



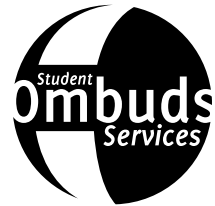
Student Ombuds Services  
Second Annual Summary Report  
July 1, 2011 - June 30, 2012

Prepared by:

Patricia Ponce, Ph.D.  
Student Ombuds

October 2012

## Annual Summary Report



### I. Introduction

This report covers the activities of the Cal Poly Office of Student Ombuds Services (SOS) from July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2012. During the period covered by this report, W. David Conn, D.Phil., served as Director of Student Ombuds Services, with Patricia Ponce, Ph.D., as Associate Ombuds. Effective January 1, 2012, Ponce became Student Ombuds, reporting directly to President Armstrong.

#### Mandate

The Student Ombuds Services office provides a confidential, impartial, independent and informal environment to the extent possible based on the laws and policies governing the office. The Student Ombuds Services office is a place where Cal Poly students can seek guidance regarding concerns, conflicts, complaints, or problems.

The Office operates under the International Ombudsman Association Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics. (see <http://www.ombudsassociation.org/about-us/mission-vision-and-values/iaa-best-practices-standards-practice>) The key elements of these standards and codes are the following:

*Confidential:* SOS holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence, and does not disclose one's identity or communications unless given permission to do so. The only exception to this privilege of confidentiality is where there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm to self or others. No permanent records are maintained other than general issue and demographic data for reporting trends.

*Informal:* SOS operates informally. All communications are "off the record." The Ombuds does not make any judgments or participate in any internal or external formal processes.

*Impartial:* SOS operates impartially. The Ombuds does not take sides in any issue. The Ombuds does not advocate on behalf of the student or the university but rather promotes fair and equitable processes and procedures.

*Independent:* SOS operates independently of administrative structures. The office reports to the University President.

#### Role of the Ombuds

Cal Poly's certified Ombuds is a resource person who *confidentially* listens to students' concerns off the record and helps them to explore different solutions. The Ombuds can mediate between parties providing both sides are willing participants. The office serves as a supplement and alternative to existing formal processes and services and offers an early warning mechanism that identifies trends and systemic concerns. Also, the office is informal and is not a university "office of notice."

### Process

Students voluntarily seek guidance from Student Ombuds Services. The office holds daily drop-in hours from 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon and also schedules appointments to best meet students' availability. Students may visit, call, or email the office; although students are informed that email is not a secure form of confidential communication and are encouraged to stop by the office or call for consultation.

### University Outreach

SOS has operated for two complete years of service. Students are increasingly becoming more aware of the office through the website, brochure, logo, marketing items and extensive outreach. Their increased familiarity has likely contributed to the marked growth in visitors to the office. Additionally, the Ombuds met with Deans, departments, student organizations and clubs, athletic teams, and large lecture classes in an effort to inform the campus community about SOS. Over 50 presentations were made reaching more than 3000 Cal Poly community members.

## **II. Service Statistics**

The year comparisons below demonstrate an overall increase in nearly all categories regarding visits to the Ombuds Office. The increase may be attributed to a greater awareness on campus about the office and services. It is less likely that there are more problems and concerns on campus but rather that students are utilizing campus resources in greater numbers in an effort to have their needs met. Student resourcefulness in this manner will likely support their academic success goals and satisfaction with the Cal Poly experience.

<b>Comparisons</b>	<b>2010 - 2011</b>	<b>2011 - 2012</b>	<b>Change</b>
Total number of Cases	64	157	Up 145%
Total number of Issues	70	186	Up 166%
Total number Undergraduates	57	124	Up 118%
Total number Graduate Students	9	11	Up 22%
Total number Parents	Not recorded	22	
Total Contacts	96	213	Up 122%

The tables that follow illustrate in more detail the individuals served, number of cases, and types of issues discussed. The data show a substantial increase in the number of students utilizing the services. The definitions below describe the different types of contacts. Any inconsistencies or incomplete tables are due to missing data, since all information is voluntarily noted by students on intake forms.

Total Contacts - refers to all contacts made with the Office of Student Ombuds Services including phone calls, emails, face to face visits, and repeat visits regarding the same or different issues.

Cases - are when issues are discussed and options are explored and offered.

Follow-ups - are repeat discussions with a visitor regarding the same issue. The Follow-up is tabulated as a contact and not as an additional case.

General inquiries are described as phone calls, emails, or a face to face visit in which inquiries are made about the office or in which a referral is made but a case is not recorded. Such general inquiries were not tabulated for this report.

### Individuals Served

Consistent with the undergraduate/graduate student ratio, the vast majority of individuals served were undergraduates. Women and men used the services in nearly equal numbers. Most of the cases were drawn from students in two professional colleges - CAFES and Engineering, and the College of Liberal Arts. However, the dominance of these colleges may simply be a reflection of their size.

<b>Individuals Served</b>	<b>Summer 2011</b>	<b>Fall 2011</b>	<b>Winter 2012</b>	<b>Spring 2012</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Undergraduates	19	37	28	40	124
Graduate Students	2	3	3	3	11
Women	4	17	20	21	62
Men	10	22	11	22	65
CAFES	2	4	8	11	25
COB		6	2	3	11
CAED		2	3	3	8
COE	4	7	5	8	24
CLA	4	8	6	6	24
COSAM	1	8	4	8	21
Continuing Education			2	1	3
Parents	1	10	5	6	22
<b>Total Cases</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>157</b>

### Patterns of Office Use

*Contacts:* Most students visited the office in person for consultation. Nearly one quarter sought consultation over the phone. Since email is not a secure form of communication, few cases were addressed electronically. And a growing number of cases required follow-up communication.

<b>Contacts</b>	<b>Summer 2011</b>	<b>Fall 2011</b>	<b>Winter 2012</b>	<b>Spring 2012</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Office visits	13	32	24	35	104
Email	11	1	3	6	20
Phone	2	21	9	23	55
Follow-ups	2	14	2	16	34
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>213</b>

### Summary of Student Characteristics

*Ethnicity:* The overwhelming majority of individuals who utilized SOS and disclosed their ethnicity were White. This high proportion is reflective of the ethnic composition of the university. Asians were next in the frequency of use. Additionally, a large proportion of students opted not to disclose their ethnic identity.

Ethnicity	African Amer.	Amer. Indian	Asian	White	Filipino	Latin@	Middle Eastern	Pacific Islander	South Eastern	Other
Sum 11			1	5		1	2			
Fall 11			8	19		2				
Wtr 12	1		4	15		6				
Sp 12	2		3	18		5				
<b>Totals</b>	3		16	57		14	2			

*Class Level:* Most of the students who utilized SOS and disclosed their class level were Seniors. Freshmen and Junior students used the services next in frequency.

	Freshmen	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Grad. Stud.
Sum 2011		2	1	5	2
Fall 2011	7	6	8	13	3
Winter 2012	6	5	8	8	3
Spring 2012	14	5	6	9	3
<b>Totals</b>	27	18	23	35	14

### **III. Nature of Student Issues**

Listed below is a case breakdown according to “issue.” Consistent with the previous year (2010-2011), the most common issue raised by students involved grades. Two other recurrent issues had to do with advising and faculty-student interactions.

<b>Academic</b>	<b>Sum11</b>	<b>Fall 11</b>	<b>Wtr 12</b>	<b>Sp 12</b>	<b>Total</b>
a. Advising	8	7	7	6	28
b. Academic Dishonesty					
c. AP/DQ	2	3	2	4	11
d. Course content	1				1
e. Grades	1	12	10	6	29
f. Other students	1				1
g. Professor		9	9	9	27
h. Study Skills			5	2	7
i. Time Management			2	3	5
j. Other issue			1		1
<b>Administration</b>					
a. Accounting / Fees					
b. Admissions / Residency		1		1	2
c. Financial Aid	2	1	1	1	5

d. Housing on / off		6	1	1	8
e. Police / Parking		2	1	6	10
f. Policy clarification		1		2	3
g. Registration / Evaluations	4	5	2	4	15
h. Technology		2	1		3
i. Other issue					
<b>Student Services</b>					
a. Athletics				1	1
b. ASI / Rec Sports					
c. Career Services					
d. Clubs	1	2			3
e. Dining Services					
f. Health / Counseling	2	1			3
g. Legal services referral				2	2
h. Student Employment					
i. Student Life Issue		5	5	2	12
j. Other Issue	2				2
<b>University Environment</b>					
a. Accommodations					
b. Bullying Issues			1		1
c. Discrimination Issues			1	1	2
d. Disrespect / Hostile				1	1
e. Ethical Issues					
f. Facilities	1				1
g. Harassment Issues			1		1
h. Sexual Assault Issues				1	1
<b>Total Issues*</b>	26	57	50	53	186

\*Total number of issues may not equal totals in the aggregate summaries as some cases include multiple issues.

*Response Categories:* New in 2011 - 2012 is the tabulation of how the Ombuds responded to cases. Problem solving and the identification of options dominated followed by referrals to other campus resources.

<b>Response Categories</b>	<b>Summer 2011</b>	<b>Fall 2011</b>	<b>Winter 2012</b>	<b>Spring 2012</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Feedback & conflict coaching	3	11	11	8	33
Intervention	1	3	4	6	14
Mediation or facilitated meeting					
Policy clarification & options		2	1	5	8
Problem solving & options	15	30	22	27	94
Referral	14	23	24	30	91

*Learned about SOS:* Since SOS is relatively new to the university, understanding where and how students learned about the office can guide future marketing strategies. Students seem to benefit from electronic communications and campus referrals. Henceforth, SOS will continue sending direct student email and provide ongoing outreach to campus departments.

Where/how learn of office	Summer 2011	Fall 2011	Winter 2012	Spring 2012	Totals
Campus wide email	10	5	4	6	25
Campus referral	2	6	9	11	28
Class presentation		2	2	3	7
Club/org. outreach		1	1	5	7
Friend	1	5	4	3	13
Library	3	4			7
On-line/portal		4		5	9
Poster/signage				1	1
SOAR/WOW		3	2	2	7

#### **IV. Ombuds Professional Activities**

Professional development is a strong value of the office. The certified Ombuds is an active member of the International Ombudsman Association (IOA). Professional resources are available via the IOA website, active listserv and consultation with colleagues. The Ombuds attended the annual spring meeting in which discussions about student issues and varied office practices provided insights for SOS. The Cal Poly Student Ombuds also gave a presentation in a session on “Establishing Rapport,” and was a featured speaker at the “New Ombudsman Luncheon.”

The Ombuds has also been invited by the IOA Certification Committee to attend a writing workshop in February 2013 to review and revise IOA certification exam questions.

Additionally, the Cal Poly Ombuds has consistently attended local training workshops on mediation.

During the period of this report, the Ombuds participated in the Inclusive Excellence Council, the Multicultural Center Advisory Board, and the Student Affairs CARE Team.

Also, the Ombuds was recognized by the Status of Women Committee for Outstanding Service to the Cal Poly community.

## **V. Recommendations** (based on cases brought to the Ombuds)

1. The university should consider developing: a) a policy to address the number of finals a student can take in a given day to optimize student success; and b) a process for students to request alternative finals (day and time) when more finals are scheduled than the recommended daily number.
2. The university should consider developing a consistent and regular mechanism to inform and remind faculty of the Code of Ethics regarding respectful and confidential interactions/behaviors with students. See faculty handbook <http://www.academic-personnel.calpoly.edu/content/handbook/university>.
3. The university should consider developing a consistent and regular mechanism to inform and remind faculty of policies pertaining to attendance, grading and retention of student evaluation materials [e.g. Academic Resolutions AS-592-03/IC (excusable absences) and AS-247-87/SA&FBC (retention of exams and student access)].
4. The university should consider developing a university-wide policy for using waitlists and adding students to classes.
5. The university should consider developing a consistent and regular mechanism for informing students of academic policy changes and cancellations or changes in academic programs (e.g. policy changes page/link on the registrar's website).

## **VI. Conclusion**

I wish to thank Kelly Sebastian for her pleasant, prompt, and valuable administrative support.

I also want to acknowledge Dr. David Conn's support and collaboration during the formative stages of the Office.

I am grateful to the many campus departments, faculty, staff, and administrators who have worked with me in an effort to support students and offer solutions to concerns.

And most importantly, I want to thank the many students who have trusted me regarding their issues of concern. I appreciate their graciousness and fortitude.

---

Office of Student Ombuds Services  
California Polytechnic State University  
Kennedy Library, room 113  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407

---

Telephone: 805 756-1380  
Fax: 805 756-7142  
E-mail: [ombuds@calpoly.edu](mailto:ombuds@calpoly.edu)  
Website: [www.ombuds.calpoly.edu](http://www.ombuds.calpoly.edu)