VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY
VERITAS UNITAS CARITAS
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2020-2021 REPORT

FROM THE OMBUDS OFFICE

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A MESSAGE FROM THE OMBUDS OFFICE

It has been my honor to be at Villanova University during this milestone year in which we braved the pandemic, to serve its faculty and to assist in its growth and development. Because the Ombuds Office is independent from any other office of the University, I have been able to provide faculty with complete confidentiality and neutrality, using informal methods to help them navigate through their concerns. I have translated those aggregate concerns to University stakeholders, providing them with the knowledge and opportunity to address them. Together, we made significant progress.

I have truly enjoyed meeting Villanova faculty in this role. It is my goal to meet all of you! It would be my great pleasure to meet and discuss any workplace issue you have, no matter how small or strange it feels. I encourage you to consult with me as early as you can, so you can resolve the issue before it grows. Taking this kind of constructive approach to addressing your concerns not only helps you, but also helps the University move through and beyond those concerns. Just send me an email introducing yourself, and we will schedule a meeting. I would also appreciate your inviting me to your group meetings, where I can present about the Ombuds resource, or just listen and learn about what is happening.

The Ombuds Office is an amazing resource for the University. You will see your colleagues' testimonials about it throughout this report. Let's work together to make 2021-2022 a different kind of milestone year for Villanova.

Warm regards,

Megan P. Willoughby, Esq.
Faculty Ombuds

"Meg helped me clarify the problems and the steps to resolve them. She also helped reduce my anxiety about the issues—which allowed me to focus on what needed to be done. She was also encouraging and welcoming."

"The Ombuds Process was straightforward and very useful."

"I am very grateful for this resource!"

"The ability to discuss concerns that can be very time-consuming and stressful for faculty members, given some of the complexities of Villanova as an organization, with an Ombudsperson is essential. Consulting with the Ombudsperson can both allay anxieties and concerns and make having difficult conversations with administrators easier or even unnecessary if there is another discernible, appropriate path forward. This was the case with my experience."

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report communicates anonymous, aggregated information about how the Ombuds resource is used at Villanova. It tracks patterns through information faculty provided in a confidential feedback tool at the outset and conclusion of the concerns they presented to the Ombuds Office. For purposes of this report, each set of concerns identified by a visitor will be referred to as a case. No case represents a finding, judgment or determination; rather, it is the story of what has occurred, as perceived by faculty. The report presents information about the cases, services provided to faculty, distribution of issues and faculty perspectives on the Ombuds process.

"Working with the Ombudsperson was extremely helpful. She always responded promptly and was always available to discuss my concerns. Her feedback was detailed, substantive, and helpful."

"The concern was brought forward to the appropriate person."

*"Very professional, hardworking, transparent. Great job."*

"Meg is extremely knowledgeable, straightforward, effective and empathetic while conveying impartiality the entire time. She was wonderful to work with."

CASE DATA

During the academic year, from July 2020 through June 2021, faculty brought 40 new cases to the Ombuds Office. In addition to the four still active from the prior year, it assisted with 44. Faculty initiated 14 cases in the fall semester and nearly double that (26) in the spring. The Office also received requests to assist staff, as well as undergraduate and graduate students, but its current scope is limited to faculty.
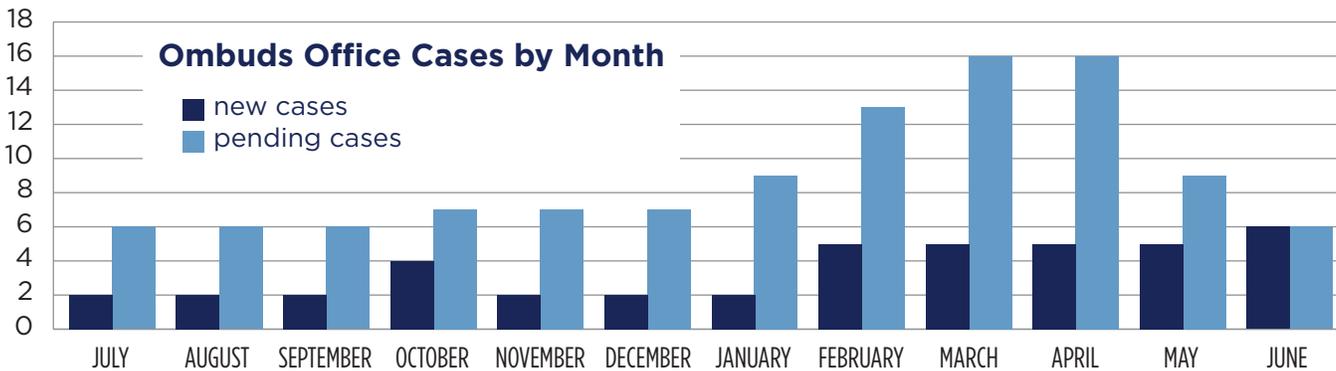
Each case represents a new inquiry brought by a faculty member that elicited an Ombuds response, and most cases included several concerns. Thirty cases reached a successful resolution. A successful resolution looks different in every case. For some faculty, it means being better equipped to make a decision or engage with a colleague. For others, it is improved understanding of procedures or determinations that apply to them. For many, it involves a renewed optimism for their work and workplace. Of the remaining cases, six are still pending, six are active in a different forum and the status of two are unknown. The timeframe for resolution has ranged from four to 310 days, with an average length of 65 days. Within the 44 cases this year, the Office handled 115 concerns. Those concerns had the following distribution:
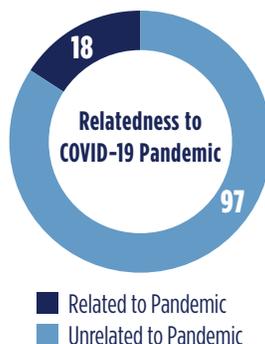
Most issues arose at the departmental level (52), and many emerged at the University (37) and college (26) levels. Many issues (97) were intra-organizational, while some were inter-organizational (18).

Faculty from four of the six University colleges utilized the Ombuds Office. In the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Villanova's largest college, faculty from most departments (14) sought the Ombuds services. Nearly half of the faculty who used the Ombuds services this year were tenured (21), and another seven were on the tenure track. The remaining 16 were not eligible for tenure.

Of the individuals who provided optional demographic information, slightly more than half identified as female, and most were Caucasians, aged 40-59, and were not Hispanic, disabled or veterans.

"Very professional and well-prepared, provided guidance, insightful advice and strong yet impartial support."

"It was great. I am extremely thankful for having this resource that is by definition not representing either me or my employer. I just wanted someone to look at all of the facts that I was seeing … and give me an impartial opinion about whether I was misunderstanding or missing something. I appreciated that this was a confidential way to communicate with people in authority at the University."

"Excellent work."

SERVICES PROVIDED

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ombuds Office conducted meetings through online platforms, as well as connected by telephone and email. Each case began with an initial consultation, during which faculty discussed their concerns. After probing to identify all important information, we considered options, weighing the benefits and risks associated with each and then faculty determined a plan to address their concerns. The Ombuds Office continued to consult with them throughout the implementation of their plan. Once faculty achieved desired outcomes, their cases were closed. The Ombuds Office continues to monitor the effectiveness of the resolutions and offer support to faculty and assistance as needed.

Specifically, the Ombuds Office provided the following services:

- served only as a sounding board in 10 cases,
- in 25 of the cases, provided feedback on written communications,
- conducted research for faculty in 27 cases,
- met with multiple stakeholders in 22 cases,
- in nine cases, relayed messages between parties to a concern (shuttle diplomacy), and
- facilitated four mediations between parties.

Ombuds Services

- ■ Sounding board
- ■ Documents
- ■ Research
- ■ Stakeholders
- ■ Shuttle diplomacy
- ■ Mediation
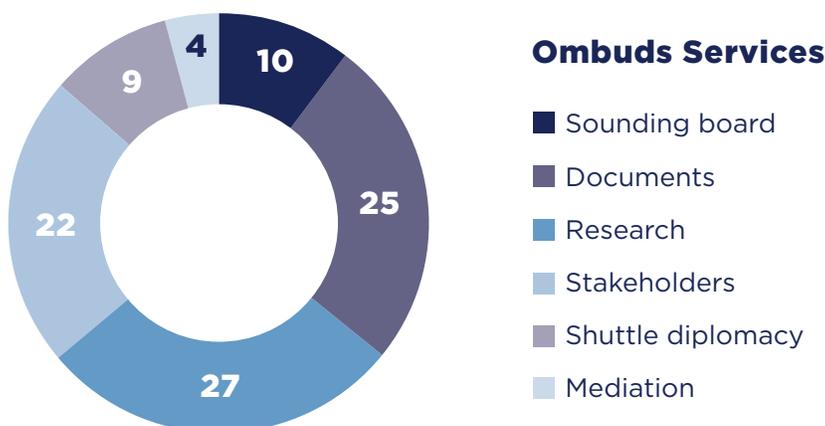
The Ombuds Office conducted outreach to make faculty aware of this resource. It held virtual Meet the Ombuds sessions, as well as presented information to faculty and staff in academic department and administrative office meetings. The Ombuds webpage, ombuds.villanova.edu, contains the Principles of the Ombuds Office. It is accessible from the webpages of Faculty Congress and the Office of the Provost. The Ombuds Office also advertised its services through Campus Currents, as recommended by faculty.

"Extremely professional and approachable individual."

"Megan was an incredible listener. I have followed up with her regarding my concerns, and I am hopeful that change will be coming where necessary based on her follow up."

"The Ombudsperson was very supportive and helpful."

DISTRIBUTION OF ISSUES

Of the faculty who completed the initial intake form utilized by the Ombuds Office, they categorized their concerns in the following manner:

Self-Identification of Faculty Concerns

- Interpersonal Communication
- Departmental Climate
- Abrasive Conduct
- Leadership
- Administration
- Other

The International Ombuds Association (IOA) developed a classification system for Ombuds to categorize concerns presented to them. An explanation of each category and its sub-categories in the Uniform Reporting Category (URC) is contained in the Addendum.

In order to promote uniformity and protect anonymity, Villanova's Ombuds Office categorized its faculty concerns utilizing the URC:

Faculty Concerns by Uniform Reporting Catergory

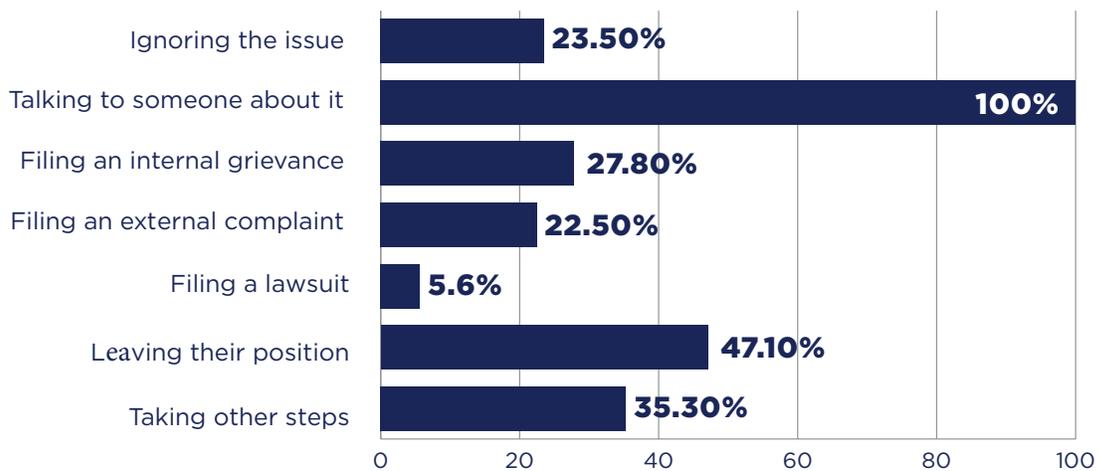| Category	Value
1. Compensation and Benefits	7
2. Evaluative Relationships	27
3. Peer and Colleague Relationships	8
4. Career Progression and Development	10
5. Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance	24
6. Safety, Health and Physical Environment	0
7. Services/Administrative Issues	0
8. Organizational, Strategic and Mission Related	13
9. Values, Ethics and Standards	26

FACULTY PERSPECTIVE

Overwhelmingly, responding faculty indicated that they used the Ombuds services based on a colleague's recommendation. Some also learned of it through an Ombuds presentation, meeting or web page.

At the outset of their cases, faculty reported having high confidence that the Ombuds process would help resolve their concerns. All faculty agreed or highly agreed that they were sufficiently informed about the Ombuds Office.

Prior to having their first Ombuds consultation, responding faculty identified various options they had been considering to resolve their concerns:

Faculty Plans Prior to Ombuds Consultation

Option	Percentage
Ignoring the issue	23.50%
Talking to someone about it	100%
Filing an internal grievance	27.80%
Filing an external complaint	22.50%
Filing a lawsuit	5.6%
Leaving their position	47.10%
Taking other steps	35.30%

Some faculty reported having already taken some of these steps, including seeking advice from lawyers, University stakeholders and trusted colleagues, family and friends.

At the end of their cases, all responding faculty agreed or highly agreed that the Ombuds assisted them with identifying their concerns, developing options to address them, and implementing a plan to resolve their concerns. They had this to say:

Do you intend to use the Ombuds Process again to resolve a concern that arises in the future?

★★★★★
5.00 Average Rating

Will you recommend the Ombuds Process to a colleague that has a concern?

★★★★★
5.00 Average Rating

"No further action necessary. My concerns were resolved."

"Great resource."

"Meg was a great choice for the position."

"Megan listened and asked appropriate questions throughout the discussion to really understand my concerns. ... I am sure that I will be contacting her in the future when I am having issues or concerns. Her empathy, listening and great advice were integral to the resolution of one problem. I also believe that her assistance and expertise will hopefully fix the major problem we originally discussed. I don't think enough people know about the Ombudsman as a resource that can provide an outside perspective on a variety of issues that come up in academia such as difficult partnerships, meetings, colleagues, discussions, etc. The ability to have a confidential conversation with Megan helped me delve into difficult topics which was so helpful in developing strategies going forward.

Thanks so much!"

ADDENDUM A

As discussed in the Distribution of Issues section above, the International Ombuds Association developed the Uniform Reporting Categories, a classification system that Ombuds utilize to categorize concerns presented to them. An explanation of each of the nine broad categories and their sub-categories is contained in the document below.

INTERNATIONAL OMBUDSMAN ASSOCIATION
Uniform Reporting Categories

1. Compensation & Benefits
Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the equity, appropriateness and competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits and other benefit programs.

1.a Compensation (rate of pay, salary amount, job salary classification/level)
1.b Payroll (administration of pay, check wrong or delayed)
1.c Benefits (decisions related to medical, dental, life, vacation/sick leave, education, worker's compensation insurance, etc.)
1.d Retirement, Pension (eligibility, calculation of amount, retirement pension benefits)
1.e Other (any other employee compensation or benefit not described by the above sub-categories)
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2. Evaluative Relationships
Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries arising between people in evaluative relationships (i.e. supervisor-employee, faculty-student.)

2.a Priorities, Values, Beliefs (differences about what should be considered important – or most important – often rooted in ethical or moral beliefs)
2.b Respect/Treatment (demonstrations of inappropriate regard for people, not listening, rudeness, crudeness, etc.)
2.c Trust/Integrity (suspicion that others are not being honest, whether or to what extent one wishes to be honest, etc.)
2.d Reputation (possible impact of rumors and/or gossip about professional or personal matters)
2.e Communication (quality and/or quantity of communication)
2.f Bullying, Mobbing (abusive, threatening, and/or coercive behaviors)
2.g Diversity-Related (comments or behaviors perceived to be insensitive, offensive, or intolerant on the basis of an identity-related difference such as race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation)
2.h Retaliation (punitive behaviors for previous actions or comments, whistleblower)
2.i Physical Violence (actual or threats of bodily harm to another)
2.j Assignments/Schedules (appropriateness or fairness of tasks, expected volume of work)
2.k Feedback (feedback or recognition given, or responses to feedback received)
2.l Consultation (requests for help in dealing with issues between two or more individuals they supervise/teach or with other unusual situations in evaluative relationships)

2.m Performance Appraisal/Grading (job/academic performance in formal or informal evaluation)
2.n Departmental Climate (prevailing behaviors, norms, or attitudes within a department for which supervisors or faculty have responsibility.)
2.o Supervisory Effectiveness (management of department or classroom, failure to address issues)
2.p Insubordination (refusal to do what is asked)
2.q Discipline (appropriateness, timeliness, requirements, alternatives, or options for responding)
2.r Equity of Treatment (favoritism, one or more individuals receive preferential treatment)
2.s Other (any other evaluative relationship not described by the above sub-categories)
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3. Peer and Colleague Relationships
Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries involving peers or colleagues who do not have a supervisory–employee or student–professor relationship (e.g., two staff members within the same department or conflict involving members of a student organization.)

3.a Priorities, Values, Beliefs (differences about what should be considered important – or most important – often rooted in ethical or moral beliefs)
3.b Respect/Treatment (demonstrations of inappropriate regard for people, not listening, rudeness, crudeness, etc.)
3.c Trust/Integrity (suspicion that others are not being honest, whether or to what extent one wishes to be honest, etc.)
3.d Reputation (possible impact of rumors and/or gossip about professional or personal matters)
3.e Communication (quality and/or quantity of communication)
3.f Bullying, Mobbing (abusive, threatening, and/or coercive behaviors)
3.g Diversity-Related (comments or behaviors perceived to be insensitive, offensive, or intolerant on the basis of an identity-related difference such as race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation)
3.h Retaliation (punitive behaviors for previous actions or comments, whistleblower)
3.i Physical Violence (actual or threats of bodily harm to another)
3.j Other (any peer or colleague relationship not described by the above sub-categories)
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4. Career Progression and Development
Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about administrative processes and decisions regarding entering and leaving a job, what it entails, (i.e., recruitment, nature and place of assignment, job security, and separation.)

4.a Job Application/Selection and Recruitment Processes (recruitment and selection processes, facilitation of job applications, short-listing and criteria for selection, disputed decisions linked to recruitment and selection)
4.b Job Classification and Description (changes or disagreements over requirements of assignment, appropriate tasks)
4.c Involuntary Transfer/Change of Assignment (notice, selection and special dislocation rights/benefits, removal from prior duties, unrequested change of work tasks)
4.d Tenure/Position Security/Ambiguity (security of position or contract, provision of secure contractual categories)
4.e Career Progression (promotion, reappointment, or tenure)
4.f Rotation and Duration of Assignment (non-completion or over-extension of assignments in specific settings/countries, lack of access or involuntary transfer to specific roles/assignments, requests for transfer to other places/duties/roles)
4.g Resignation (concerns about whether or how to voluntarily terminate employment or how such a decision might be communicated appropriately)
4.h Termination/Non-Renewal (end of contract, non-renewal of contract, disputed permanent separation from organization)
4.i Re-employment of Former or Retired Staff (loss of competitive advantages associated with re-hiring retired staff, favoritism)
4.j Position Elimination (elimination or abolition of an individual's position)
4.k Career Development, Coaching, Mentoring (classroom, on-the-job, and varied assignments as training and developmental opportunities)
4.l Other (any other issues linked to recruitment, assignment, job security or separation not described by the above sub-categories)
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5. Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that may create a legal risk (financial, sanction etc.) for the organization or its members if not addressed, including issues related to waste, fraud or abuse.

5.a Criminal Activity (threats or crimes planned, observed, or experienced, fraud)

5.b Business and Financial Practices (inappropriate actions that abuse or waste organizational finances, facilities or equipment)

5.c Harassment (unwelcome physical, verbal, written, e-mail, audio, video psychological or sexual conduct that creates a hostile or intimidating environment)

5.d Discrimination (different treatment compared with others or exclusion from some benefit on the basis of, for example, gender, race, age, national origin, religion, etc.[being part of an Equal Employment Opportunity protected category – applies in the U.S.])

5.e Disability, Temporary or Permanent, Reasonable Accommodation (extra time on exams, provision of assistive technology, interpreters, or Braille materials including questions on policies, etc. for people with disabilities)

5.f Accessibility (removal of physical barriers, providing ramps, elevators, etc.)

5.g Intellectual Property Rights (e.g., copyright and patent infringement)

5.h Privacy and Security of Information (release or access to individual or organizational private or confidential information)

5.i Property Damage (personal property damage, liabilities)

5.j Other (any other legal, financial and compliance issue not described by the above sub-categories)

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6. Safety, Health, and Physical Environment

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about Safety, Health and Infrastructure-related issues.

6.a Safety (physical safety, injury, medical evacuation, meeting federal and state requirements for training and equipment)

6.b Physical Working/Living Conditions (temperature, odors, noise, available space, lighting, etc)

6.c Ergonomics (proper set-up of workstation affecting physical functioning)

6.d Cleanliness (sanitary conditions and facilities to prevent the spread of disease)

6.e Security (adequate lighting in parking lots, metal detectors, guards, limited access to building by outsiders, anti-terrorists measures (not for classifying "compromise of classified or top secret" information)

6.f Telework/Flexplace (ability to work from home or other location because of business or personal need, e.g., in case of man-made or natural emergency)

6.g Safety Equipment (access to/use of safety equipment as well as access to or use of safety equipment, e.g., fire extinguisher)

6.h Environmental Policies (policies not being followed, being unfair ineffective, cumbersome)

6.i Work Related Stress and Work–Life Balance (Post-Traumatic Stress, Critical Incident Response, internal/external stress, e.g. divorce, shooting, caring for sick, injured)

6.j Other (any safety, health, or physical environment issue not described by the above sub-categories)

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7. Services/Administrative Issues

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about services or administrative offices including from external parties.

7.a Quality of Services (how well services were provided, accuracy or thoroughness of information, competence, etc.)

7.b Responsiveness/Timeliness (time involved in getting a response or return call or about the time for a complete response to be provided)

7.c Administrative Decisions and Interpretation/Application of Rules (impact of non-disciplinary decisions, decisions about requests for administrative and academic services, e.g., exceptions to policy deadlines or limits, refund requests, appeals of library or parking fines, application for financial aid, etc.)

7.d Behavior of Service Provider(s) (how an administrator or staff member spoke to or dealt with a constituent, customer, or client, e.g., rude, inattentive, or impatient)

7.e Other (any services or administrative issue not described by the above sub-categories)

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8. Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that relate to the whole or some part of an organization.

8.a Strategic and Mission-Related/ Strategic and Technical Management (principles, decisions and actions related to where and how the organization is moving)

8.b Leadership and Management (quality/capacity of management and/or management/leadership decisions, suggested training, reassignments and reorganizations)

8.c Use of Positional Power/Authority (lack or abuse of power provided by individual's position)

8.d Communication (content, style, timing, effects and amount of organizational and leader's communication, quality of communication about strategic issues)

8.e Restructuring and Relocation (issues related to broad scope planned or actual restructuring and/or relocation affecting the whole or major divisions of an organization, e.g. downsizing, off shoring, outsourcing)

8.f Organizational Climate (issues related to organizational morale and/or capacity for functioning)

8.g Change Management (making, responding or adapting to organizational changes, quality of leadership in facilitating organizational change)

8.h Priority Setting and/or Funding (disputes about setting organizational/departmental priorities and/or allocation of funding within programs)

8.i Data, Methodology, Interpretation of Results (scientific disputes about the conduct, outcomes and interpretation of studies and resulting data for policy)

8.j Interdepartment/Interorganization Work/Territory (disputes about which department/organization should be doing what/taking the lead)

8.k Other (any organizational issue not described by the above sub-categories)

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9. Values, Ethics, and Standards

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the fairness of organizational values, ethics, and/or standards, the application of related policies and/or procedures, or the need for creation or revision of policies, and/or standards.

9.a Standards of Conduct (fairness, applicability or lack of behavioral guidelines and/or Codes of Conduct, e.g., Academic Honesty, plagiarism, Code of Conduct, conflict of interest)

9.b Values and Culture (questions, concerns or issues about the values or culture of the organization)

9.c Scientific Conduct/Integrity (scientific or research misconduct or misdemeanors, e.g., authorship; falsification of results)

9.d Policies and Procedures NOT Covered in Broad Categories 1 thru 8 (fairness or lack of policy or the application of the policy, policy not followed, or needs revision, e.g., appropriate dress, use of internet or cell phones)

9.e Other (Other policy, procedure, ethics or standards issues not described in the above sub-categories)

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