



# ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**TENNESSEE**  
KNOXVILLE

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION,  
HEALTH & HUMAN SCIENCES

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## Executive Summary

This report was prepared following the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Office of Ombuds Services Charter, which requires a report every fiscal year to the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, chancellor. This report is also provided to the Faculty Senate following university policies listed in the Faculty Handbook. Additionally, the report meets the reporting guidelines of the International Ombudsman Association and is made available to the public at [ombuds.utk.edu](http://ombuds.utk.edu).

The Office of Ombuds Services was established on May 1, 2019, and Lisa Yamagata-Lynch was internally hired as the full-time University of Tennessee, Knoxville, ombudsperson to serve both the Knoxville campus and the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture (UTIA). Activities since May have focused on Yamagata-Lynch's job role transition, establishing a physical office space, charter development, ombudsperson professional development, and internal outreach. Visitors began to request phone appointments as well as in-person visits starting April. By the end of June there were a total of 22 visitors and 11 distinct cases. Visitors included department heads, faculty, staff, and graduate students. Some of these cases involved one-time consultations or referral services, and others involved the ombudsperson becoming an ongoing informal consultant to help visitors identify the best method to navigate their situations. The ombudsperson received additional consultation requests from individuals outside of UT. These requests were referred to appropriate internal and external offices.



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The number of visitors and cases were limited in this two months of operations, but there were enough cases where common patterns were observed and prominent themes emerged. Each of the case themes was coded following the IOA Uniform Reporting Categories (Dale, Ganci, Miller, & Sebok, 2008). The most prominent themes were in the evaluative relationship category. Tensions observed in these relationships were between graduate students and department heads, faculty and department heads, and staff and supervisors. The most common themes observed in this category included respectful treatment, communication, department climate, supervisory effectiveness, and equity of treatment.

The recommendations from fiscal year 2019 will be focused on further establishing the Office of Ombuds Services:

### Subhead Here

To continue Office of Ombuds Services operations during the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, chancellor transition

- For the ombudsperson to engage in professional development to become an IOA–certified organizational ombudsman practitioner
- For the ombudsperson to engage in further internal outreach with other offices on campus in an effort to support employees and graduate students at UT Knoxville and UTIA

When looking forward to the upcoming fiscal year 2020, it is likely for the Office of Ombuds Services to see an increase in visitor consultation requests with the faculty periodic post-tenure performance review going into full implementation.