

AFA Ombuds Summary of Observations and Aggregate Data -- November 2022

The AFA Ombuds provides informal, confidential problem-solving assistance to members of the AFA. I was appointed AFA Ombuds when the role was created in December 2019. Since then, a total of 23 individuals have contacted me for assistance.

Following is a summary of observations and aggregate case data. Because strict confidentiality is a key principle of practice for all organizational ombuds, this summary includes only general information that has been anonymized.

Organizational ombuds work includes a range of problem-solving and conflict management interventions that address both *individual* disputes and problems that appear to be *systemic* in nature.

Most of the cases I've received have involved *individual* disputes, i.e., AFA members seeking help with managing conflict with either another AFA member, or with a colleague or supervisor at their home institution. Invariably, in each case, the underlying concern was how to address the problem and minimize damage to the individual's professional reputation, career, or professional relationships.

Generally, *systemic issues* involve the policies, practices, or organizational norms that exist in an organization itself. In my AFA Ombuds role, while many inquirers perceived concerns about the norms, climate, and challenges of academia and their respective home institution, very few individuals sought assistance from me regarding *systemic concerns* about the AFA itself.

In every case, my primary role has been to help individuals clarify their concerns, identify their priorities, communicate clearly and effectively, and identify possible options for next steps in conflict situations and/or managing difficult conversations. I also researched and directed individuals to appropriate resources that could provide additional guidance.

Inquiries usually include a complexity of concerns, perceptions, facts, and interests. My role includes helping inquirers identify what matters most to them (i.e., their *primary concern*) and what they would like to see happen. *Primary concerns* are broadly categorized using the list in Appendix II of this report. The primary concerns for each of the 23 cases I've received are listed Appendix I (point #4) of this report. Additional aggregate demographics are also included in Appendix I.

While I did meet with AFA members on-site at the 2020 AFA Conference, all subsequent inquirers have contacted me via ombuds@afajof.org. I will be on-site and available for in-person meetings during the AFA 2023 Annual Meeting at the at the Sheraton New Orleans.

Francine Montemurro,
AFA Ombuds, November 2022

Appendix I
Aggregate Data

1. Workplace status or affiliation of Inquirer

Workplace Status or Affiliation	Number of Inquiries
Faculty	18
Graduate Student	3
Unknown	2
Total	23

2. Gender of Inquirer

Gender (perceived)	Number of Inquiries
Female	13
Male	10
Other	0
Unknown	0
Total	23

3. Race of Inquirer

Race (perceived)	Number of Inquiries
Black or African American	1
White	7
Asian	10
Hispanic or Latina/o	2
Unknown	3
Total	23

4. Primary Concern

Primary concern	Number of Inquiries
Policy/Practice	7
Integrity	7
Hostile Environment or Incivility	1
Harassment or Discrimination	5
Peer or Colleague Relationship	1
Evaluative Relationship	1
Work or Educational Environment	1
Total	23

Appendix II

American Finance Association Ombuds---Categories of Concerns

1. **Employee Compensation and Benefit.** Salary equity, appropriateness or competitiveness of compensation, health, dental, retirement and other benefits.
2. **Evaluative Relationship.** Evaluative relationship (e.g., problems w/supervisor-employee, or faculty-student relationship.) May include differences in cultures, priorities, values or beliefs; or concerns about supervisory effectiveness or style, communication, trust, cooperation, etc.
3. **Peer/Colleague Relationship.** Peers/colleagues *not* in evaluative relationship (e.g., conflict between staff, researchers, or members of organizations.) May include differences in cultures, priorities, values, or beliefs; problems w/interpersonal relationships, communication, or cooperation, mistrust, misunderstandings, etc.
4. **Career Progression and Development.** Processes or decisions regarding entering or leaving a job or job duties. May include job progression, stability, future potential, professional development, restructuring or changing organizational relationships, nature and place of assignment, termination, etc. May include AFA members who are graduate students or post-docs.
5. **Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance.** Perceived risk of financial, regulatory, or legal, non-compliance (whether to organization or individual.) May include allegations of waste, fraud or abuse, including, illegal activity, slander or defamation of character.
6. **Safety, Health, and Physical Environment.** Perceived risk to life-safety or health. May include fear of someone or something within the environment, hazardous material, potential for violence, etc.
7. **Services/Administrative.** Service quality or efficacy. May include poor quality of performance, responsiveness, application of rules, behavior of service providers, etc.
8. **Policy/Practice.** Efficacy or equity of policy or practice. May include request for clarification; or perceived need for revision, failure to adhere to published policy or document, etc.
9. **Integrity** Covers academic work, scholarship or intellectual property. Perceived plagiarism, lack of research integrity, attribution of authorship, intellectual property, etc.
10. **Harassment or discrimination.** Perceived harassment, disparate treatment, or illegal discrimination *based on protected class (excluding perceived sexual harassment.)*
11. **Sexual Harassment.** Perceived sexual harassment.
12. **Hostile Environment/Incivility.** Perceived harassment, hostile environment, or incivility *not based on protected class.*
13. **Information Requests and Transferal.** (i) Requests from inquirer for information or assistance in accessing or understanding, resources, policies, procedures, etc., or (ii) Relaying of information, perceptions, or experiences from inquirer to the Ombuds.
14. **Work or Educational Environment.** Tone, culture of workplace or educational environment. May include perceived problems with leadership style, peer relationships, departmental norms or dysfunction.
15. **Other Coaching.** Coaching that does not fall primarily into any of the other categories. "Coaching" refers to collaborations intended to assist individuals develop and progress from where they are, to where they want themselves (and/or their unit) to be.
16. **Other.** Issues that do not fall within the above categories.