



CONNECTICUT
COLLEGE

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDS

ANNUAL REPORT • 2021

MISSION & VISION



The mission of Conflict Resolution and Ombuds Services at Connecticut College is to support our staff and faculty, and to promote a conflict responsive workplace.

Conflict is a fact of life. When our community is rich with diverse individuals and unique perspectives, we may not always see eye to eye. Believe it or not, this conflict can be a good thing! Innovative thought and diversity of experience is what makes communities and organizations stronger. As long as we know how to engage and respond to conflict in healthy ways, it becomes a tool for growth.

But this takes work. It takes bravery, an open mind, and a collaborative spirit. An ombuds can't resolve your conflicts for you, but if you are willing, an ombuds can be your guide. We can do the work together.

The vision of Conflict Resolution & Ombuds Services is:
To create a shared understanding of how we work through and talk about conflict at Connecticut College.
To create new spaces for empathy to grow and be shared.
To ensure everyone at Conn has accessible and shareable tools to navigate conflict in their academic, personal, and professional lives.



LOOKING FORWARD

Actualizing Full Participation through Courageous Conflict Engagement: a new initiative presented by the Gund Dialogue Project. *Led by colleagues from across the College, we explore the challenges of working through conflicts that emerge within our communities. Together, we work to develop common conflict language, create shared expectations around approaching conflict, and practice strategies for healthy conflict engagement. These workshops will continue throughout 2022 and beyond. All are invited to join!*

Mediation Certificate. *This course, open to faculty, staff, and students, will provide an immersive experience in mediation and conflict resolution skills; and a chance to connect in meaningful ways.*

Conflict Skills Lab. *Open to faculty and staff throughout the 2022-23 academic year, these short workshops will provide regular opportunity to practice essential skills as we navigate conflict in the workplace.*

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YEAR IN REVIEW



OMBUDSPERSON

AMY SEREDAY, MS, CO-OP
ASEREDAY@CONNCOLL.EDU



This past year has found Connecticut College, not unlike the world around us, soldiering on in the face of adversity. I am humbled every day by the strength, perseverance, and spirit of those who make up this vibrant community. Having met with staff and faculty from all corners of this organization, let me share the view from my office. I see folks being called upon to do more with less, both at home and at work. I see good people longing for healthier, happier, more prosperous times. I see a genuine desire for opportunities to communicate and connect, and I am honored to be a partner in this work. Know that my door is always open, as a confidential, neutral sounding board, for whatever challenges may arise on the path forward.

Amy Sereday, MS, CO-OP
Staff and Faculty Ombudsperson

VISITOR VOICES

“Everyone should be encouraged to speak to the Ombuds, even for just a check-in so that people understand how the process can work.”

“Having you there to help guide the conversation was wonderful and I can’t thank you enough for your thoughtfulness, care, and compassion.”

“Amy was easy to talk to, non judgmental and offered practical actions to help me deal with the situation.”

“I liked that it was a safe space to discuss concerns and to find ways of addressing them. The Ombuds was a great sounding board and helpful in providing support. I felt heard even if there was very little that could be done, and it allowed me to develop personally and professionally.”



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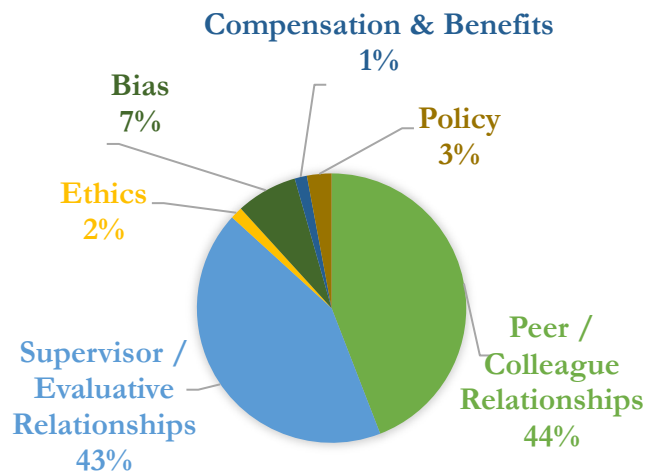
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MEASURING IMPACT

68 unique visitors
203 visits
4 mediations
7 group facilitations

PRIMARY CONCERNS



SECONDARY CONCERNS

Conflicts are complex and often span multiple issues. Concerns around diversity, bias, and understanding surfaced in 28.5% of cases seen by the Ombuds in 2021.



UNDERSTANDING VALUE

The greatest resource of any organization is its people. It is difficult, almost uncomfortable, to put numbers to the value of an ombuds program. Every moment of support or positive change that helps a member of our community is priceless. Continued investment in conflict resolution benefits the social, emotional, and financial wellbeing of Connecticut College.

Gallup State of the American Workplace Report (2017) calculates the cost of employee disengagement at 34% of that employee's salary.

By assisting visitors, Ombuds services may have saved an estimated \$975,605 by mitigating employee disengagement at Conn in 2021.
(Based on average salary data for Connecticut College, year 2021)

In a report from the Society of Human Resource Management (2017), the estimated cost of losing an employee to another organization is equivalent to 6-9 months salary for that employee.

By assisting visitors, Ombuds services may have saved between \$482,460 and \$723,690 by reducing employee attrition at Conn in 2021.
(Based on average salary data for Connecticut College, year 2021; 33% of visitors reported as attrition risk)



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VISITOR DATA

Visitor data is a valuable tool for tracking long-term trends in types of cases as they relate to various identity groups within our community. In addition, demographic data can highlight identity groups which may be under-served by the Ombuds.

Demographic data is based solely upon the information visitors choose to disclose. Disclosure may at times be made only as it relates to a visitor's issue. Failure to list a particular group below is not indicative of oversight or omission by the Ombuds.

Confidentiality *always* takes priority over data collection. In order to maintain confidentiality, demographic data is not correlated to specific cases or visitors, or to aggregate case data. Visitors may be categorized as "not disclosed" in order to protect their identity.

UTILIZATION BY GROUP

Gender Identity

- 75% female
- 23% male
- 1% non-binary
- 1% not disclosed

Race and Ethnicity

- 66% white
- 16% latinx
- 16% black
- 1% aapi
- 1% not disclosed

Sexual Orientation

- 63% heterosexual
- 16% homosexual
- 1% bisexual
- 20% not disclosed

CASE TRENDS

The majority of cases by far center around *peer and colleague relationships* and *supervisor / evaluative relationships*, with both categories seen in nearly equal numbers, 44% and 43% respectively. This speaks to the importance of healthy communication and strong leadership within our work teams. Team building does not happen spontaneously; it requires effort and intention. All managers, chairs, and directors are welcomed to visit the Ombuds to discuss ways to develop group culture.

Striking in the data is the gender disparity in visitors. Far greater numbers of visitors identify as female. While there may be a number of factors driving this difference, bias appears to play a role. As noted in the case type data, 28.5% of visitors reported secondary concerns of bias. When we overlay bias concerns and gender, we see that 25% of that 28.5% are visitors identifying as female, with more than half of those being women of color. Presenting issues included fairness in work/life balance, pay equity, and ideas being heard and valued.