

FAIRNESS MATTERS



Camosun College

OFFICE of the OMBUDSPERSON
ANNUAL REPORT

SEPTEMBER 1, 2022 – AUGUST 31, 2023

ROB THOMPSON, OMBUDSPERSON



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Camosun College is committed to the fair and just treatment of students. To this end, since 1992 the College and the Camosun College Student Society have together supported the operation of the Office of the Ombudsperson.

The Ombudsperson – or Solutions Office – works for fairness at the college. The role of the Ombudsperson is to deal with inquiries, concerns, complaints, and grievances on any college matter affecting students. The Ombudsperson serves as an independent, impartial and confidential third party in support of fairness and natural justice to provide guidance to students so that they may advocate effectively on their own behalf.

From September 1, 2022 – August 31, 2023, the Office was involved in 165 new cases and consultations (referred to as ‘visitors’), and two ongoing cases from the previous academic year. Through 494+ substantial contact meetings, the Office met with 164 student visitors who raised questions and concerns about virtually every College-related school and service including academic marks and decisions, finances and tuition, course management, records, interpersonal conflicts, personal issues, placements and clinicals, and accommodations. This is roughly 1% of the total registered college student headcount of 14,421.

Students accounted for 164 of the 165 new visitors. Issues were raised more often by women (68%) than men (31%); non-binary (1%). Considering the student visitors, at least 24% were international students. While 88% were current students, 2% were graduated, 2% were applying/accepted, 5% had dropped, 1% were on academic removal, and 2% had other student statuses.

Regarding the overall subject of concerns, 68% were academic-related; 24% were non-academic, and 8% were both. While questions and concerns were heard about almost every sector of the College, those relating to the School of Arts & Science, the Registrar’s Office, and the School of Health & Human Services were the most frequently discussed. It is important to note that visitors use the Office services for a variety of reasons, including questions, brainstorming and as a sounding board, requests, seeking clarity, gathering information, concerns, and complaints. Many issues are resolved promptly once the student has the pertinent information.

Visitors choose how they want to connect with the Ombudsperson. For initial meetings, 31% of visitors prefer telephone, 26% MS Teams video, and 25% email. It is worth noting that the visitor preference for in-person meetings remained low (13%), even though all COVID-19 restrictions had ended.

The outcomes of consultations and cases include resolved (65% or 109 cases), no contact after 1 month / outcome unknown (28% or 47 cases), partially resolved (3% or 5 cases), not resolved (3% or 4 cases), and pending / in process (1% or 2 cases). The categories of the Office's actions taken to resolve the concern are numerous and often a single case or consultation involves multiple actions including

- listening / providing info and advice / exploring options (165 cases and consultations),
- clarifying – info gathering and fact-finding (60),
- internal referral (24),
- shuttle diplomacy (22),
- meeting facilitation or observation (18).

A complete list of actions taken and other reporting categories are presented in the data section.

The Office of the Ombudsperson conducted reviews of systemic college practices and policies after concerns had been raised by students, staff, and faculty. The Office made 14 area- or program-level recommendations and five systemic- or college-level recommendations.

FEEDBACK TO THE OFFICE



The meeting with [the chair] went well. There was one open spot in the... cohort so I am enrolled in the... Practicum course again and it seems to be a good fit for me... I wanted to thank you again for all your help this past month with my situation. I would not be in the position I am now without your support. I am very grateful. I will be sure to reach out again if something changes, but I am confident the practicum will go much better this time around.

INTRODUCTION



I am pleased to present this annual report covering my third full academic year at Camosun College, covering the period September 1, 2022 – August 31, 2023. An important responsibility of a post-secondary ombudsperson, underlining transparency, is to report back to the community regarding the Office’s activities during the previous year.

I am thankful to be able to support fairness at Camosun College. As a visitor, originally from southern Ontario, I respectfully acknowledge that our campuses are situated on the territories of the Lək̓ʷəŋən (Songhees and Kosapsum) and WSÁNEĆ peoples. I honour their knowledge and welcome to all students who seek education here.

The Office of the Ombudsperson was established at Camosun in 1992 and has been supporting fairness at the college for over 30 years. While most Canadian universities have Ombuds offices, many colleges do not, and I am truly heartened by Camosun’s strong and ongoing commitment to fairness, equity, Indigenization, and reconciliation.

Every large institution has a certain number of challenges and conflict, just part of the normal human condition and a changing world. Mahatma Gandhi emphasized “Peace is not the absence of conflict, but the ability to cope with it.” Themes involving conflict raised in this report should be considered in this context.

I appreciate the support and openness of the Camosun community and enthusiastically look forward to continued collaboration with you to maintain fairness and equity on campus.

Respectfully submitted,

Rob Thompson, Ombudsperson

March 2024

ABOUT THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON: MISSION, STRUCTURE AND MANDATE

*The Ombudsman brings the lamp of scrutiny to otherwise dark places,
over the resistance of those would draw the blinds.*

Supreme Court of Canada Justice Brian Dickson, 1984

Ombudsman, a word of Swedish origin meaning ‘citizen’s representative,’ is an official appointed to investigate complaints against a company or organization, especially a public authority. Synonyms include: representative, defender, preserver, minder, guardian, watchdog. The first post-secondary ombuds in North America was established in 1965 at Simon Fraser University. There are currently over 35 post-secondary institutions in Canada which maintain ombuds offices. On Vancouver Island, only Camosun College and the University of Victoria have ombuds offices.

MISSION

The mission of the Office of the Ombudsperson is to ensure that students are treated fairly at the College. The Office provides a safe place to voice and clarify concerns and complaints. By advocating for fairness and natural justice, the Ombudsperson helps to achieve equitable resolutions.

STRUCTURE AND MANDATE

As Camosun College and the Camosun College Student Society (CCSS) are committed to the just and fair treatment of every member of the College community, they collaborate in supporting the operation of the Office of the Ombudsperson.

This service is independent, confidential, impartial, informal, free of cost, and highly accessible. It serves all Camosun students and campuses. To support its independence, the Student Society and the College fund the Office equally. The Ombudsperson is advised by the Human Resources Executive Director and CCSS Executive Director. While it is understood that college students (members of CCSS) comprise the vast majority of visitors, the Ombudsperson regularly consults confidentially with college staff and faculty, and CCSS employees.

The mandate of the Office is twofold in nature. Firstly, the Office provides an independent, impartial and confidential process through which students may find assistance and advice toward a fair and equitable resolution of any college-related concern. The Ombudsperson acts as a support and resource, providing assistance to visitors so that visitors may advocate and act on their own behalf. In order to do this, the Ombudsperson makes every effort to expeditiously obtain the necessary materials to inform visitors on matters of policy, procedure, and individual rights, as well as available services.

Secondly, when trends, patterns, policies, procedures, or practices of the college generate systemic concerns or conflicts, the Office can initiate reviews or investigations and make corresponding recommendations when appropriate. Some recommendations may be initiated to promote discussion or draw attention to institution-wide concerns. The Office cannot make binding decisions for the college on any case. Monitoring for potential systemic concerns is the vital reason that the Office collects aggregate data on cases and consultations – to become aware of trends, such as an increasing number of complaints or conflicts in a certain area, to be able to offer support for conflict prevention and de-escalation.

The Ombudsperson acts in accordance with the principles of natural justice and fairness within the existing policies of Camosun College and in compliance with the Standards of Practice of the Association of Canadian College and College Ombudspersons (ACCUO). The ACCUO Standards of Practice state that an ombudsperson:

- fosters respectful, fair and equitable policies, practices and treatment of individuals
- functions independently of the administrative structures of the institution and of the staff, faculty and student associations
- operates in an impartial and objective manner
- respects confidentiality
- provides information, advice and intervention
- investigates and/or informally resolves complaints through access to persons, records, files and information
- recommends on individual and systemic issues without decision-making authority to implement the recommendation
- reports publicly and/or issues an annual report to the authority designated in the terms of reference of the office.

This is a partial list of the ACCUO Standards of Practice; for the complete list, please consult: <https://accuo.ca/>.

WHAT IS ADMINISTRATIVE FAIRNESS?

Administrative fairness, also known as procedural fairness, is a concept that most people generally understand and feel strongly about – it’s the expectation that the public should be treated well by public service staff. In Canada, the concept of administrative fairness is well developed. For example, we can expect in our public service delivery that staff follow rules and guidelines, treat the public with respect, and consider clients’ needs. We expect that decisions will not be biased and that clear, transparent reasons for decisions will be provided by those with authority. Administrative fairness reinforces public trust in institutions and ultimately reduces conflict and correspondingly saves resources.



THE FAIRNESS TRIANGLE

A FAIR PROCESS REQUIRES:

- An impartial decision maker
- Information about any available review or appeal processes
- Reasonable notice that a decision is going to be made
- Clear information about the decision-making criteria
- Clear and meaningful reasons for decisions
- An opportunity for the person affected to be heard and have their views considered
- A timely decision

FAIR OUTCOMES (DECISIONS) ARE:

- Made in accordance with applicable rules, laws and policies
- Considerate of the individual needs and circumstances of the person affected
- Made with appropriate legal authority
- Based on relevant information
- Based on rules that are fair (not unjust, improperly discriminatory or unreasonably burdensome)

FAIR TREATMENT (SERVICE) INCLUDES:

- Respecting confidentiality
- Being honest and forthright
- Being trauma-informed
- Being transparent about what you can and cannot do
- Offering respectful and courteous treatment
- Demonstrating cultural humility
- Making information clear and easily accessible
- Being accountable and apologizing if you or your organization makes a mistake
- Active listening

[Source: BC Ombudsperson, *Fairness in Practice Guide: A Guide to Administrative Fairness in the Public Sector* <https://bcombudsperson.ca/assets/media/OMB-FairnessInPractice-ForWEB-Feb18.pdf>]

VISITOR DATA

VISITOR CASES & CONSULTATIONS

Visitor cases & consultations 2022-23	165 (179 in 2021-22)	average ~14 new/month
Cases ongoing from 2021-22	2	
Total active visitor cases & consultations 2020-21	167	
Total student visitors	164	
Parent, faculty, staff, and community visitors	1	
% of student visitors accessing the Office	~1%	

MEETINGS

Number of substantial meetings	494+ (503+ in 2021-22)	
Average # meetings / visitor	2.9	
Maximum # meetings / visitor	18 (24 in 2021-22)	8 visitors had 10+ meetings each

LENGTH OF INVOLVEMENT / VISITOR [N = 165]

Average # days / visitor	10	
Maximum # days / visitor	125	15 visitors' cases open 30 days+

RECOMMENDATIONS MADE [N = 18] (7 IN 2021-22)

Area recommendations originating from student cases	7
Area recommendations from ombudsperson's 'own motion'	7
Systemic/policy college recommendations	4

ADDITIONAL OFFICE ACTIVITY AND ACTIONS [N = 114+]

Including:

Faculty/staff consultations on policy or process	53
Referring student directly to student services	22
Presentations & training events as well as academic program introductions, networking, training, workshops, student orientation fairs, etc.	18

WEBPAGES

Ombudsperson five webpages total unique page views	2783 (2815 in 2021-22)
<i>Student Complaints Process</i> webpage unique views	952 (701 in 2021-22)

OVERVIEW OF AGGREGATE VISITOR DATA

During 2022-2023, the Office welcomed a wide range of visitors and their concerns. Some were short consultations for information, guidance and referrals, while others involved numerous and lengthy meetings, further research, clarification, meeting facilitation and observation, and shuttle diplomacy. Normally, the Ombudsperson could arrange meetings promptly and meet with visitors in person, virtually, or by phone within a day or two.

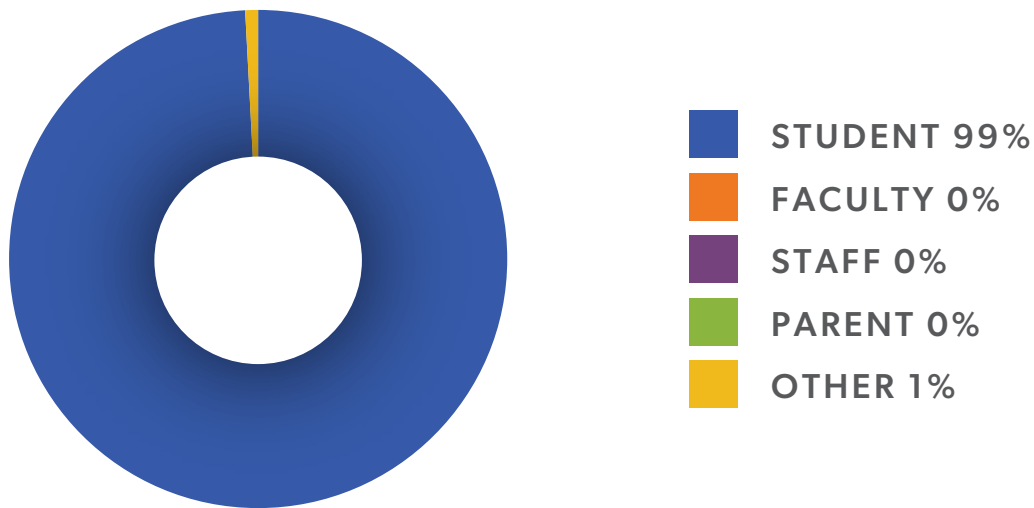
The Ombudsperson met with visitors who raised concerns about virtually every college-related faculty and service. Examples of questions and concerns addressed include:

- academic issues such as grades, exams, academic appeals, academic advising, academic status
- academic misconduct including plagiarism
- interpersonal disputes between students, faculty and staff
- tuition and finances
- COVID measures
- college policies and practices
- disability accommodations
- campus services
- personal matters

The 164 student visitors to the Office over the academic year represent roughly 1% of the total college population of 14,421 students (source: Institutional Research and Planning). This percentage can indicate the current climate, transparency, and amount of student supports available at a given post-secondary institution. It is apparent that some students are either unaware of the Office or unclear of the Office's role. Therefore, it will be necessary to continually educate and create awareness about the Office so that students can take advantage of the service.

FIG. 1 CONSTITUENCY

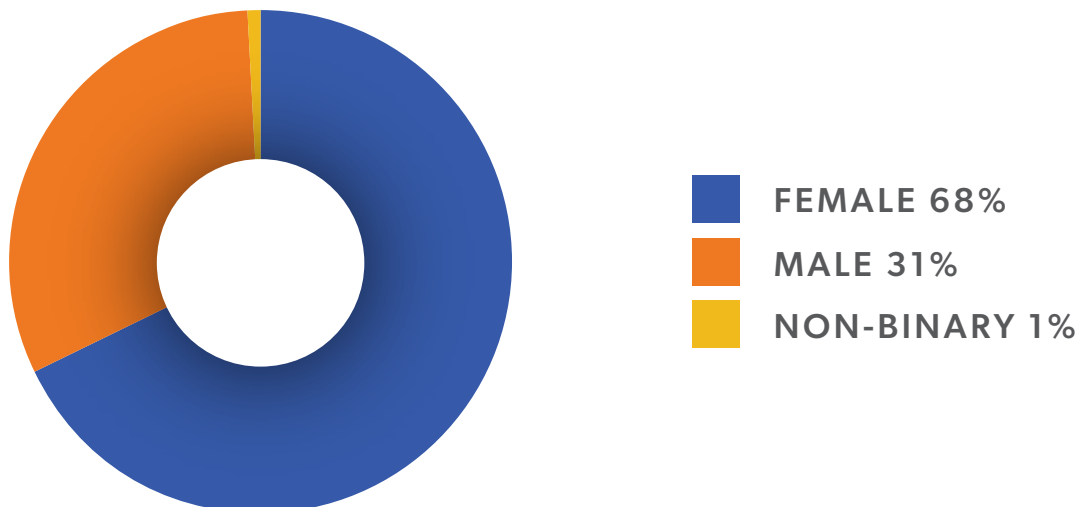
[N = 165]



Considering the visitor data from the past year, we can see that students accounted for the vast majority of visitors (99%), while parents, staff, and community members accounted for 1% (please see Fig. 1 above). The Office cannot discuss students' details with parents or others due to privacy guidelines. Nevertheless, it can explain college processes, which are also publicly available on the college website.

FIG. 2 GENDER

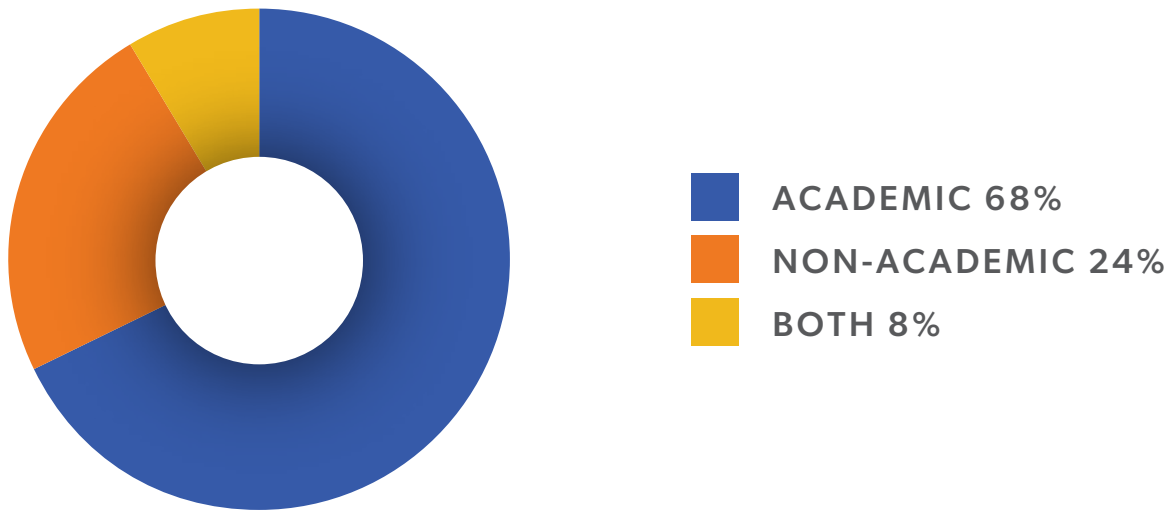
[N = 165]



Concerns were raised more often by women (68%) than men (31%); non-binary 1% (Fig. 2).

FIG. 3 CONCERN

[N = 165]



Regarding the subject of visitors’ concerns, 68% were academic-related, 24% were non-academic, and 8% were both (Fig. 3). Data for detailed categories of academic and non-academic concerns is found below in Fig. 7 and Fig. 8.

FIG. 4 STUDENTS

[N = 164]



Of the student visitors to the Office, 76% were domestic students while 24% were international students (Fig. 4). This figure is noticeably more than the general ratio of domestic to international students at the college [approximately 1700 or 12% of the college’s total student population of 14,421 were international in 2022-23; source: Institutional Research and Planning].

Examples

To put a human face on the aggregate data, the Office will highlight specific examples from the reporting period throughout this report.

International students in Canada face numerous additional challenges, including language, culture, visas and paperwork, finances, housing, and employment. Many international student access college supports and assistance to navigate their new Canadian circumstances and they are well supported by Camosun International. Student services refer many international students to the Office as they seek guidance on navigating college processes such as final grade reviews, academic misconduct, academic progress, the student complaint process, and medical compassionate withdrawals. With cultural and language differences, it is no surprise that international students require more support and make up a significant proportion of visitors to the Office.

One international visitor to the Office was facing academic removal following three semesters with GPA less than 2.0. As the college is now adhering to its Academic Progress policy, few exceptions are granted; students on academic removal are not allowed to register in most college programs for 12 months. The aim is to allow these students time to reflect and actively seek support on the issues which are preventing their academic success. The Office is now visited every year by students on academic removal, both international and domestic, who are considering their options. The Ombudsperson has made recommendations to the college this year on this theme: proactive student retention support and academic early alert system – with the intention to adopt proactive retention supports with an academic early alert system to reduce the number of students on academic removal [see the Recommendations section below].

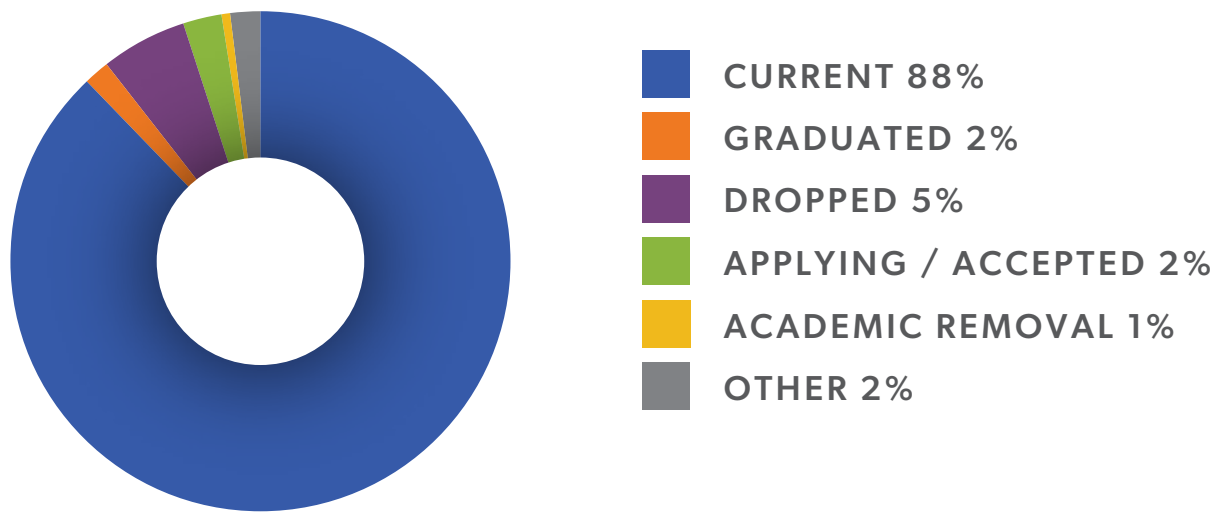
FEEDBACK TO THE OFFICE



Thank you so much for easing me up when I was too stressed. Assistance to dean has agreed to take my exam and said he would ask the department for the same by Monday. Thank you so much once again. You provided me right support at right time.

FIG. 5 STUDENT STATUS

[N = 164]



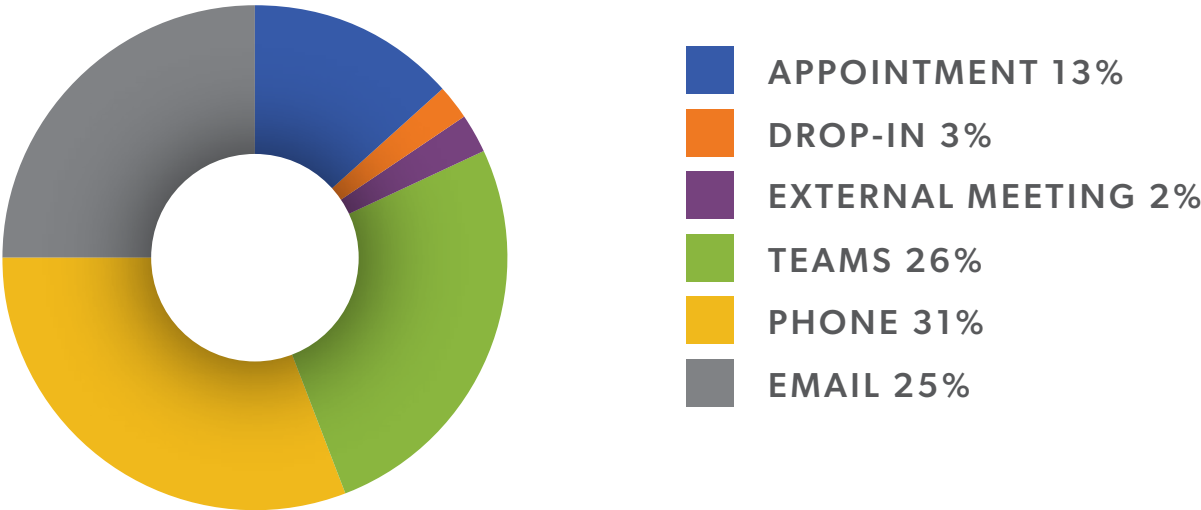
Most student visitors were current students (88%), while others had dropped (5%), or were applying / accepted (2%), graduated (2%), on academic removal (1%), or had another status (2%) (Fig. 5).

Example:

Even with the warnings that the Registrar's Office sends to students regarding their academic status (alert, probation, removal, suspension) and the consequences of continuing along the same academic path, many students are somehow still surprised at the academic removal stage that they are not able to register for one year. There are practices currently at the college which support student retention, including two faculty advisors in the School of Business. However, there is no mandated intervention at the academic probation stage to prevent students from registering without contact with a college advisor. One of the Office's systemic recommendations this year includes a recommendation on student retention and an academic early alert system.

FIG. 6 MODE OF INITIAL MEETING

[N = 164]



To meet with visitors, the Ombudsperson uses whatever mode is most suitable for visitors: phone (31%), Microsoft Teams video (26%), and email (25%) being most common for initial meetings (Fig. 6). Only 13% of initial meetings were held in person.

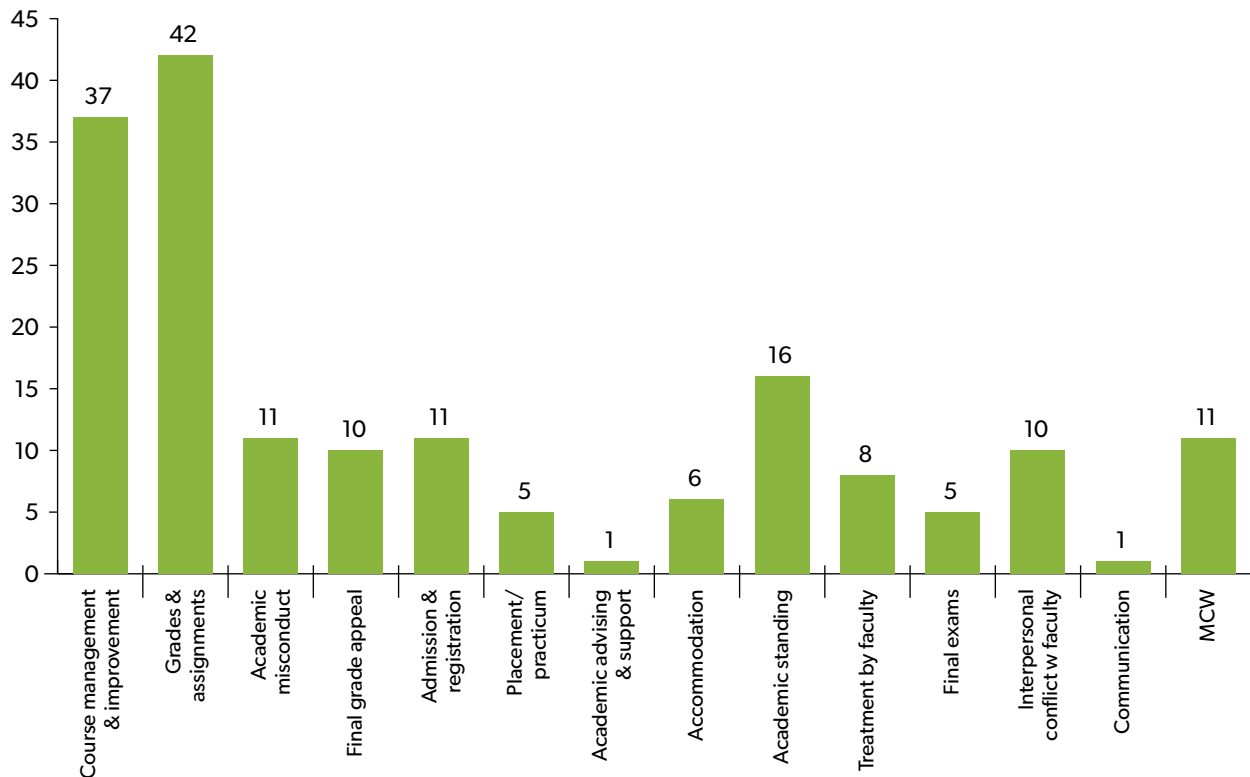
FEEDBACK TO THE OFFICE



Thank you for all your support. Your presence in the meeting has given me a lot of strength. I really appreciated that my vulnerability and request were heard. Even though the reason they explained the initial denial created more confusion for me as I had never received this kind of message from my instructor, I think communication is always needed. Again, my gratitude for your prompt responses and for showing up is far more than words.

FIG. 7 TYPE OF ACADEMIC CONCERN

[N = 174; CAN BE MULTIPLE/VISITOR]



The broad range of academic concerns raised by visitors is presented here, and often visitors raised more than one concern. 'Grades and assignments' (42 visitors) was the concern most often raised, followed by 'course/program management and improvement' (37), 'academic standing' (16), 'admission & registration' (11), and 'final grade appeal' (10) (Fig. 7).

Examples:

Listed below are some common Academic Concern themes. It is worth explaining how these themes interact with the Student Complaint Process.

In the course management category, students raised the following academic complaints with the Office this academic year:

- their course is unfocussed, lacking direction, communication, or disorganized
- students are learning little
- feel singled out in clinical, not treated fairly
- instructors have cancelled numerous classes and not made them up later

- marks were not provided in a timely way for students to either succeed or drop the course by the deadline [the Office has discussed this theme with the Provost and Vice President Education and Innovation and will continue to explore it]
- group assignments, especially that other students are not completing their tasks
- interpersonal conflicts.

When a student raises a complaint with the Office, the Ombudsperson arranges a meeting to listen to the student's concerns and then explore options, using the college Student Complaint Process as a guide: <https://camosun.ca/services/ombudsperson/student-complaints>.

Students are encouraged to discuss their concerns first with the instructor or staff, and if the concern was not resolved, to raise it with the chair or supervisor. Complaints which are still unresolved, or formal complaints, can be raised with the Dean or Director. The Office is available to provide feedback on students' discussion points or emails, as well as to offer perspective on the concern. It is worth noting that, commonly, students who raise a concern with the Office do not move pursue the complaint further. Very few complaints raised in the Office reach the Deans' level.

Occasionally a student will contact the office to share their overall experience in a program after they completed the program or dropped out of it. This year for instance, a former student argued that a particular course was not an appropriate match for the health program she graduated from.

Students experiencing serious and complicated mental health concerns sometimes connect with the office to raise complaints, and often numerous college offices are involved including the Office of Student Support, the Director of Student Affairs, and possibly the student's academic program leader or chair. For example, over a period of three months, the Ombudsperson met numerous times with a student and college staff initially about the student's complaints, but then about their behaviour, which included fantastical and disturbing accusations about faculty.

Interpersonal conflicts between instructors and students occur, as in any setting. Sometimes these are personality clashes. However, often mental health issues are involved. The Office coaches students on using nonviolent communication to make requests and express their needs.

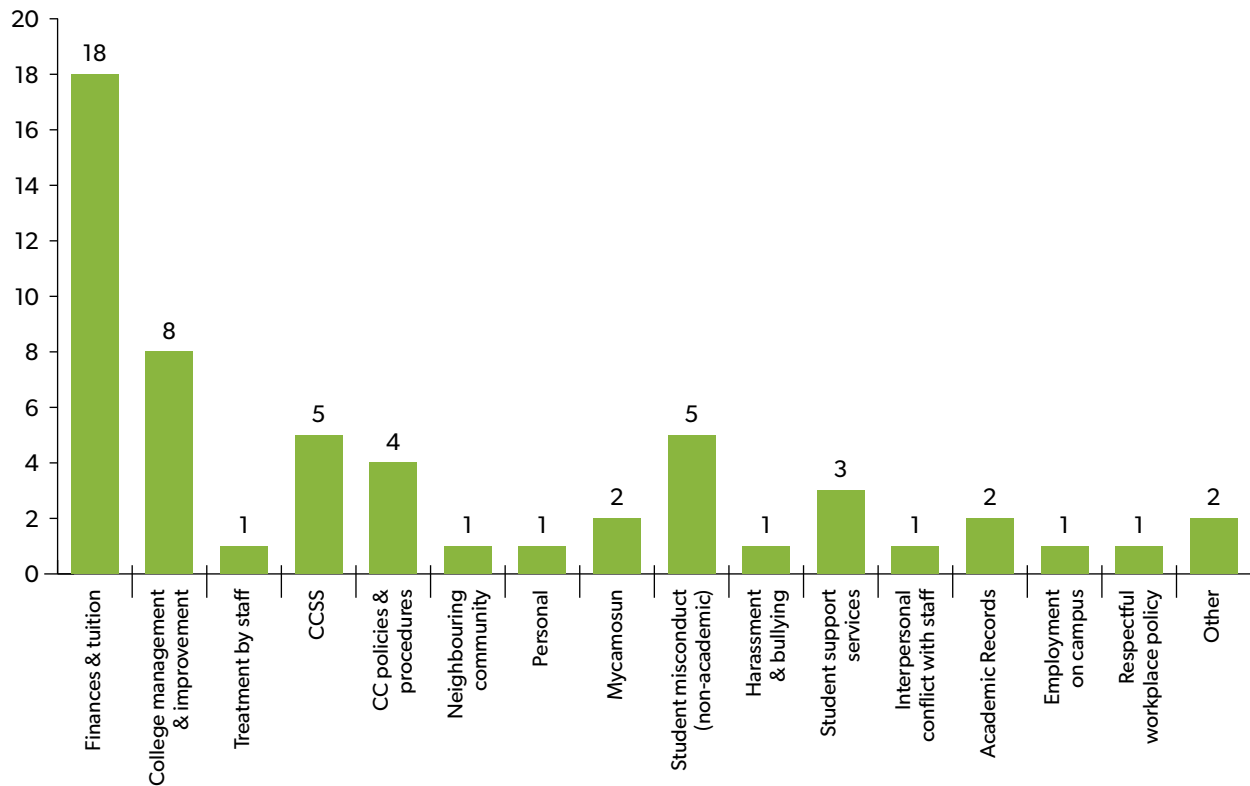
Students can withdraw from their courses on myCamosun up to the last day of classes without any paperwork. As a result, there are fewer students requesting Medical/Compassionate Withdrawals (MCW) and the focus now mainly involves retroactive MCW requests, supporting students in preparing their requests including feedback on letters and encouraging them to provide relevant documentation so that they do not waste their time nor the Registrar Office staff's time.

Students also visit the Office with requests for retroactive academic appeals for final grades in courses from years past, some up to ten years ago! The Ombudsperson explains that no appeal is possible after such a long time and shares the link to the policy, highlighting the timeline in the process document – students actually have five business days to initiate a final grade review.

Appreciation:

The Ombudsperson would like to express appreciation and highlight the flexibility demonstrated by instructors, chairs, and staff in providing academic concessions to students who experience life events which, though highly normal – sickness, disorganization, mental health, family – still impacts your schedules and work. Every year, there are countless such situations and the following provides one glimpse. In April 2023, three students in three different courses, completely unconnected, missed their final exams by mistake – all thinking the exams were the following week. The Ombudsperson directed the students back to the instructors (and chairs, if necessary), encouraging them to explain their honest mistake, apologize, and ask if there could be an option to reschedule. The Ombudsperson was very impressed by the instructors’ generosity in arranging subsequent options for exams for these students.

FIG. 8 TYPE OF NON-ACADEMIC CONCERN
[N = 56; CAN BE MULTIPLE/VISITOR]



There were also a wide range of non-academic concerns raised by visitors. Again, some visitors communicated multiple concerns. The main concerns raised include ‘finances and tuition’ (18 visitors), ‘college management & improvement’ (8), ‘non-academic student misconduct’ (5), and CCSS (5) (Fig. 8).

Examples:

In the 'finances and tuition' category, the themes were varied. Common were requests for special consideration for tuition refunds/credit when students dropped courses or submitted an MCW request beyond the drop deadline. Some students requested consideration of a payment plan, as they were unable to pay off their entire tuition account at once; they were concerned either about the ability to register for upcoming courses or to avoid the collections agency and associated credit rating problems, and often both.

In one situation, an international student's parent died and he returned to his home country to join his family. He took proactive steps by informing his instructors and requesting to shift to online attendance for approximately a month while he was away, but the instructors said it was not possible. He then promptly withdrew from all four courses and then requested a tuition refund through a compassionate withdrawal, which was denied as he had missed the November deadline by several days. He appealed the decision to the VP Student Experience, who met with the student and granted him a tuition credit for one of his four courses. That is currently the final stage of the college's Medical/Compassionate Withdrawal policy appeal process. In this case, the process was followed correctly. The student, instructors, and college offices all communicated professionally and in a timely way. Were the instructors', Registrar's and VP's decisions fair? The Ombudsperson generally does not get involved in decision outcomes when a process has been followed correctly. See the Administrative Fairness section and Fairness Triangle on pages 7-8. Note: The college does not yet have an academic concessions policy; this policy is still in the development stage.

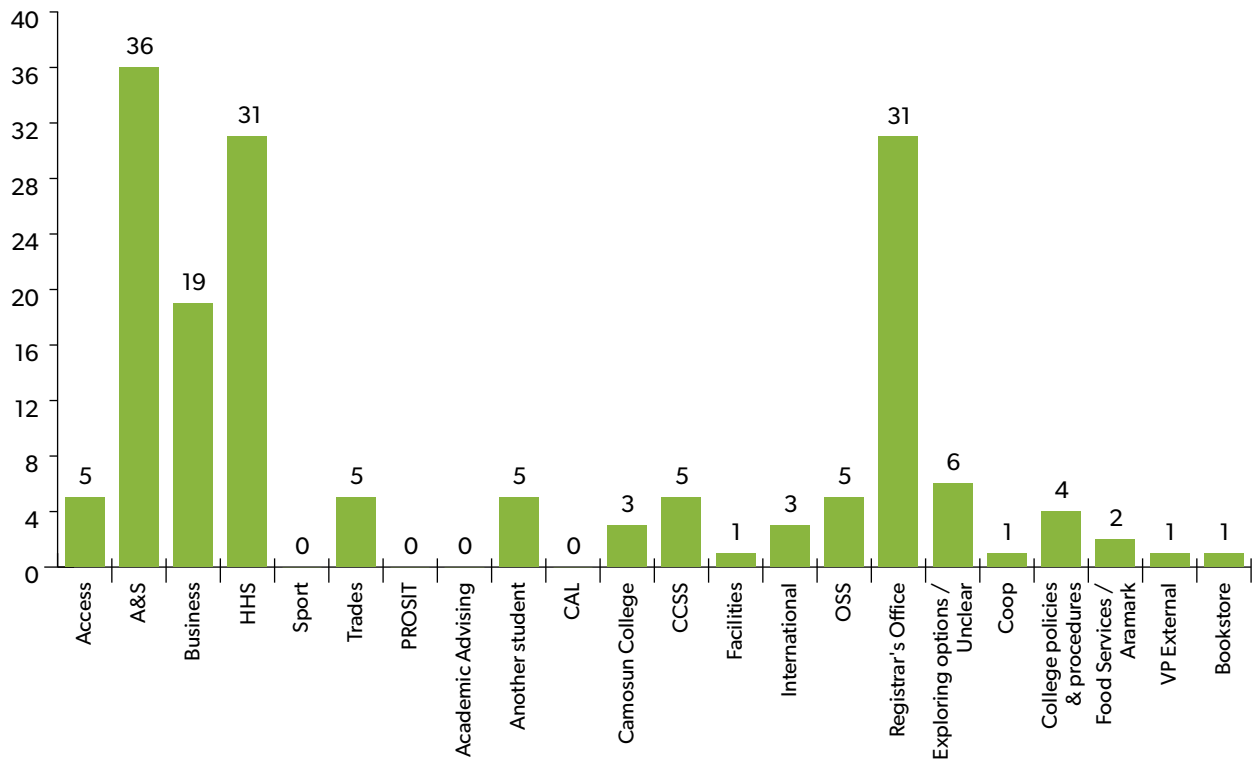
When a student disagrees with a financial decision, the only recourse is the Special Considerations section of the Medical/Compassionate Withdrawals policy E-2.8; there is currently no formal financial appeals policy. The Registrar has stated that a financial appeals policy will be implemented in 2024.

Other non-academic themes raised by students include:

- disappointment that the college and CCSS do not do more for Black History Month
- the bike lane opposite the Interurban campus on Interurban Road they consider dangerous due to often being covered by gravel
- Wilna Thomas building reduced opening hours [see Recommendations section]
- the high cost of purchasing required textbooks.

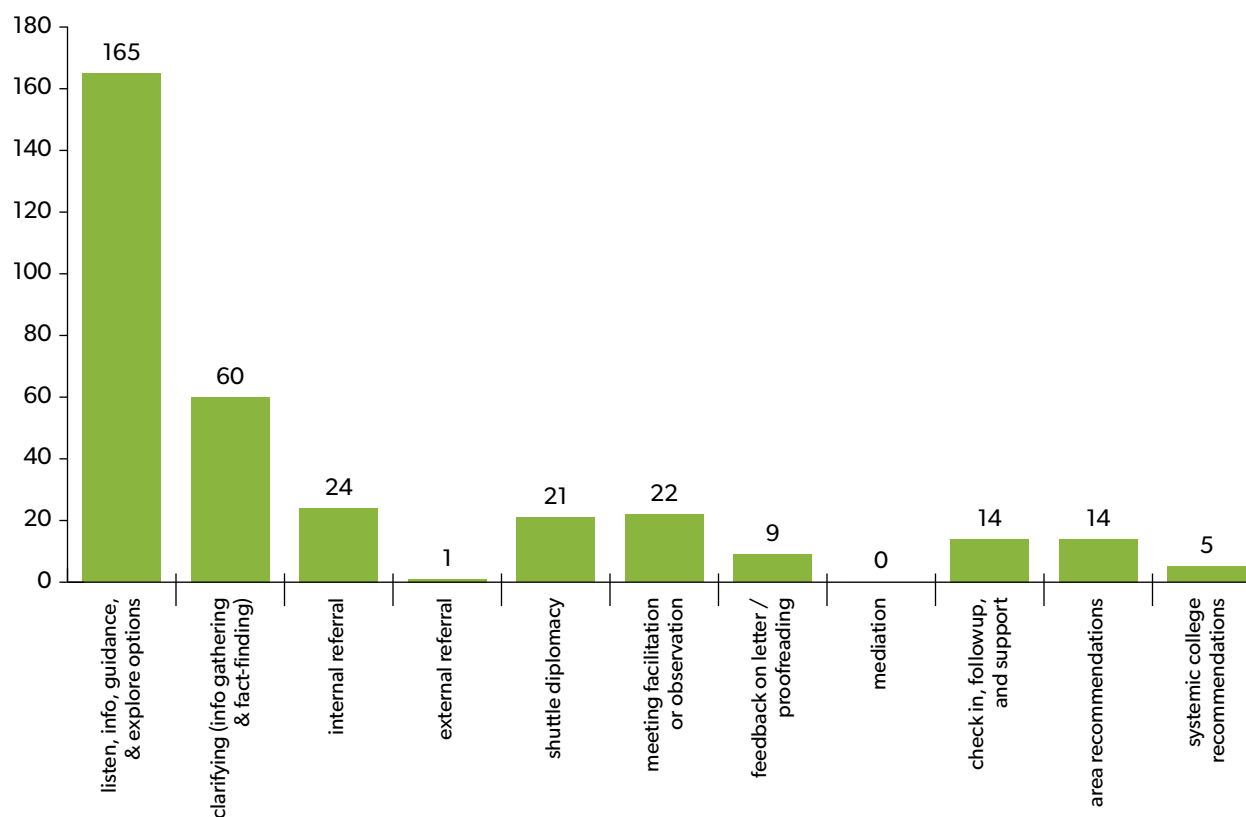
FIG. 9 SCHOOL OR AREA OF CONCERN

[N = 164]



While concerns and questions were heard regarding many sectors of the College, the School of Arts & Science, the Registrar's Office, and the School of Health & Human Services were the three most frequently discussed (Fig. 9). Again, it worth highlighting that not all visitors are raising complaints or problems. Not infrequently, a question or concern can be clarified during one or two brief consultations. Sometimes a referral to a student service is required. This category highlights the subject area or area of concern at the college rather than the visitor's area of study, as they often differ; students often present concerns which are not related to their academic program or to their program school. As an example, Nursing students in the School of HHS and Kinesiology students in the Centre for Sport & Exercise Education are required to complete Biology courses in the School of Arts and Science. Similarly, students ask questions or raise concerns about non-academic areas, such as tuition, student services, or another student.

FIG. 10 ACTION TAKEN TO RESOLVE CASE
 [N = 335; CAN BE MULTIPLE/VISITOR]



The categories of ‘action taken’ are numerous and often a case or consultation involves multiple Ombudsperson actions. Each case or consultation includes ‘listening, offering information and guidance, and exploring options’ (all 165 visitors). Additional actions include ‘clarifying – info gathering and fact-finding’ (60), ‘internal referral (24), ‘meeting facilitation or observation’ (22), shuttle diplomacy (21), and ‘feedback on letter / proofreading’ (9), among others. When referring visitors to other internal staff and services, I referred numerous students to faculty members (chairs, advisors and deans) and services including Centre for Accessible Learning, the Counselling Centre, Office of Student Support, Admissions and Registration, Eye? Sqa’lewen, Academic Advising, and Camosun International. A complete list of ‘action taken’ data is presented below (Fig. 10).

Examples:

Occasionally there is an administrative glitch with finances or registration where there is an unusual case and no system in place to administer it correctly. One such example occurred this year when a student taking only one course was charged for CCSS extended health. The odd situation transpired when the student completed one 0-level MATH course and registered for the

next one on the same calendar day, so that the system considered this student to be registered in two courses and therefore full-time. After the student contacted the Office, the Ombudsperson communicated directly with the Registrar’s Office [tracked below as ‘shuttle diplomacy’ in the Action Taken category] and the staff corrected the situation promptly. Afterwards we discussed how these rare situations might be avoided or handled better in the future.

Other examples of shuttle diplomacy include a student complaint that the newly-renovated Wilna Thomas building had shorter opening hours Nov. 2022 – Jan. 2023 than other buildings. The student wanted to study in the attractive new spaces there. The Ombudsperson contacted the Executive Director, Facilities Services & Campus Development several times to request a timeline for the regularization of the building’s opening hours. By the end of January 2023, the college had aligned the Wilna Thomas opening hours with other buildings which are open late on campus.

In another instance involving Facilities, the Ombudsperson communicated several times with Facilities regarding the large non-functioning clock on the LACC building facing the plaza, following a student complaint in summer 2022. Status updates were provided in 2022 and 2023, ultimately explaining that a replacement may be necessary and that work would be done in conjunction with other work to the exterior of the LACC building. As of March 2024, the clock is not functioning and has not yet been replaced.

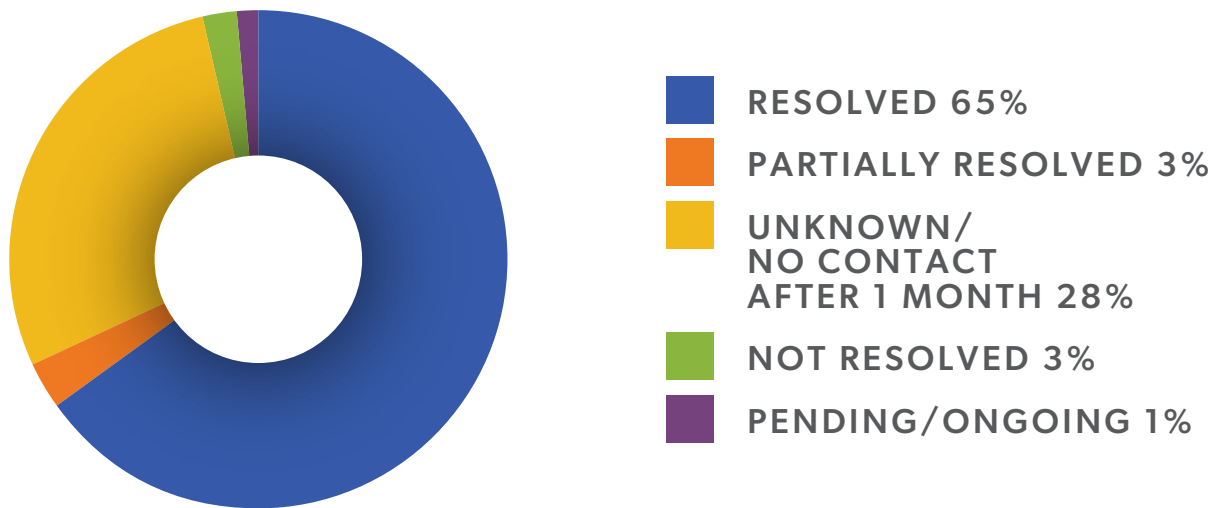
FEEDBACK TO THE OFFICE



I would express my acceptance of this situation. I believe it is beneficial for me to move forward. I greatly appreciate your understanding and support me during appeal period. Your guidance and encouragement have always been positive to me. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

FIG. 11 OUTCOME

[N = 167]



The 'outcome' categories of consultations and cases include 'resolved' (65%), 'unknown / no contact after one month' (28%), 'partially resolved' (3%), not resolved (3%), and pending (1%) (Fig. 11).

It is key to clarify the outcome categories here and to highlight that 'resolved' indicates that the concern was reviewed and resolved – or followed a college process – in a way that met administrative fairness and natural justice standards. For instance, a student requests a final grade review/appeal and over the course of several weeks followed the college process by meeting with the instructor, then chair, then dean to argue that the final grade should be higher. The student's appeal is ultimately not successful and the original grade is upheld at each level. The role of the Ombudsperson is not to advocate for a particular outcome or to determine if a decision was in one group's perceived favour or another, or in this case to advocate for a particular grade for the student. Rather, the Office observes that the concern or appeal is handled fairly through the appropriate college process, the process is publicly available, there is no bias in the decision, and a timely decision is provided and communicated with sufficient rationale and detail.

Similarly on this theme, the Ombudsperson does not attempt to indicate in this report an individual's level of satisfaction with a particular outcome. For example, a student submits a Medical Compassionate Withdrawal request and the Registrar's Office provides a timely decision, with clear reasons supported by college policy, but ultimately does not approve the request. From the standpoint of administrative fairness and natural justice, this case is considered 'resolved' by the Office of the Ombudsperson, regardless of whether the parties agree or whether the request is approved or not, as a fair process is followed. The Ombudsperson certainly understands that a student in this case might feel disappointed and quite possibly frustrated. Therefore, the 'resolved'

or 'not resolved' outcome is not synonymous with 'request granted / not granted' or 'happy student / unhappy student.' Again, 'resolved' indicates that the Office observed that the college process is followed fairly and a fair decision is provided within the stated or reasonable timeframe.

That said, the Ombudsperson will intervene in circumstances where a college policy or process is not followed or a policy is witnessed to be unfair or unjust. In the latter case, the Office may conduct a systemic review of a college policy and can make recommendations if it is inconsistent with procedural fairness and natural justice.

An 'unknown' outcome is unfortunately more common than desired, as visitors often do not update the Office. The Ombudsperson attempts a follow-up check in with each student where the outcome is unknown. Many visitors respond with an update and often an additional question, making the check ins worthwhile. However, many visitors do not respond. These cases are therefore listed as 'unknown,' though the Office suspects that most of them have been 'resolved' in one way or another.

Please refer to the section 'What the Ombudsperson does: Mission, Structure and Mandate' for more detail on administrative and procedural fairness, as well as the Recommendations section.

FEEDBACK TO THE OFFICE



I would glad that you assist me to do the process and give me some advices. whatever the result is positive or negative, I appreciate that you devote time to our conversation and making me feel comfortable. Thank you.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A key role of the Camosun Ombudsperson is to track, review, and investigate potential systemic issues at the college – potential gaps or recurring problems – and if appropriate, make recommendations. Throughout the last academic year, a number of systemic complaints and concerns were raised through the Office. After conducting reviews, the Ombudsperson made corresponding recommendations in a number of situations, generally starting with informal, confidential discussions. The Office made 14 area or program-level recommendations and five systemic or college-level recommendations. Below, a key recommendation is highlighted, an update on a 2021-22 recommendation is reported, and several recommendation themes are summarized.

RECOMMENDATIONS: SAMPLE THEMES

At the college level:

- The college requested that the Office conduct an independent review of the allegations contained in an anonymous August 2022 letter regarding a college program. The Office presented a final report of the review to the President with a list of considerations, not formal recommendations, for both the students involved and the college. It is worth noting that this review focused solely on the anonymous allegations and was not a review of college staff or the college program.
- The Office provided recommendations to the college during its consultations for development of an academic concessions policy.
- The Office provided recommendations to the college during its consultations and review of academic advising [see also Key Recommendation below].

At the area or program level:

- The Ombudsperson contacted a program chair when a student noticed that the 45% weighting of the final exam was not in line with the college's [Evaluation of Student Learning policy](#), where the maximum is limited to 40%. The chair informed the instructor, who immediately changed the weighting, updated their course outline, and informed the class of the change. The matter was resolved promptly and efficiently.
- After testing the college 24/7 emergency phone number, the Office contacted the Manager of Protection Services, requesting that they update their webpages with interim emergency phone numbers during the period when contracting the new 24/7 emergency service provider was in process and the current emergency number was not working effectively.

- Following a complaint, the Office requested that, as part of standard procedural fairness practice, Camosun International provide students with detailed responses including reasons when communicating Medical/Compassionate Withdrawal request decisions.
- A student raised a concern about the transparency of the Camosun International Guardme health insurance webpage. The page described the insurance provision but not the cost. After reviewing the Camosun insurance program and other post-secondaries' programs, the Office made one recommendation, that for clarity and transparency, and to meet current practice in BC post-secondaries, that the college clearly list the 3-month \$150 cost in the description on the Camosun website <https://camosun.ca/international/current-international-students/medical-insurance>. The Camosun International staff promptly made this update.
- A distressed student complained about a confusing registration process which had originated from an unclear webpage of the MOA-155 Medical Terminology course, the prerequisite for the Certified Medical Lab Assistant Certificate. There were two issues in this case: the student's pending registration and the program webpage. The Ombudsperson followed up with the program lead and recommended that the MOA-155 course webpage and the program webpage be updated to prevent further confusion; the changes were made promptly. After the Office spoke directly with the Associate Registrar ['shuttle diplomacy' in Action Taken category Fig. 10], the student was able to register and enter the MOA-155 course at the last minute.

KEY RECOMMENDATION:

Proactive student retention support and academic early alert system

Attention:

Provost and Vice President Education and Innovation

Acting Vice President Enrolment and Community Engagement

Background:

Thank you for your feedback in February on my office's draft recommendations. Below are my Office's final recommendations. These themes involve both of your divisions.

Over the last few years, we have discussed the themes of **proactive student retention and academic intervention** for students at academic risk, i.e., students who are struggling semester after semester and who are often on academic probation/removal [Academic Progress policy]. During the recent review of academic advising across the college, these issues were raised by staff. My office has become increasingly aware of the need for an academic early alert system, as I regularly meet with students who are at academic risk and on academic probation and academic removal. The Office has reviewed many concerns of students at academic risk. In considering possible solutions over the last year and a half, I have met with numerous college staff who in

some way interact with students at academic risk; 100% of the staff and faculty I spoke with said that the college should do more for retention and to support students at academic risk. Many college staff noted that the college has increased recruitment efforts without creating a retention plan. I have discussed this theme at length with Scott and his RO staff, looking at academic status numbers from the last few years. Approximately fifty students are on academic removal each semester. We know that losing students with consistently low GPAs to academic removal and academic suspension is an expensive waste of college, public, and individual resources.

Currently, the college has no mandated academic intervention at the academic probation stage to prevent students from registering without contact with a college advisor. Even with the clear warnings that the RO sends to students regarding their academic status and the consequences of continuing along the same path, many students are somehow still surprised when they arrive at the academic removal stage and are unable to register for one year. The Office's recommendations should increase student success by preventing some students from careening toward academic removal and academic suspension without intervention. At numerous Canadian PSIs, students at the academic probation stage are prevented from self-registering again to ensure that this intervention happens. This is one of many Canadian examples:

Douglas College

WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN I AM ON ACADEMIC PROBATION?

You will be restricted from registering into courses and are required to meet with your Student Success Advisor (SSA) by a prescribed date for academic advice.

<https://www.douglascollege.ca/current-students/advising-services/academic-probation/academic-probation-faq>

The Ombudsperson acknowledges that the college's current academic advising resources may not be sufficient to meet this kind of specialized retention model and that additional funding may be required to support the retention system.

The Office also acknowledges that the college strongly supports student success. The Ombudsperson wants to highlight that there are numerous service units that support student retention including academic advising, Counselling Centre, Eyē? Sqā'lewen, CAL, Help Centres, Library, Writing Centre, and Office of Student Support. Within the schools, the faculty retention advisors in the School of Business, Access Navigator, program leaders, and School leadership also contribute to student retention.

These recommendations are in no way meant to diminish or downplay the efforts of so many Camosun faculty and staff. To the contrary, the Office is continually impressed with the above-and-beyond effort and engagement that college staff and faculty provide students, including those who are struggling. These recommendations are intended to strengthen existing student support resources and retention practices.

The intent of these recommendations is for the college to continue its existing beneficial retention practices and then add some teeth and additional resources to strengthen the support for students at academic risk and ensure efforts are connected and collaborative. These recommendations support the college's Strategic Plan goals, as well as administrative fairness, transparency, and student mental health. John, as you have emphasized, creating a student retention system is the right thing to do.

The Office of the Ombudsperson is therefore formally recommending that the college initiate in 2024 a student retention and early academic alert task force to:

- a. Implement a proactive student retention and academic intervention system, which will mandate an intervention for all students at the academic probation stage to meet with an academic retention advisor to create a personalized academic plan.
- b. Develop a specialized, purpose-trained retention advisor role or "Student Success Navigator," serving students in all schools to ensure that those at academic risk receive dedicated support.
- c. Consider developing a cost-effective "Camosun Student Success" remedial course as part of the college's support system for students on academic probation. With careful design and/or a modular structure, aspects of such a course might also serve to set new students up for success.
- d. Consider how an academic intervention system could complement existing services, and create opportunities for increased collaboration.
- e. Collect and analyze student retention numbers to support development and success of this system.

The Office of the Ombudsperson appreciates the opportunity to provide these recommendations to the college and looks forward to collaborating with the college community on these recommendations.

Status: ongoing

OFFICE ACTIVITY

OUTREACH, EDUCATION AND NETWORKING

This year, the Ombudsperson had regular meetings with staff and faculty leaders on both campuses. To better explain and increase awareness of the Office's services, the Ombudsperson developed new promotional materials including kiosk posters, washroom posters, and bookmarks. This year, the Ombudsperson conducted over one hundred non-visitor meetings, including staff/faculty consultations, outreach and networking, academic program introductions, trainings and workshops, and student orientation fairs. The reception at Camosun has invariably been very welcoming, open, and collaborative in support of fairness. Please contact the Office to arrange an Ombudsperson introduction, presentation, or discussion in your department or office.

OVERVIEW OF OFFICE ACTIVITY

- Bi-weekly meetings with the Office advisors, the VP Student Experience and CCSS Executive Director
- Presenting at Welcome Week, student academic program orientations, CCSS, and faculty meetings, including:
 - Dental programs orientation
 - HHS student rep meeting
 - CCSS board & staff meeting
 - Consultations with instructors, program leads & chairs re: college policies
 - Individual classes
- Meeting regularly with faculty & staff to share current concerns and gather feedback
- Providing recommendations or feedback on draft and current policies, procedures, plans, and practices, including:
 - Several Camosun website pages
 - Development of an academic concessions policy.
 - College consultations and review of academic advising [see Recommendations section for more detail]
- Instagram video short in conjunction with College Communications
- Participating in Association of Canadian College and College Ombudspersons (ACCUO) events and activities, such as the annual conference and AGM (online), the regional conference in Kelowna (in person), as well as remaining an active member of the ACCUO Communications Committee

- Participating in numerous workshops and trainings, mostly online and no-cost, including:
 - CCDI Webinar: Allyship: What type of ally are you?
 - Understanding Fact-Finding & Investigation Level 1 training [3 days]
 - Naloxone training
 - Coast Salish '101'
 - BCcampus webinar, FLO Panel: Educative Approaches to Academic Integrity
 - TRC '101' Calls to Action in Education
 - Building Emotional Intelligence
 - BC Ombudsperson training: Fairness in Practice
 - CCDI Webinar: DEI stories of success: LGBTQ2S+ inclusion
 - CCDI Webinar: Meritocracy: A myth

FEEDBACK TO THE OFFICE



That's great to hear. Thank you for your help throughout this process. I appreciate it tremendously. I will let you know when my account has been updated.

[Next day] I received the message below from Camosun and have verified that the charges have been removed. Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Camosun College

OFFICE *of the* **OMBUDSPERSON**

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