offering a safe space where every member of the community can seek clarity, support, and a path forward. We look forward to continuing to serve the BCM community and to contributing to a culture where concerns can be raised safely, addressed constructively, and resolved with mutual respect.

Thank you for reading our annual report and for your continued commitment to fostering a respectful, collaborative community. We appreciate your engagement and look forward to supporting you in the year ahead.

LEARN MORE

ABOUT THE OMBUDS OFFICE

Learn more about the Ombuds Office's full range of services and constructive problem-solving support on the bcm.edu website.

Contact

Contact us to schedule a confidential consultation, training, or workshop.

713-798-5039

ombudsoffice@bcm.edu