



# **OMBUDSPERSON ANNUAL REPORT 2022**

January 2023

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2022 was the second year of the Ombudsperson position at Dakota State University (DSU). The Ombudsperson serves as a resource between faculty and administration on issues related to DSU or South Dakota Board of Regents (BOR) policies and procedures. Year two focused more directly on assisting faculty with cases brought forward and offering training sessions.

Throughout the 2022-year, faculty members brought forth 31 cases to the Ombudsperson, dealing with a range of different policies and procedures. Basic data was collected on the cases including: date, general issue, policy or procedure addressed, population impacted, time spent, and case status.

There were three specific themes identified from the cases brought forward. The first notes how suggested changes to the workload document seemed to clarify past issues. This highlights an important function of the ombudsperson position in making suggestions for possible changes to policy and procedure. The second discusses how it is important to consider the place of the Ombudsperson position within the overall university structure. Finally continued training sessions are vital as documents impacting faculty continue to be revised.

Overall, I feel that the Ombudsperson position continues to be an important part of DSU. The position is still new, so there remains a need for an awareness campaign on what the Ombudsperson provides. Faculty brought forth a range of cases this year and the information provided resulted in a deeper understanding of the policies and better relationships between faculty and administration.

**Mary Francis**  
**DSU Ombudsperson**  
**January 2023**

# BACKGROUND

The Ombudsperson position at Dakota State University (DSU) was established in February 2021 to serve as a resource between faculty and administration on issues related to DSU or South Dakota Board of Regents (BOR) policies and procedures. The Ombudsperson is a current faculty member who is assigned to a three-year term by the University President from a slate of individuals selected by the General Faculty.

The Ombudsperson provides confidential, impartial, and informal assistance. The goal of the Ombudsperson is to help resolve cases with the faculty member at the lowest level. This may be accomplished by providing information on policies and providing suggestions on courses of action. All final decisions on actions are made by the faculty member.

# ACTIVITIES

## Reports

The Ombudsperson reports to the Vice president for Human Resources. During the year, one-on-one meetings were held quarterly in order to provide a check-in on the position and the cases brought forward.

The Ombudsperson also provided a review of the 2021 Annual Report to the President's Cabinet and the General Faculty during January 2022. These oral reports provided a summary of the work done by the Ombudsperson, an overview of the number and types of cases brought forward, and allowed time for questions.

## Training Sessions

During 2022, the Ombudsperson offered two training sessions. A session on salary policy was offered in the spring and a session on changes to the workload document was offered in the fall. These sessions were offered as hybrid with over 40 individuals attending each session either in-person or via Zoom. A recording of the session was made and linked from the Ombuds website. Attendees included faculty members, deans, and college program assistants. Overall, the feedback on the sessions was very positive.

# CASES

Throughout 2022, 31 cases were brought to the Ombudsperson from various faculty members. Basic data was collected on the cases including: date, general issue, policy or procedure addressed, population impacted, time spent, and case status. The following charts provide a breakdown of the 2022 cases.

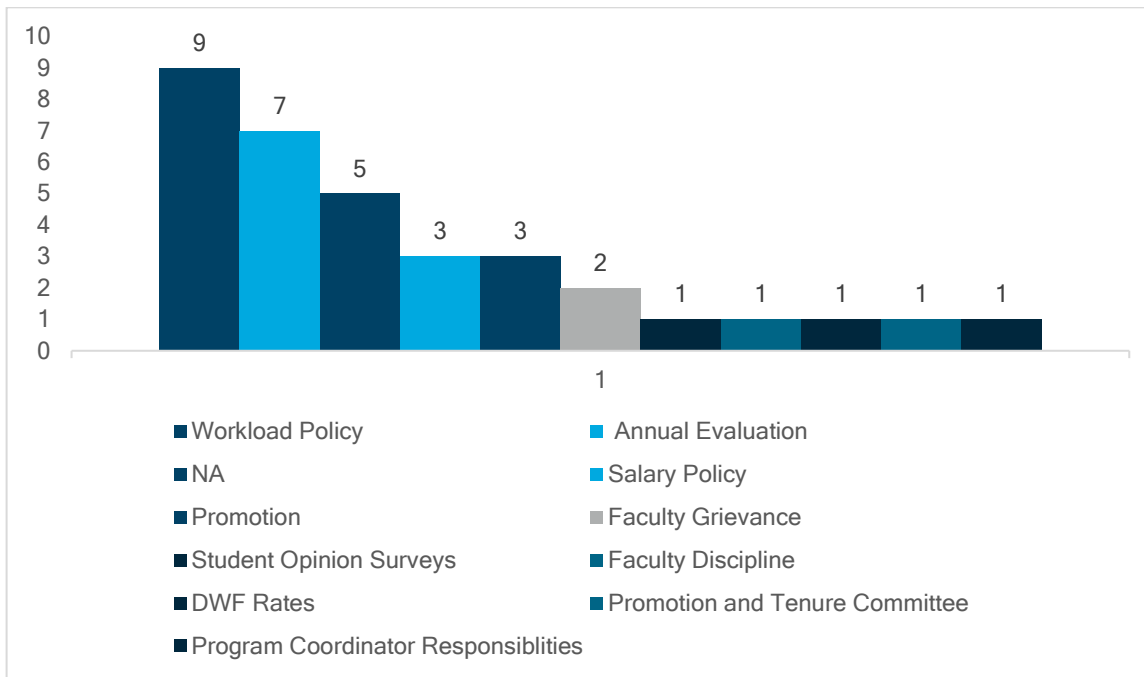
## **Policies/Procedures Addressed**

There were a number of policies or procedures that were addressed in the cases brought forward by the faculty members. Note the total number is higher than 31 due to the fact that some cases touched upon more than one policy or procedure. The NA designation was given to cases that did not fall under a specific policy or procedure. These cases often dealt with specific working conditions. The following policies and procedures were addressed:

- Workload policy (9)
- NA (5)
- Annual evaluation (7)
- Salary Policy (3)
- Program coordinator responsibilities (1)
- Student opinion surveys (1)
- Faculty grievance (2)
- Faculty disciplinary procedure (1)
- Promotion (3)
- DWF rates (1)
- Promotion and tenure committee (1)

*Table 1.*

*Policies/Procedures Addressed*

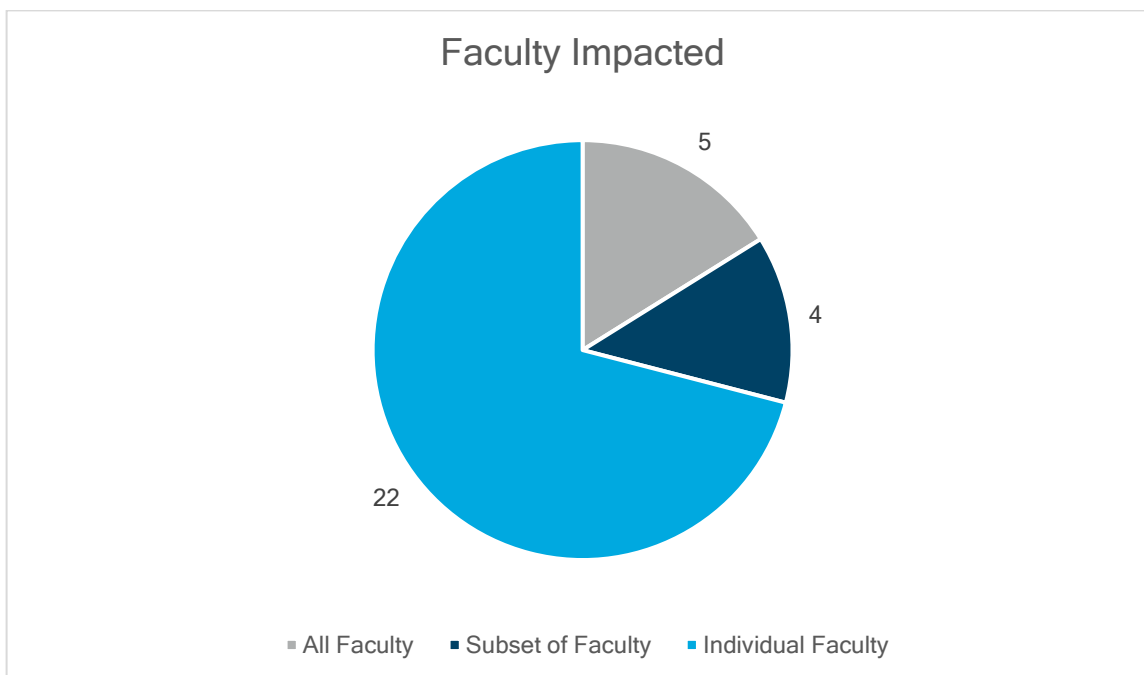


## Population Impacted

Depending on the issue, each case was classified as impacting either all faculty members, a subset of the faculty, or an individual faculty member. Of the 31 cases, 5 cases impacted all faculty, 4 cases impacted a subset of the faculty, and 22 cases impacted an individual faculty member.

*Table 2.*

*Faculty impacted*

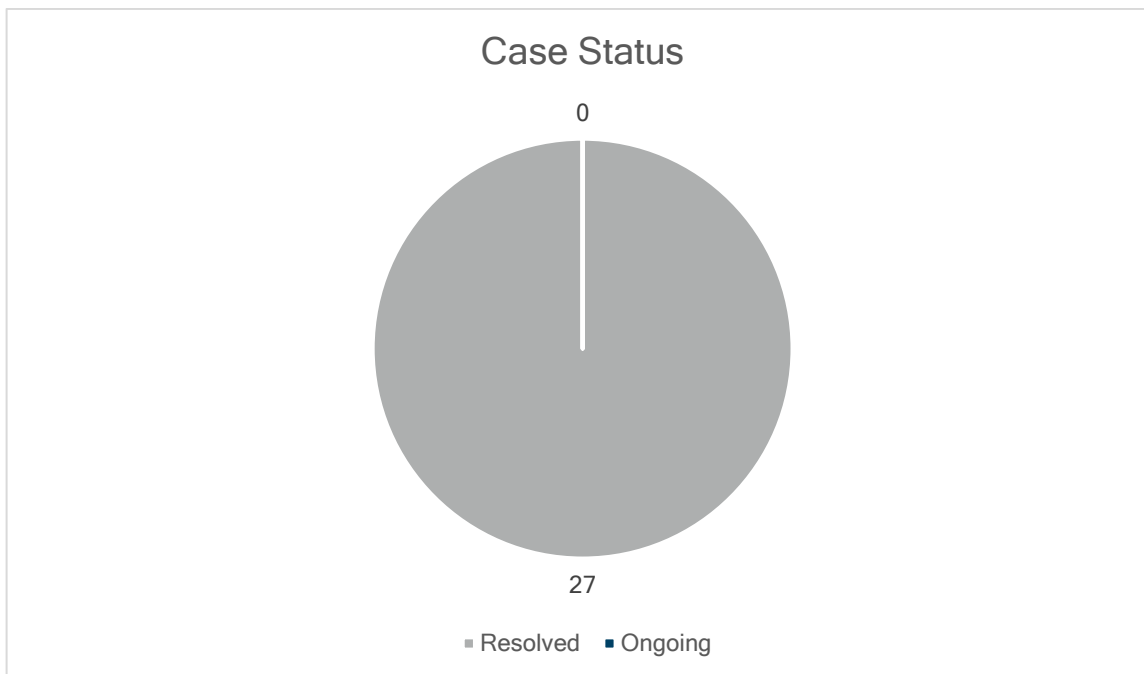


## Case Status

As cases were worked on, they were designated as either ongoing or resolved. This status refers solely to the Ombudsperson's relationship to the case and whether it is expected that they will need to spend more time working on the issue. A case may be classified resolved while the faculty member continues to deal with the case outside of assistance from the Ombudsperson. Of the 31 cases, at the end of 2022, all of the cases were resolved.

*Table 3.*

*Case Status*



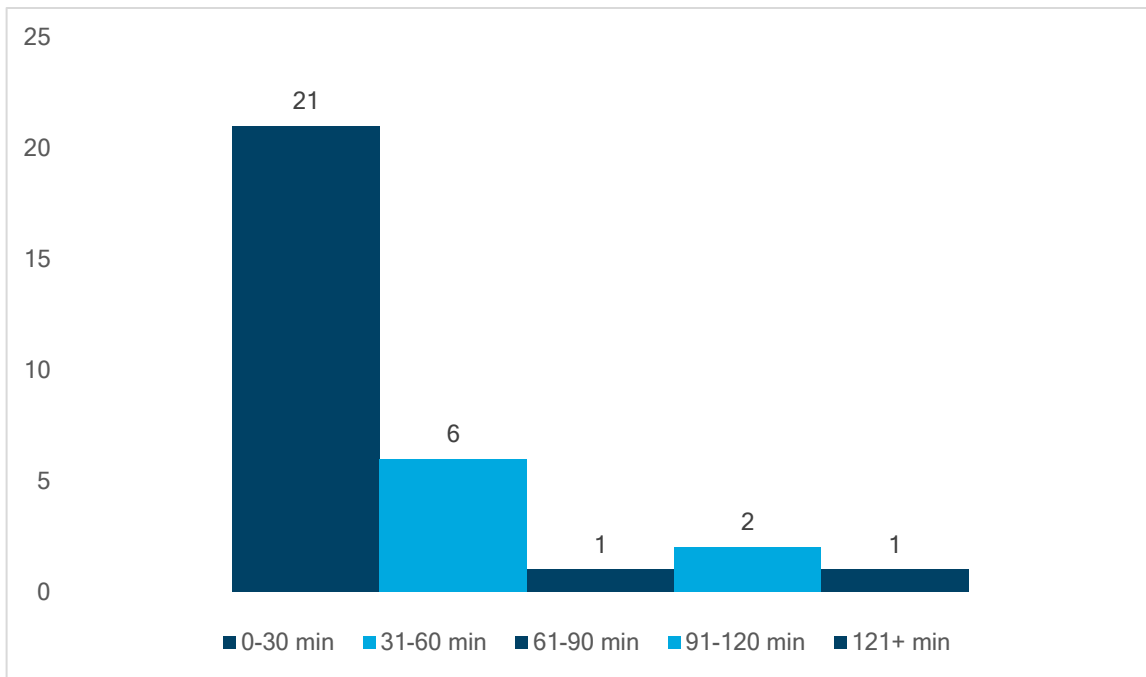
## Time Spent

Data was also collected on the time spent by the Ombudsperson on each case. Time ranged from 5 minutes to 150 minutes. On average, each case took 35 minutes. 21 cases took 0-30 minutes. 6 cases took 31-60 minutes. 1 case took 61-90 minutes. 2 cases took 91-120 minutes. 1 case took 121 or more minutes. Given the familiarity of the Ombudsperson with the assorted policies and procedures addressed, the time spent was lower than what would be expected by an individual with less knowledge of the documents.



Table 4.

Time spent



# DISCUSSION

## 1. Workload Revisions

In both 2021 and 2022, the topic with the largest number of cases focused on workload issues. One recommendation put forward last year in the Ombudsperson report was a revision of the Workload Document to address some areas of confusion. This revision was completed, and it appeared to have an impact on the cases brought forward. In 2021, the average time spent on cases dealing with workload was 110 minutes. In 2022, the average time dropped to 42 minutes. While workload still remains an issue with some faculty members, the clarification of documentation has assisted in fewer concerns brought forward. Changes should be suggested as misunderstandings of the Workload Document are uncovered in the future. The ability of the Ombudsperson to recommend changes on institutional documents and policies should also be noted across other faculty related paperwork.

## 2. Office of Ombudsperson within Institutional Structure

As the Ombudsperson position continues to integrate within the DSU culture, it will be interesting to see how it relates to other groups and structure on campus. Anecdotally during the fall semester, it appeared that faculty were turning to members of the Provost Advisory Group and General Faculty officers to share concerns related to assorted issues. While it is appropriate and beneficial to have multiple modes of communication, this may highlight an opportunity to designate certain topics that should be handled by each group.

## 3. Training Sessions

The training sessions offered by the Ombudsperson were well received. It was an efficient method to explain important concepts to a large number of faculty members. Additional training sessions should be offered each year especially with changes coming to faculty procedures such as Promotion and Tenure. These training sessions are an important method to help share details with faculty. These sessions are also a method to provide information to deans in order to help ensure consistent understanding at all levels across the entire campus.