

ACADEMIC YEAR 2022-2023

OMBUDS ANNUAL REPORT

“It is more rewarding to resolve a conflict than to dissolve a relationship.”

— Josh McDowell



California State
University

CHANNEL
ISLANDS

BELL TOWER

46

During Academic Year 2022-2023, the University Ombuds for California State University Channel Islands served a broad range of staff, faculty, and some students, navigating University concerns, conflicts, and policy. The Ombuds Office continued focusing on developing and presenting educational content to increase “conflict competence” skills. This effort brought about opportunities to collaborate with other CSU Ombuds and other Ombuds outside the CSU system. The Ombuds Office also focused on working with the Office of the President in implementing a campus Inclusive Excellence Action Plan, which includes a focus on interpreting the 2020 Campus Climate Survey and pivoting to a new survey process.

General Reflections

Academic Year 2022-2023 saw a continuation of the previous years’ patterns regarding demographics as well as of issues raised by visitors. Most visitors again came from the Division of Academic Affairs (DAA) and the top issues raised involved the exercise of authority (e.g., power dynamics) and interpersonal (e.g., peer) conflict. I believe the predominance of visitors coming from DAA is not due to more issues, but, instead, to a greater awareness and comfort with ombuds services among faculty.

This was the first year that the Ombuds Office began serving students with a focus on first-year and residential students. To accomplish this, the Ombuds Office created intake and issue tracking processes focused on student needs. To spread the word, the Ombuds Office conducted outreach to Student Government leaders, ASI, and AVPs in the Division of Student affairs, as well as participating in student-focused tabling events. The office also conducted workshops for students and staff in Housing and Residential Education, peer mentoring programs and a student club. A “Channel Our Potential” YouTube interview focused on a student-facing leader. Finally, the Ombuds Office distributed flyers to student-facing offices and added digital information boards across campus. Despite these efforts, however, student use continues to be extremely low.

To heighten awareness of the Ombuds Office, we continued to conduct extensive outreach and educational events on nearly a weekly basis. Nonetheless, the number of confidential visitors to the Ombuds Office continued to decline in Academic Year 2022-2023. This decline may be attributed to limited in-person interactions generally on campus (pandemic and office move), a general lack of familiarity with the office (thus, few referrals), and the limited options for campus-wide communications that could highlight the existence and value of ombuds services.

Ombuds Mission

Enable individuals and organizations to manage conflict effectively, collaborate equitably, and navigate policy purposefully.

Ombuds Vision

Build a campus resilient in conflict, inclusive of diverse backgrounds and experiences, and skillful in affecting change.

Ombuds Values

- Respect confidentiality and protect anonymity. (Confidentiality)
- Act independently of organizational obligation and control. (Independence)
- Serve all without preference. (Impartiality).
- Exercise no authority or control over University processes or outcomes. (Informality)
- Honor individual choice regarding actions to be taken. (Autonomy)

Ombuds Tools

The University Ombuds uses coaching, facilitation, mediation, consulting, skills development, and cross-functional connections to accomplish the Ombuds Mission.

In furtherance of the Ombuds Vision and Values, the University Ombuds listens without partiality or judgment, creates no personally-identifying records, explores concerns outside formal processes, seeks and shares information, assists visitors in connecting with appropriate resources and processes (internal and external), and discusses options for dispute resolution, conflict management, and orderly and responsible systems change, within the parameters of the laws and policies governing the University.

What do people discuss with the Ombuds?

Concern Categories

Categorizing issues raised in Ombuds visits is based on assessments by the University Ombuds after an individual visit is complete. Visitors to the Ombuds Office are not asked to categorize their own concerns. The categories are applied sequentially; therefore, they should all be considered to possess equal weight. The following Concern Categories (CC) are used in university settings.

1. Interpersonal Conflict: represents a peer-to-peer conflict.
2. Exercise of Authority: captures displays of authority from the top down, bottom up, or laterally.
3. Legal and Policy Application: questions on how a policy should apply, not necessarily the climate the policy creates.
4. Information Flow and Communication: addresses unclear communication or how information is distributed (e.g., email communication).
5. Organizational Priorities and Strategy: includes unit, department, office, and University.
6. Employment Status and Benefits: includes in-grade pay progression issues and accommodations
7. Workplace Processes: Distinct from outcomes, the focus is on how formal and informal matters or issues are moved forward. It includes the absence of an established policy. For example, when a procedure is supposed to be followed but is not. This category is more discrete and includes policy implementation.

8. Workplace Climate: policies and practices that create persistent Conflict, broader than Workplace Processes (CC7).
9. Other

Type	Concern Category	AY 19/20 ¹	AY 20/21	AY 21/22	AY 22/23
1	Interpersonal Conflict		35	19	16
2	Exercise of Authority		36	24	33
3	Legal and Policy Application		29	19	19
4	Information Flow and Communication		43	29	28
5	Organizational Priorities and Strategy		15	12	14
6	Employment Status and Benefits		18	7	14
7	Workplace Processes		28	17	14
8	Workplace Climate		26	12	22
9	Other		11	6	0
Number of concerns raised		258	241	145	160
Number of visits		137	101	57	62
Repeat visitors		37	39	0	23
# of visitors that raised two or more concerns		101	50	46	54
% of visitors that raised two or more concerns		74%	50%	81%	87%
Facilitations & Mediations conducted		4	12	4	3

¹ Concern categories for the Academic Year (AY) 2019-2020 were expanded in subsequent years. Therefore, only totals are listed for AY 19/20.

In the Moment Concerns

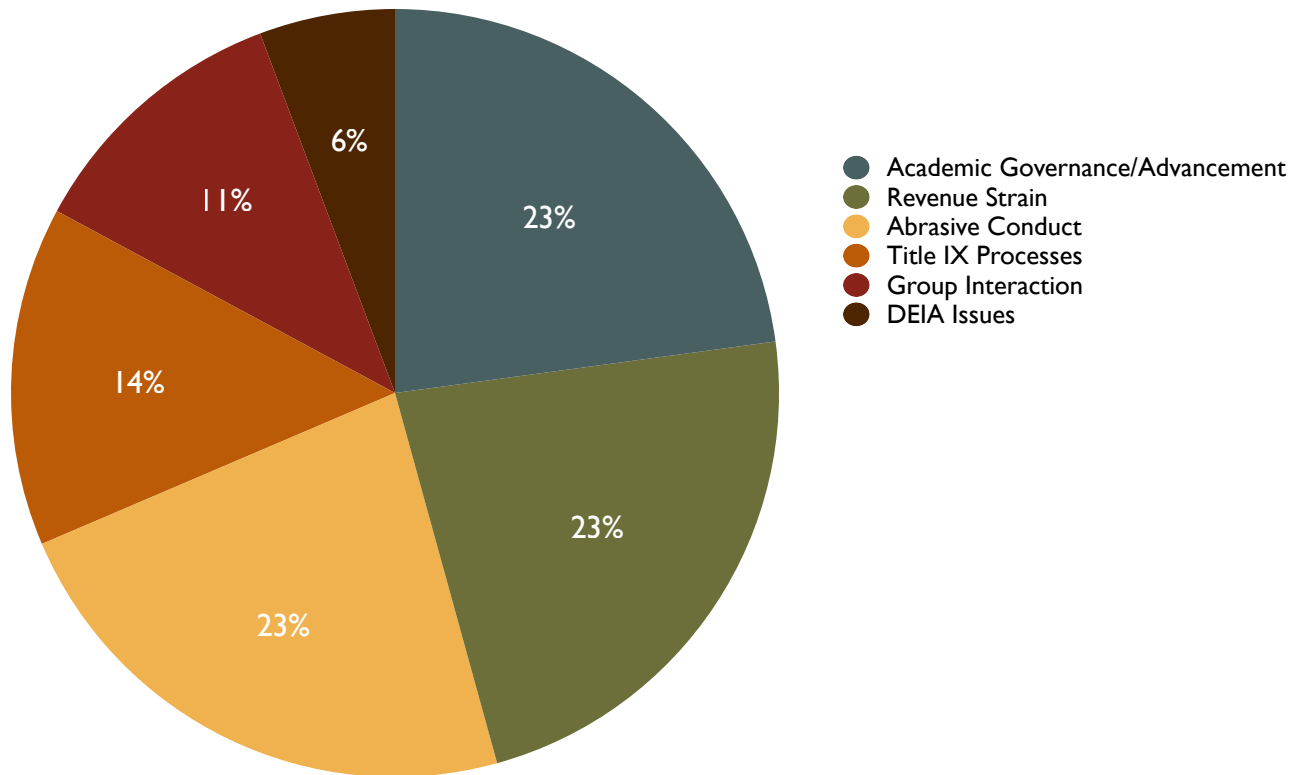
During AY 22/23, the ombuds office began keeping track of “in the moment” concerns for employees. In the moment concerns are topical themes that arise from discussions with visitors and reflect more specific issues beyond the standard nine reporting categories. These concerns were grouped into six categories as follows and are applied sequentially; therefore, they should all be considered to possess equal weight.

1. Group Interaction: Teams, teaching challenges
2. Academic Governance/Advancement: academic governance, academic senate governance, transparency, chair authority, leadership strain, small units, faculty/administration relations
3. Revenue Strain: Staffing shortages, hiring, enrollment strain, retention challenges, burnout

4. Abrasive Conduct: Working styles, abrasive leadership, microaggressions, feedback, bullying
5. DEIA Issues
6. Title IX Processes

Categories	In the Moment Concerns	AY 22/23
1	Group Interaction	4
2	Academic Governance/Advancement	8
3	Revenue Strain	8
4	Abrasive Conduct	8
5	DEIA Issues	2
6	Title IX Processes	5
Number of concerns raised		35

In the Moment Concerns



Finally, the Ombuds Office does not track the time spent with individual visitors or making inquiries about issues. However, most individual visits take roughly 75-minutes on average. The Ombuds Office also does not track the "resolution" of issues as a resolution is a highly subjective assessment and could create individually identifiable records.

Demographic Data

When individuals schedule an appointment with the Ombuds Office through the scheduling website, individuals are automatically directed to an intake form that asks for non-identifying background information. Completion of the intake form is voluntary.

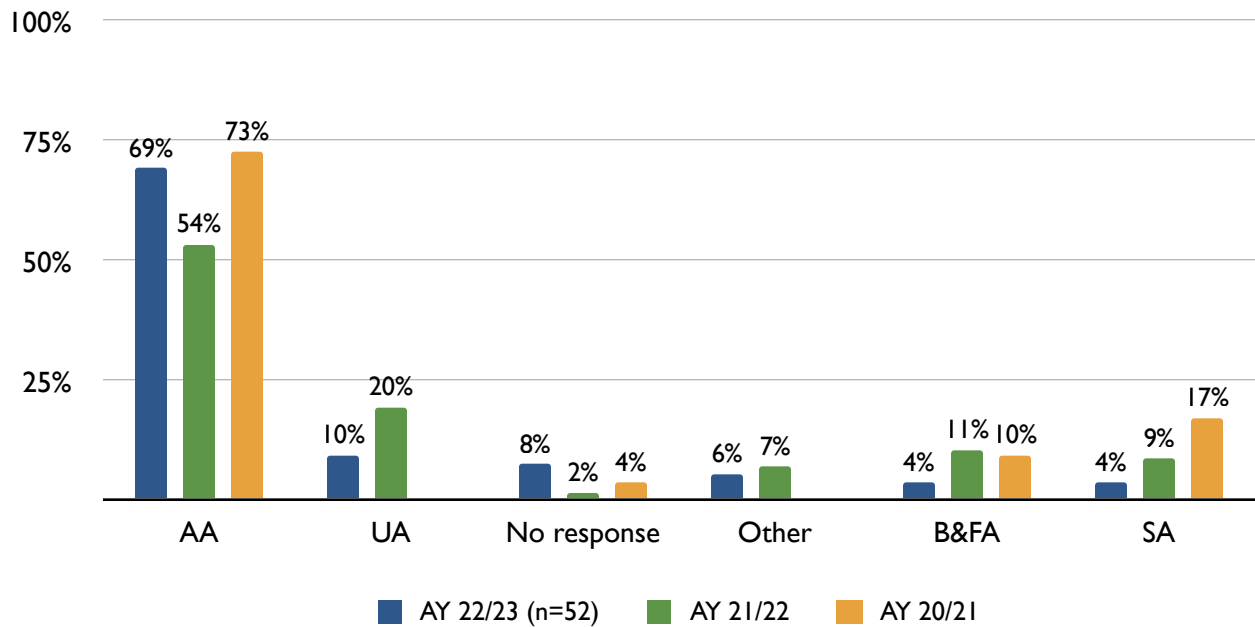
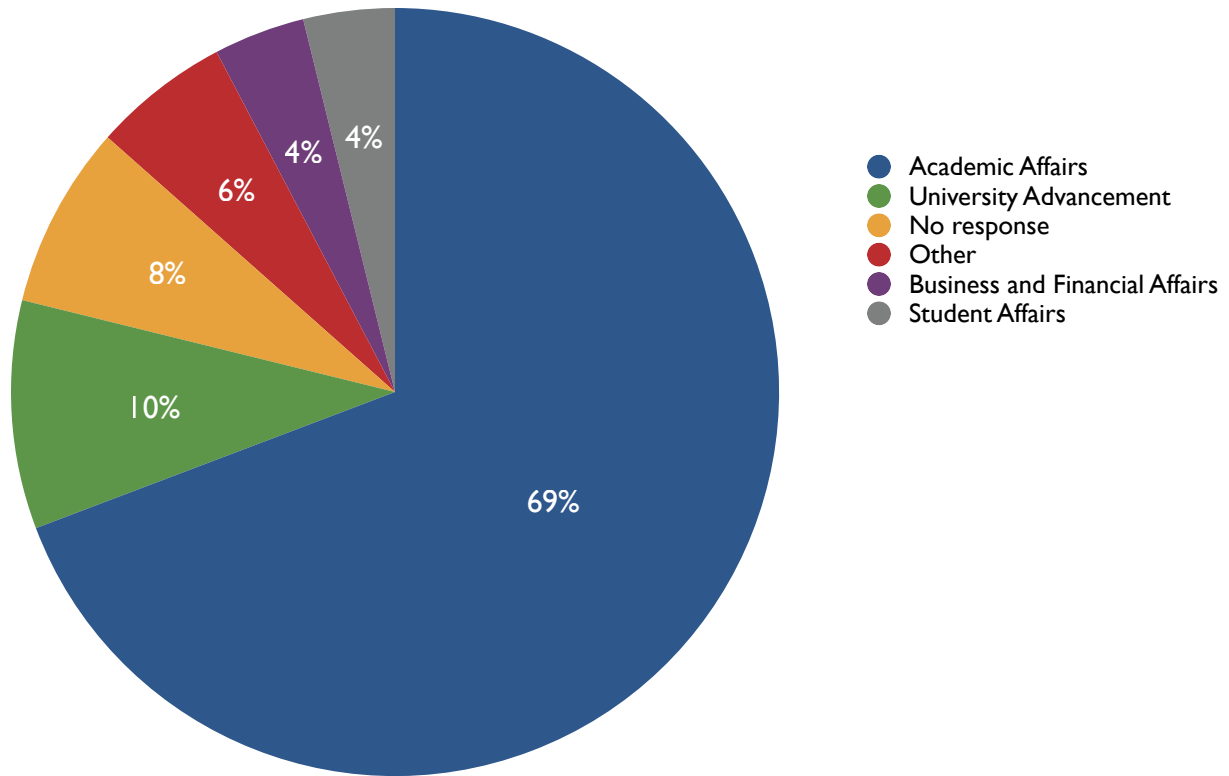
Below are statistics illustrating the employment status of Ombuds visitors, how long non-student visitors have worked for CSUCI, what organizational Divisions they come from, length of employment at CSUCI, and gender identity, race, and ethnicity as reported voluntarily. This information is included to help assess patterns and potential needs for informal conflict management support.

Regarding demographic questions, potential visitors are told: "Gender/gender identity, sexuality, race, and Hispanic/Latinx/Chicanx status help the Ombuds office identify patterns or clusters of concern regarding conflict and the experiences of conflict at CSUCI. Answering these questions is optional. In each case, you may choose 'other' and provide your own description. No personally identifiable information is correlated with your answers. Individual answers will not be shared with anyone. Your answers will not be considered in determining how the Ombuds office will help, except to the extent you authorize it."

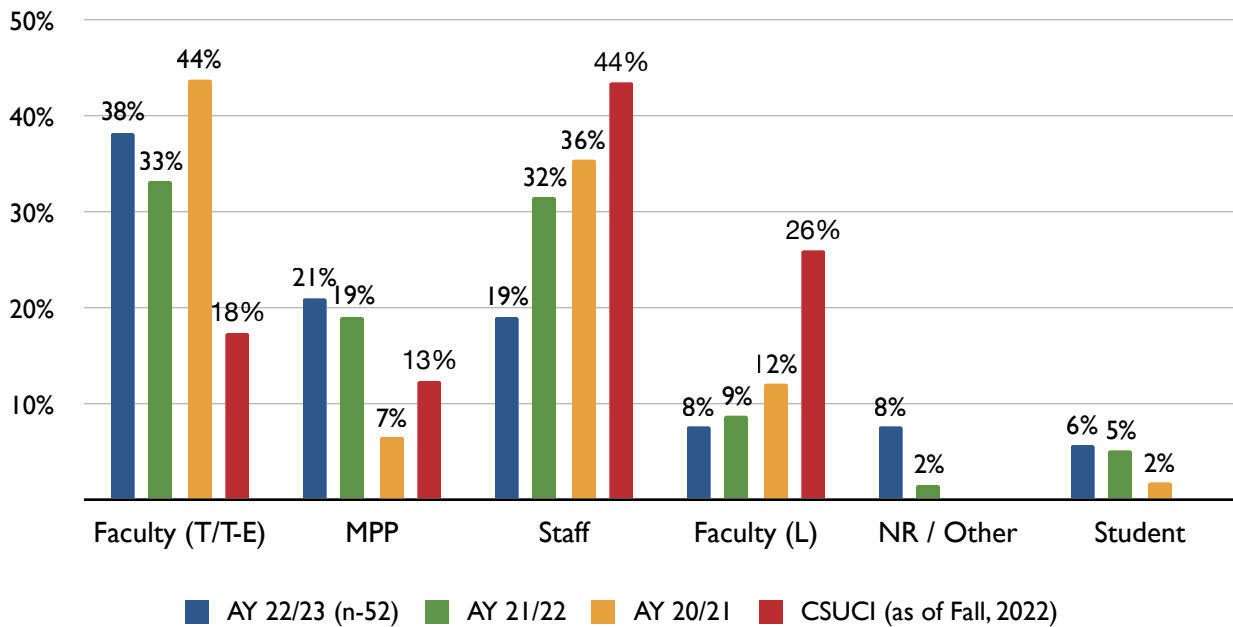
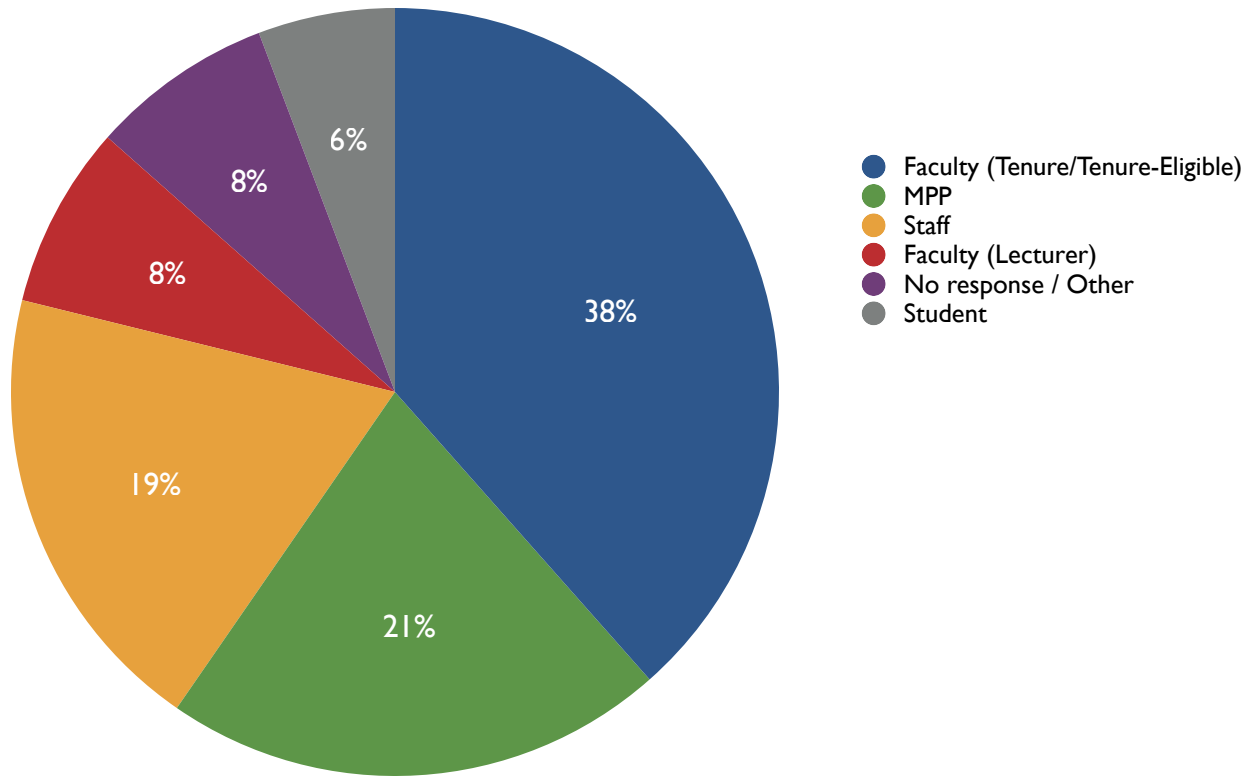
Employment category information is self-reported when an individual makes an appointment online. Providing information is voluntary. Some individuals were counted more than once because they sought Ombuds services on more than one occasion for the same issue(s). However, intake information is not linked to specific meetings, so duplicate information cannot be deconflicted. Additionally, a small percentage of individuals may have completed intake forms but did not complete a visit (cancellation or no-show). Nonetheless, these charts provide a reasonable breakdown of what types of employees seek Ombuds support.

For reporting purposes, Academic Year (AY) 2022/23 n=52. Some reporting categories have been combined to facilitate clearer data presentation and/or protect identities. Additionally, where available, CSUCI-wide data is provided for comparative purposes and reflects data collected for the Fall 2021 survey.

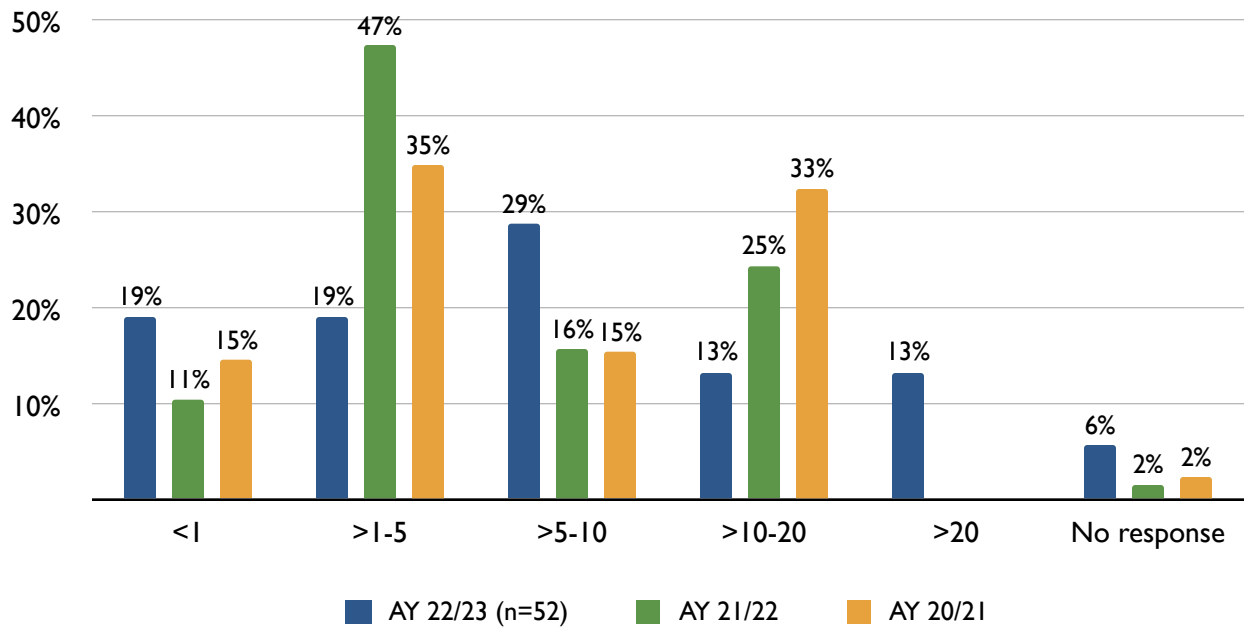
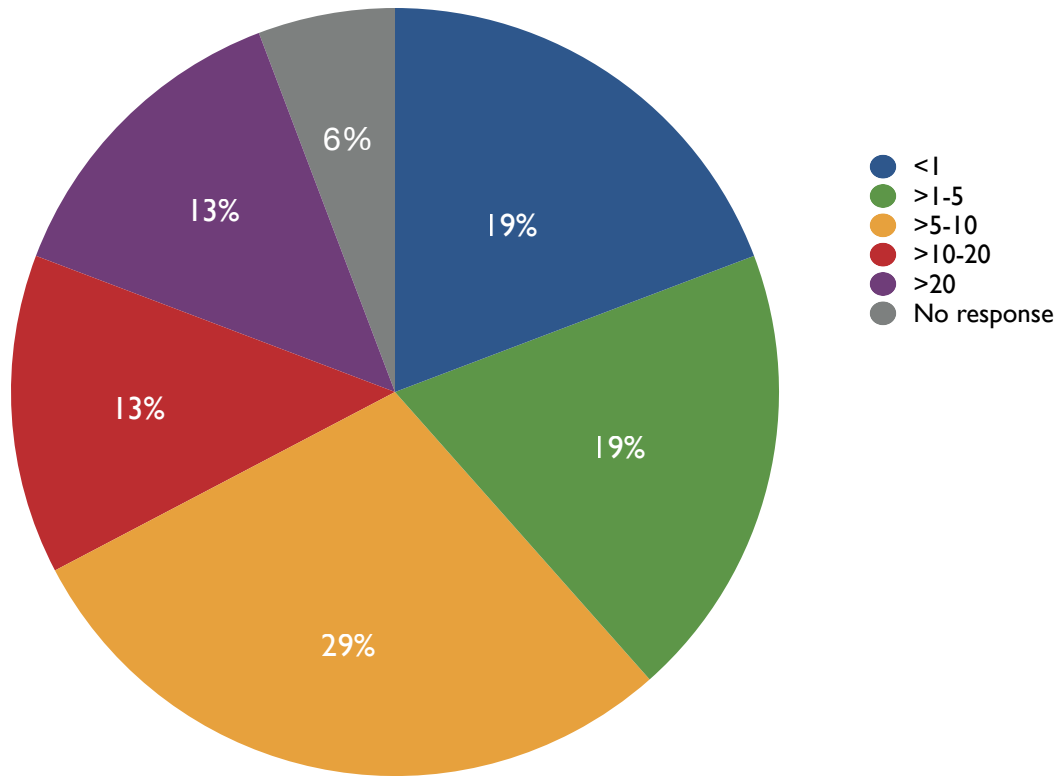
What is your CSUCI Division Affiliation?



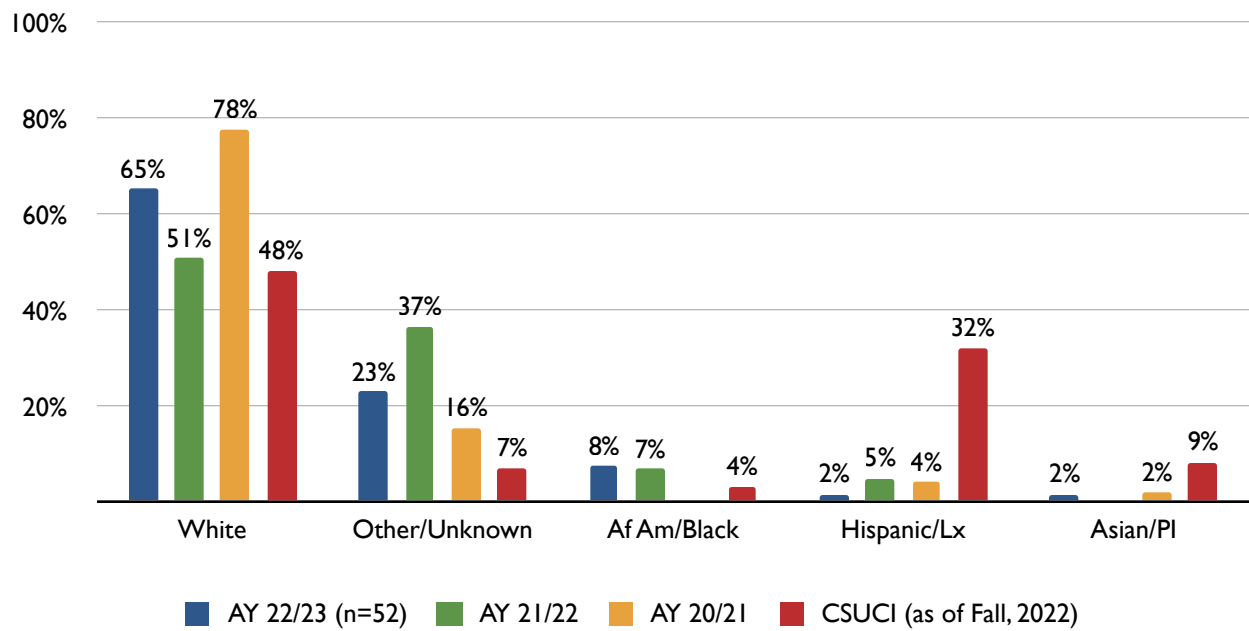
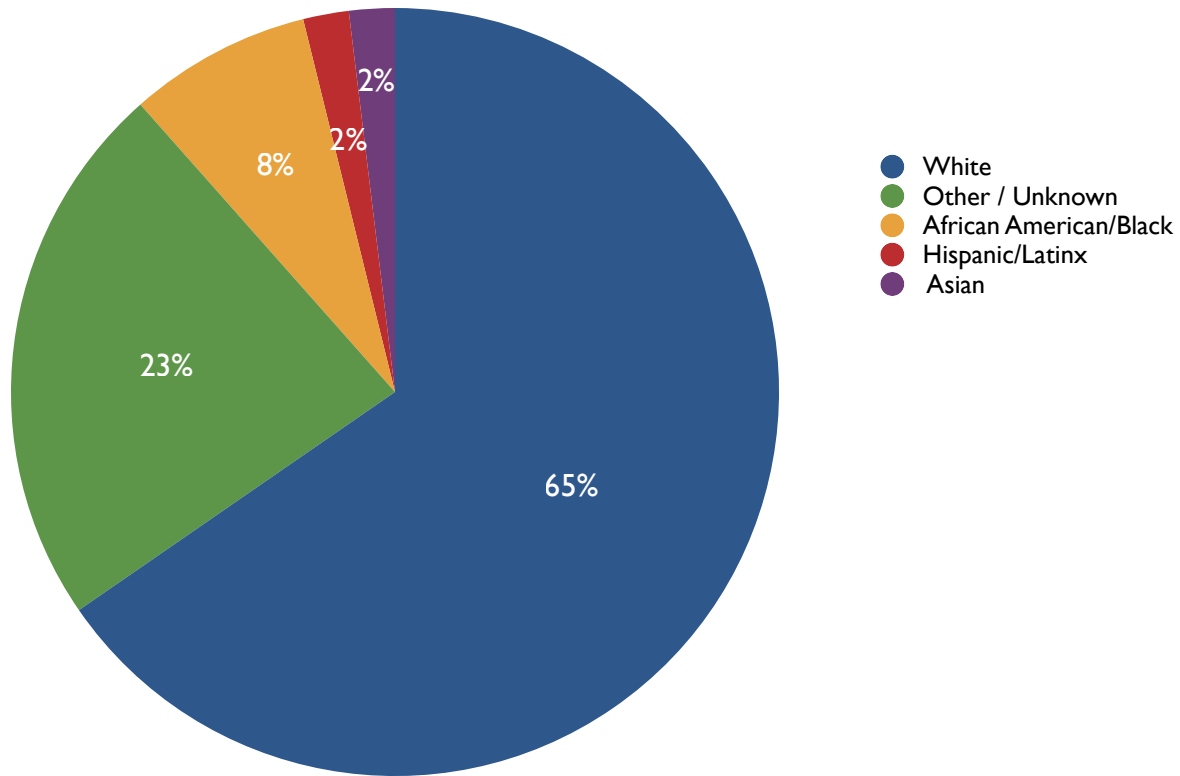
What is your CSUCI connection?



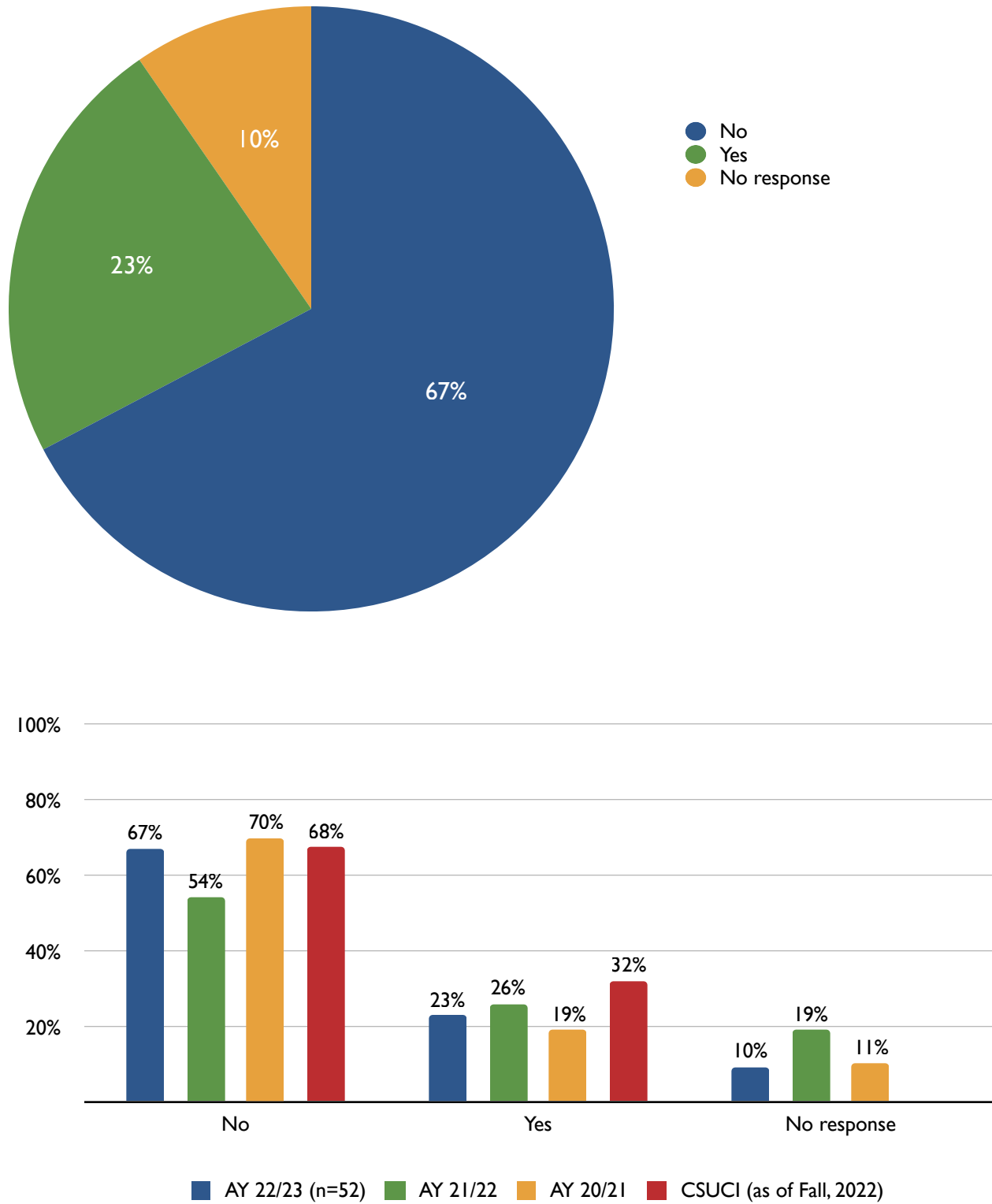
How long have you been with CSUCI (total years in any role)?



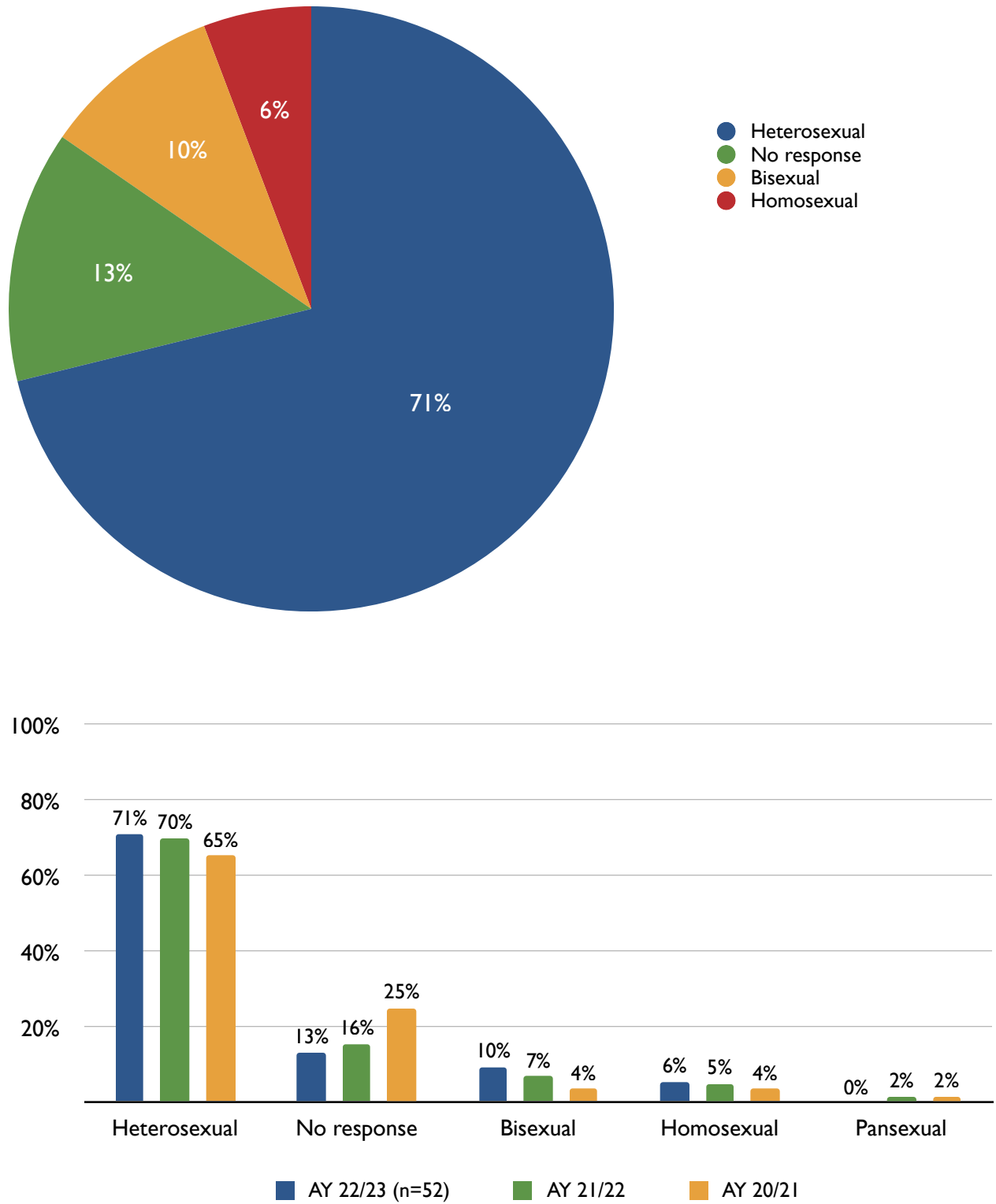
What is your racial identity?



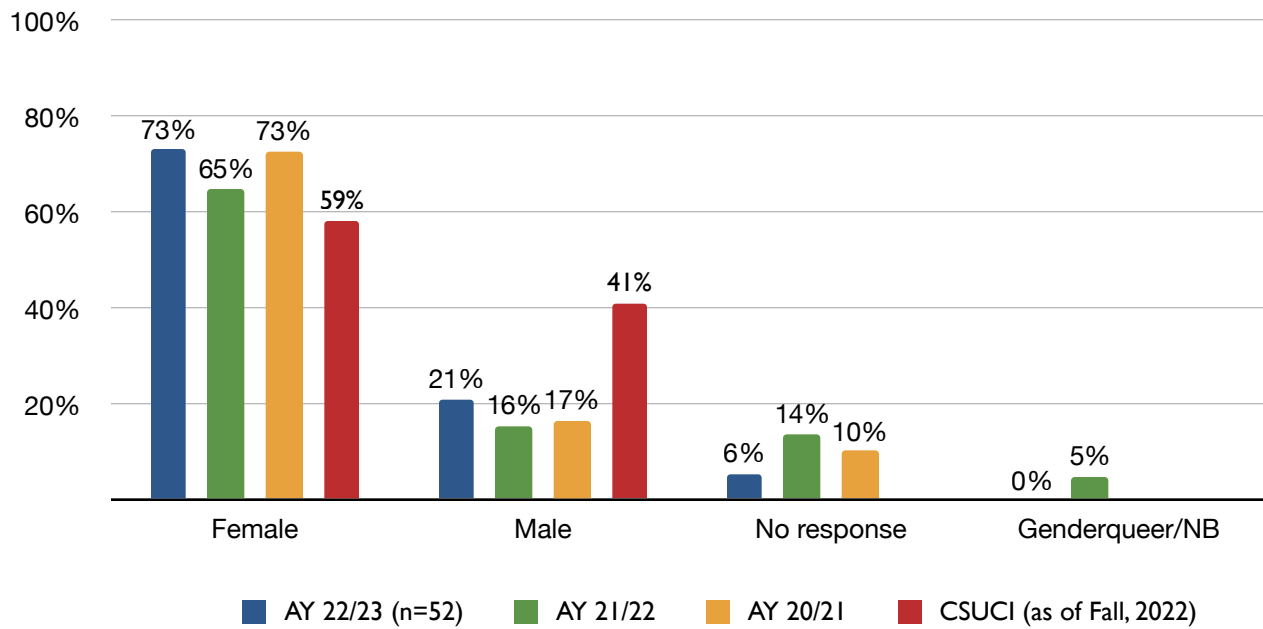
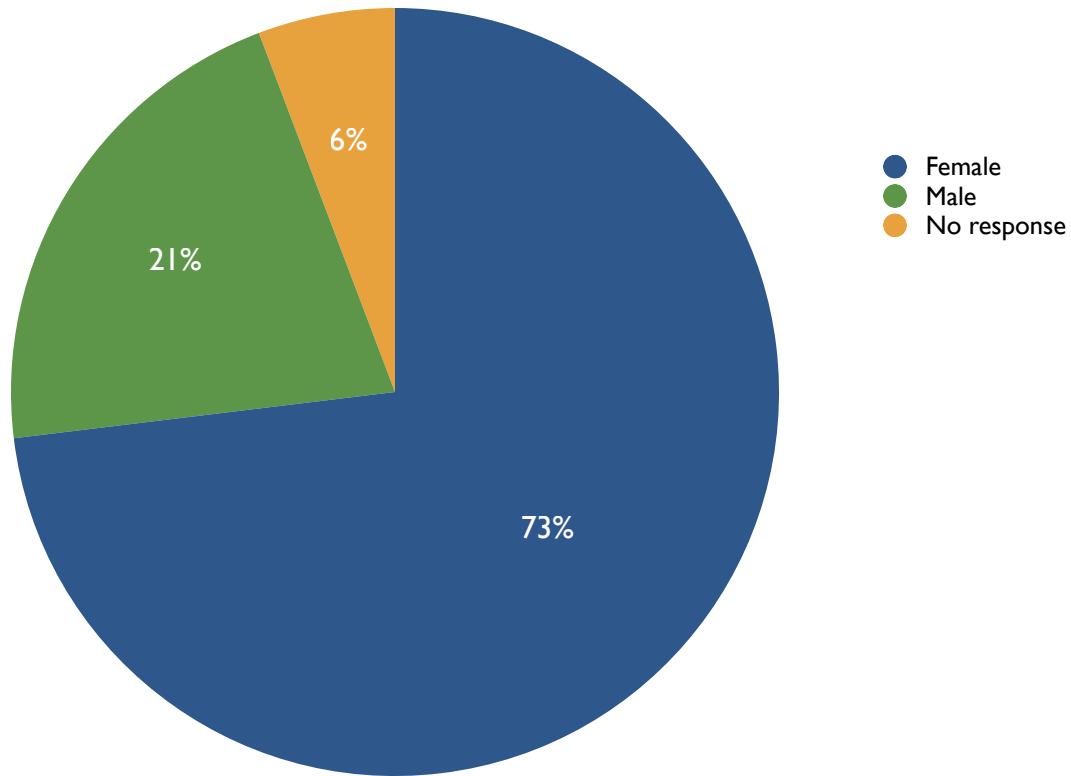
Do you consider yourself Hispanic/Latinx?



What is your sexual orientation?



What is your gender/gender identity?



Other Services

The Ombuds Office continued to employ various methods to get the word out and establish trust in using the Ombuds service.

Service Area	AY 19/20	AY 20/21	AY 21/22	AY 22/23
Facilitation / Mediation	4	12	4	3
Education and Outreach Events	76	50	52	45
Totals	80	62	56	48

Summary of Outreach and Education

- Coffee & Collaboration
 - Total virtual participants: 71
 - Total virtual sessions: 33
 - Total live participants: 6
 - Total live sessions: 2
- Channel Our Potential videos: 1
- Cross-Campus Collaboration courses taught: 2 (1 with co-teacher from SLO)
- IOA Webinar on raising issues to leadership—100+ attendees
- NEWO: 2 (1 in person)
- CI Connect cohort 3 liaison
- “Ombuds Corner” articles for Staff Council “In the Loop” newsletter: 5
- CFA Leadership
- New office open house
- In-Person workshops—
 - HRE RAs and DAs
 - Peer mentors
 - Lab techs
 - TLi
 - SACNAS student group
- Faculty Development tabling events: 2
- Updated graphics & handouts to include student services—posted paper and virtually on campus
- Served as a judge for a mediation competition for COMM class
- Ombuds presentation for COMM class

- Developed referral “got conflict?” “tagline” for signature blocks and webpages
- Professional outreach
 - Cal Caucus Planning Committee, Awards Chair
 - IOA Board of Directors, Advocacy Committee Co-Chair
 - IOA Board of Directors, Community Connections presenter (2)
 - CSU Ombuds Roundtable Planning Committee
 - West Coast Mid-Career Ombuds Group organizer & host
 - Consultant for ombuds programs in development in CSU
 - Ombuds Book Club
 - OSLAC (Ombuds at Small and Liberal Arts Colleges)
 - CSU Racial Equity Alliance: Navigating Political Resistance to Racial Equity
 - Keynote speaker for National Conflict Resolution Day event hosted by Virginia Commonwealth University
- Campus Committees
 - PACIE
 - CEAR
 - CDCG
 - Title IX Manager Search advisory committee
 - CLC MPP Facilitator
- Student Services
 - 3 students as visitors
 - SACNAS workshop – dealing with Subtle Acts of Exclusion (microaggressions)
 - Peer mentors workshop – de-escalation
 - Student Senate presentations: 2
 - Student tabling events: 1

Quantitative Feedback

Following meetings with the Ombuds that were scheduled through the Ombuds office’s website, visitors received a brief survey instrument several hours after their appointment. Half of the individuals who were sent surveys in AY 22/23 responded (n=26). Survey participants were asked to use a Likert-type scale of strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, disagree to answer four fundamental questions:

1. It was easy to make contact with the Ombuds Office.
2. The University Ombuds discussed all issues raised or offered to meet again.
3. I was satisfied with the manner in which the University Ombuds handled my issue(s), including respectfulness and listening.
4. I left the University Ombuds with an understanding of options to address my issue(s).

For questions 1 through 3, each respondent “strongly agreed” with the statement. For question 4, ninety-six percent of respondents marked “strongly agreed” while one participant marked “somewhat agree.”

Please indicate how important the following issues are in working with the Ombuds office ...	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	N/A
My identity should be protected	22	3			1
What I say should be protected	21	3	1		1
The ombuds should be unbiased	23	2			1
The ombuds should be able to talk to anyone	25	1			
The ombuds should be independent from all university and external authorities	21	4	1		

Using the same Likert-type scale as before, survey respondents were also asked about how important some issues were in working with the Ombuds office.

In addition to closed-ended questions, respondents were given a multiple choice question stating, “Before working with the University Ombuds, I considered ... (check all that apply)” followed by:

- Not talking to anyone about my issue(s)
- Giving up and remaining dissatisfied
- Leaving the University
- Filing a grievance or complaint
- Something else

Before working with the University Ombuds, I considered ...	AY 22/23	AY 21/22
Not talking to anyone about my issue(s)	15	17
Giving up and remaining dissatisfied	6	11
Leaving the University	4	9
Filing a grievance or complaint	3	10
Something else	4	6

Qualitative Feedback

Finally, survey respondents were given the opportunity to provide qualitative feedback. The following represent a cross-section of responses. Some feedback is not included, or redacted, as it could have led to identification of the individual.

I think the ombuds is great! However, it would be nice if they could remain completely confidential even in cases that may require mandated reporting. It would help if they could ... not have to report directly to Title IX. This would help with getting a neutral perspective and discussing options on what to do.

[N]o matter how small the challenge, I feel comfortable coming to meet you for support.

I feel very satisfied. I ... felt more confident about my actions to address the situation.

I was pleased with our interaction, received helpful suggestions, and my conflict was resolved successfully.

Mr. Patterson ... helped me come up with the best solution possible while making me feel safe and supported.

It was good to discuss all the options and explore a variety of situations based on my experience. While people obviously would appreciate anonymity, I feel like it might be helpful to offer the option of having a discussion summary or something of the sort that people can opt into receiving for their own reference.