

## **Student Ombuds Services 2018-19 Annual Report**

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Assistant Vice Provost/Student Ombuds

- Student Ombuds Services provides confidential, impartial and informal assistance to address issues of concern, and support to address conflict management, prevention and resolution. The Ombuds advocates for fair processes and empowers students to navigate their NC State experience.
- Student Ombuds Services provides confidential consultations to faculty, staff, administration and parents on a variety of student life issues in support of their roles to promote student success. Additionally, the Student Ombuds helps students, faculty and staff resolve conflicts in productive ways and regularly makes recommendations to campus leaders to help improve student success and organizational excellence.
- Demand for Student Ombuds Services continues to increase. 629 cases were handled by the Student Ombudsperson during the 2018-19 academic year resulting in 1535 total contacts. This represents a 74% increase in cases and a 75% increase in total contacts, largely in part to responding to Pack Essentials applications and to a lesser degree the outreach following Hurricane Florence.
- Responded to calls to the Wolfpack Response Line after Hurricane Florence. Served as a point of contact for students who were experiencing challenges post-storm. Additionally responded to calls after snow storm and assisted students/faculty with impacts to their finals exams.

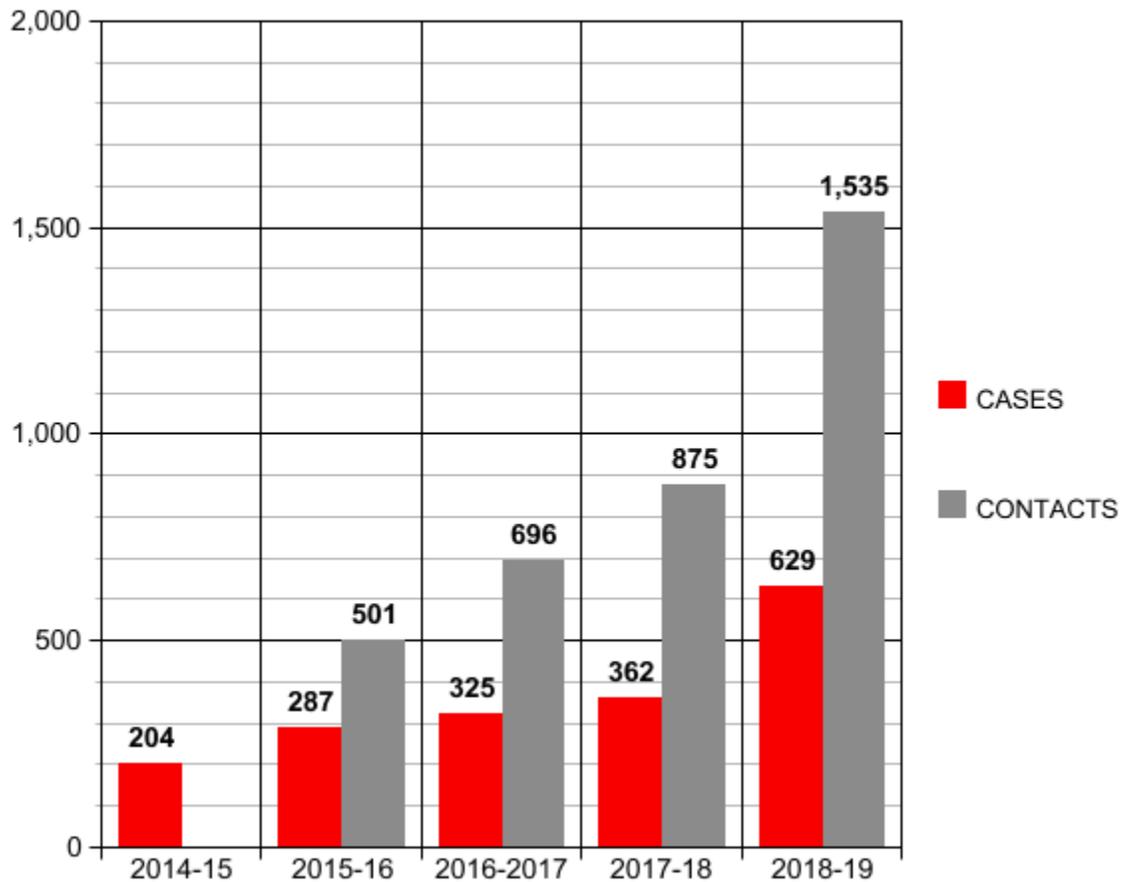
### **Financial Ombuds – Pack Essentials**

- Served as an active member on the Pack Essentials steering committee and helped lead the campus efforts to support students experiencing food, housing and/or financial insecurity.
- Worked with campus departments to update their listings on the Pack Essentials website and expanded the resources listed with an emphasis on making the website more student friendly.
- Worked with DASA, Financial Aid, University Dining and Student Government to develop protocols for the administration of the Student Emergency Fund, Meal Scholarships and Pack Meal Share programs.
- Created a common application for Pack Essentials to facilitate a comprehensive review of the students' needs and matched them with appropriate resources. In most cases, I was able to connect with students on the same day they submitted their applications and provided resources in a timely manner.

and made appropriate connections to available resources. Reviewed 305 of the 356 Pack Essentials applications submitted in 2018-19 (Financial Aid reviewed 51 of the 100 applications submitted after Hurricane Florence).

- Student Emergency Fund – 92 awards totaling \$42,735
  - Meal Plan Scholarships – 23 valued at approximately \$24,205
  - Meal Share program – 2727 meals shared with students
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- Served as consultant for the Office of International Services/Global Engagement and College of Veterinary Medicine to help them think through how to serve students who were experiencing food, housing and/or financial hardships.
  - Assisted campus department that wanted to sponsor two students and their families during the holidays that were impacted by Hurricane Florence. Identified families and facilitated getting items to them.
  - Assisted several students who were victims of fraud and helped connect them to appropriate resources.
  - Provided outreach to TRIO students and others receiving SNAP benefits that were impacted by government shutdown.
  - Provided limited outreach to students who submitted Pack Essentials applications to alert them to campus jobs, resources and other opportunities.

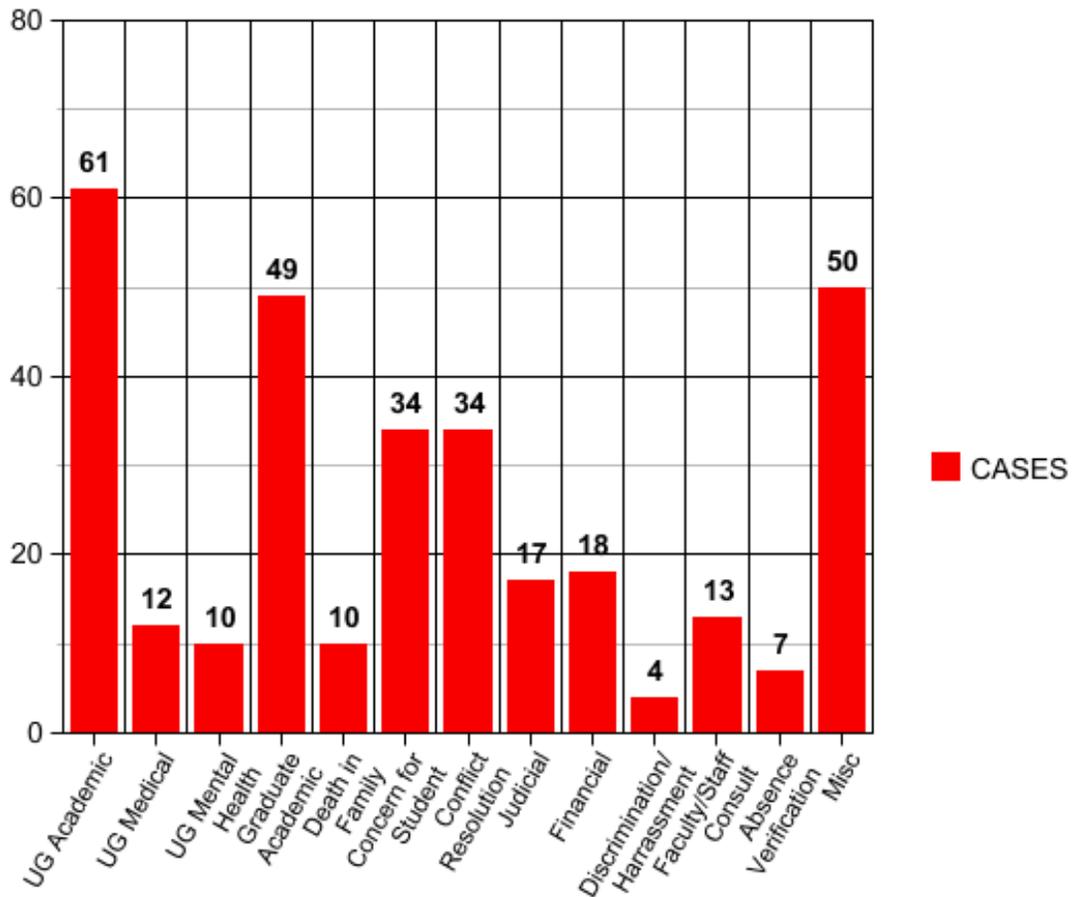
### Student Ombuds Services Cases (since inception)



- 74% increase in cases over 2017-18.
- 75% increase in number of contacts over 2017-18.
- Significant growth was attributed to Pack Essentials applications and outreach after Hurricane Florence.

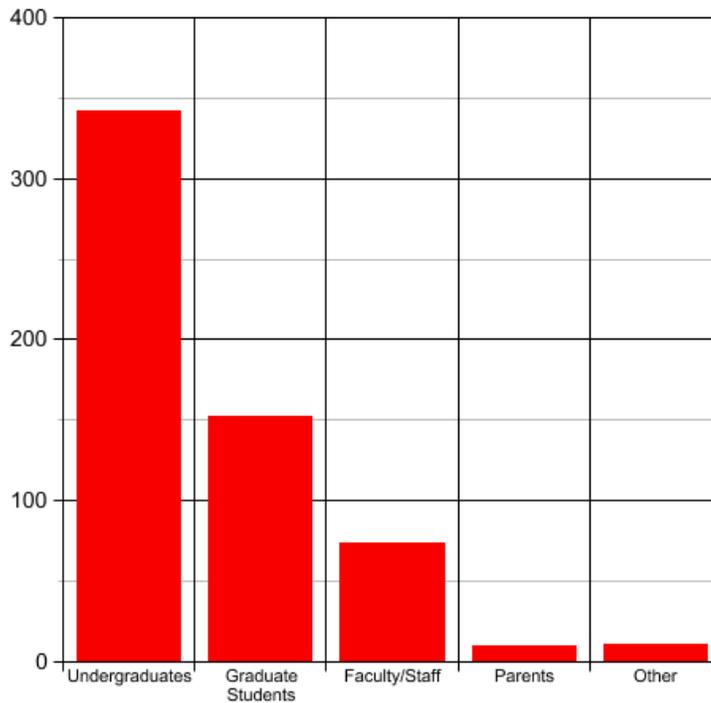
Note: Each visitor to the office constitutes a unique case (If there are multiple students involved in the same situation, collectively they are recorded as one case). A contact refers to each interaction with a visitor and any contacts made on their behalf to a campus entity.

## Types of Cases



- NOTE: Graph does not include Pack Essentials applications.
- General Academic Concerns include grade disputes, concerns regarding treatment by professors and related academic policies.
- UG Academic (medical) often involved requests for assistance after some traumatic medical incident (car accident, difficult diagnosis, etc.)
- UG Academic (mental health) often involved requests for assistance during or after psychological distress (stress, hospitalization, etc.)
- Most judicial cases involved students wanting to better understand their rights within the student judicial process and possible consequences should they be found responsible for a violation of the code of conduct. Academic integrity cases continue to be the largest number of these cases.
- Most absence verification cases were handled by the AV Officer. Cases handled by SOS typically involved more complicated cases that required additional follow-up or support.

## Visitor Status



- Most contacts from faculty/staff were to consult on a student related issue or share a concern about a student.

## Selected Cases & Recommendations

Recommendations are shared with units, departments, colleges and administrators on an ongoing basis. *(Note: This is a partial list and efforts have been taken to maintain confidentiality for the visitor. More specific issues and concerns are shared with the appropriate administrators per the Student Ombuds' charter).*

- Surfaced issue to graduate school regarding several graduate students who received unconditional passes on their doctoral defenses and then were expected to rewrite significant parts of their dissertation and or conduct further research.
- Provided support for student living in public spaces and helped identify transitional housing until student could move in to fall assignment.
- Reached out to OIS with perception that TA decisions were being made based on international status. Helped surface the concern to the Graduate School.
- Facilitated discussions between graduate student and PI to help open the lines of communication and address concerns that had been raised.

- Met with Office of Student Conduct, Division of Academic and Student Affairs and the Graduate School to share feedback about their operations and discuss student trends.
- Surfaced safety concern to library staff and Campus Police after becoming aware of concern on social media.
- Served as point of contact for family whose daughter was dealing with serious health concern at the same time as the family was dealing with Hurricane Florence.
- Surfaced concern about staff member who had damage to personal property in campus apartment during Hurricane. Recommended department formalize language in training materials and offer letter about need for renter's insurance.
- Facilitated discussion between several pairs of graduate students who were experiencing conflicts.
- Assisted graduate student who was being blackmailed with on-line video by someone overseas. Helped connect to appropriate resources.
- Worked with Graduate School and Human Resources to gain clarity on whether graduate students were eligible for FMLA. Participated in conversations about a possible medical leave policy for graduate students.
- Advised faculty member on possible solutions to address student payroll issue that impacted students participating in special internship program.
- Shared concern with appropriate campus leaders about graduate student stipends and impact on students' food/housing security.
- Provided consultation to campus department that was having an issue with a student employee. Advised on policies and practices that would help support student development and meet unit's objectives.

**Assessment:**

- Based on a survey of visitors to Student Ombuds Services: (23% response rate)
  - 93% indicated that scheduling was easy and convenient
  - 94% reported being able to meet with Ombuds in a timely manner
  - 96% said the Ombuds was courteous and helpful
  - 92% indicated Ombuds was objective throughout interactions
  - 92% reported the Ombuds was knowledgeable of institutional policies and procedures.
  - 93% trust the Ombuds to maintain confidentiality
  - 92% would refer others to Student Ombuds Services
  - Selected comments from the survey included:

- “The Student Ombuds Services is great! Such a great resource for students on campus.”
- “Quick response, kind and immediately offered to reach out to my son.”
- “Mike was very respectful and helpful in aiding me in properly communicating with my advisor and my department”
- “...helped quickly resolve my issue and make it possible for me to take a makeup test.”
- “Didn’t really help me resolve my issue, but nobody at the university was able to assist me toward resolving the issue conclusively.”
- “I enjoyed working with Mike. He was good about carefully entering the conversation and allowing myself and the other person talk things out.”
- “It was very helpful – sometimes it is just helpful to discuss an issue, even if it is not resolved.”
- “More marketing...about who they are and how they can help.”
- “As a staff member, Ombuds has been one of the greatest resources I have to provide students with support...”
- “Professional and confidential”
- “Excellent—for multiple cases, the response has always been timely, supportive, and affirming for student care.”

### **Pack Essentials:**

- Based on a survey of students who completed a Pack Essentials application: (19% response rate)
  - 97% indicated Ombuds followed up within 24 hours of submitting application
  - 95% felt their concerns were listened to and were treated with respect
  - 97% felt comfortable talking to the Ombuds
  - 97% felt Ombuds was knowledgeable about campus and community resources
  - 97% felt Ombuds provided options and appropriate resources to assist
  - 97% felt support was helpful and allowed them to focus on their success
- Selected comments from the survey included:
  - “Mike was extremely helpful and genuinely concerned for me. He was also relatable. I didn’t feel like a number in a crowd of many. This is another reason why I’m grateful for NCSU.”

- "...I filled out the Pack Essentials form and got a phone call less than a half hour later, and had meals added to my account by lunch the same day. It was incredibly fast."
- "Not very many people know about the website"