

Update from the Ombuds Office:

FY2026 Trends and Emerging FY2027 Themes

Presented to the Faculty Senate

By Diane J. Levin, J.D.

Certified Organizational Ombuds Practitioner

University Ombuds for Faculty and Staff

September 23, 2026



The Ombuds Office for Faculty and Staff

Confidential, independent, impartial, informal

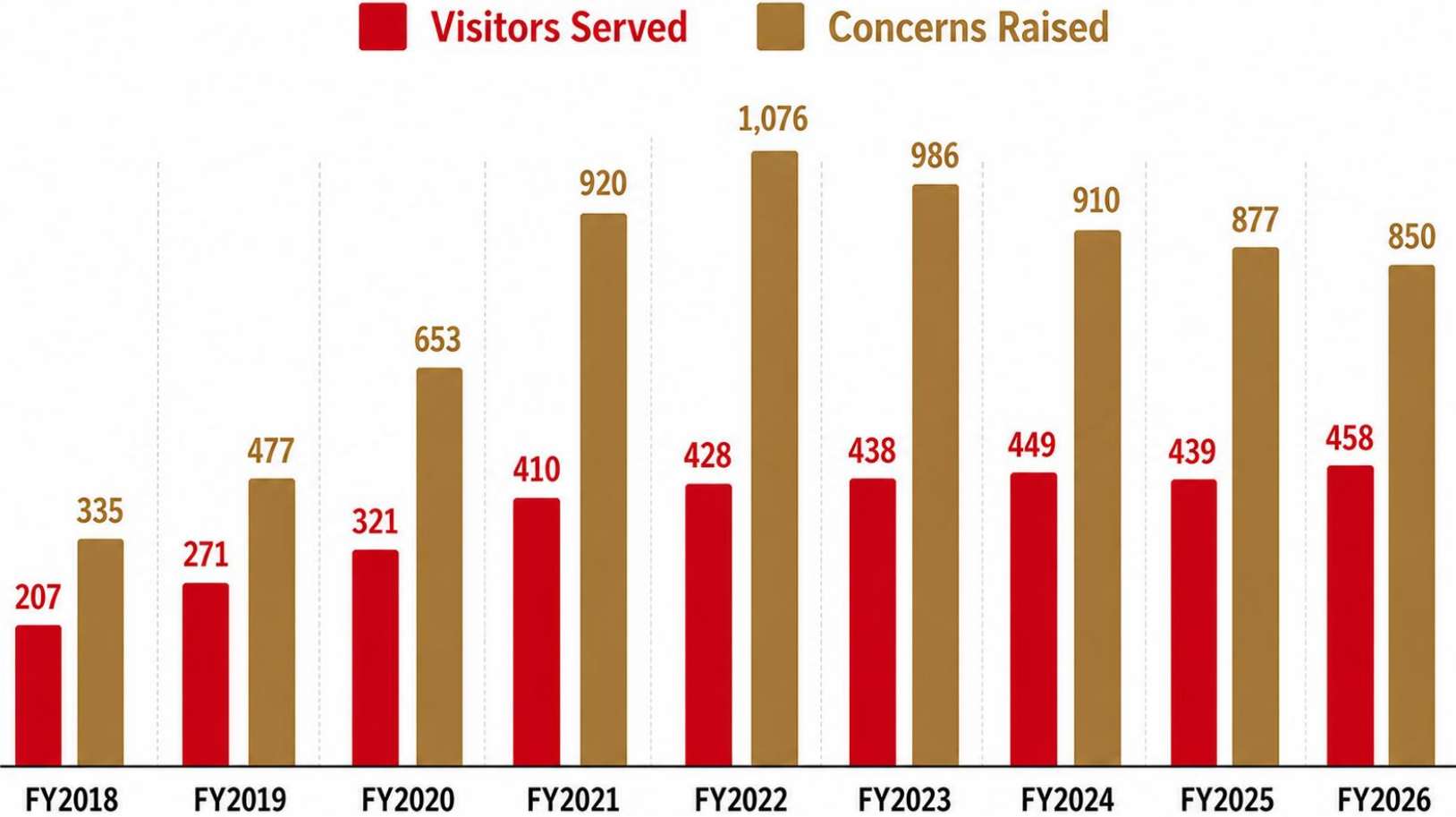
- Since 2011 has provided a safe space to raise and address concerns off the record
- Supports all university employees world-wide
- Helps foster an equitable and ethical community



Sustained Use of the Ombuds Office Over Time

3,421
visitors
supported

7,084
concerns
raised



FY2026 at a Glance



458 office visitors received support with 850 issues



64% staff / 29% faculty



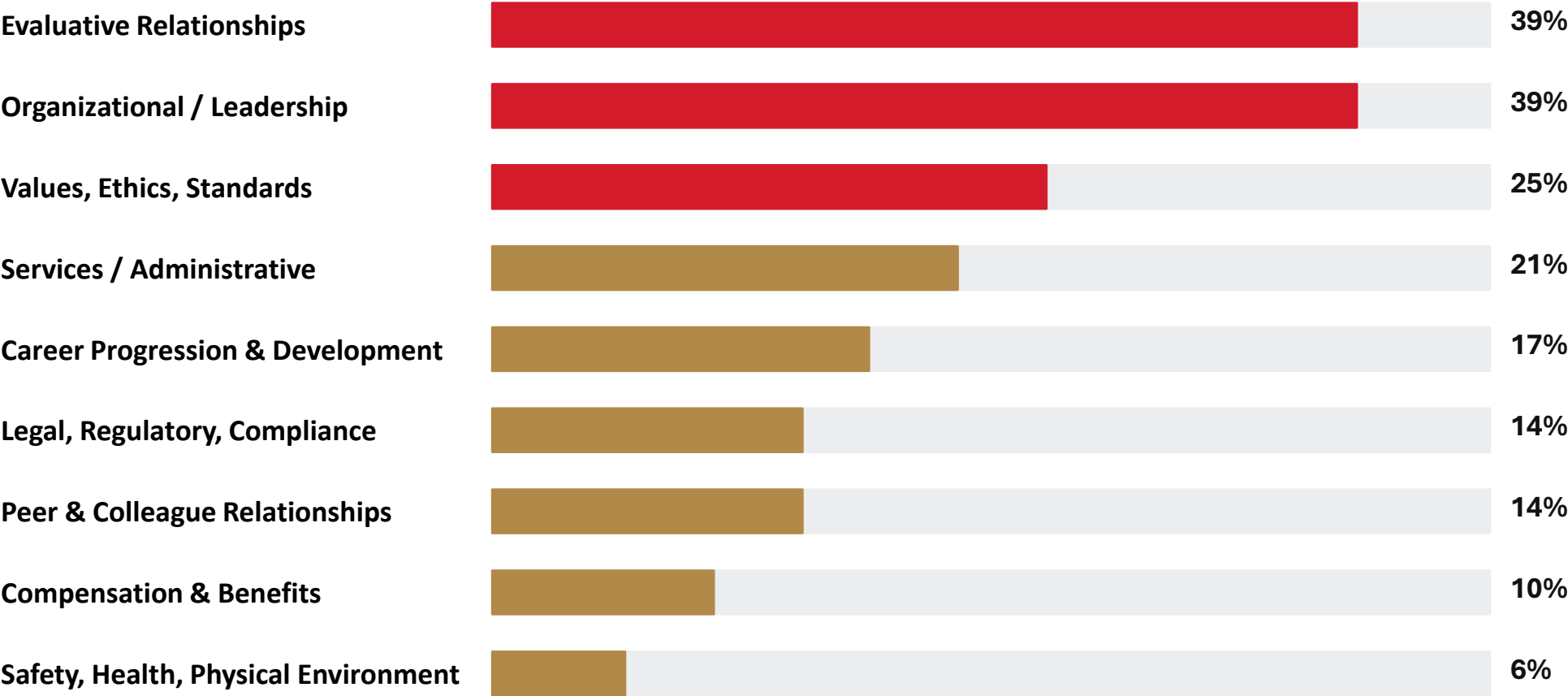
15% located on global campuses



34% were past visitors returning with new issues

What Visitors Came to Discuss in FY2026

850 Total Concerns Reported



Percent of all office visitors reporting each concern category



Three Workplace Themes Defined FY2026

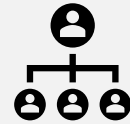


Organizational & Leadership

Faculty: Concerns centered on interactions with senior leadership and effectiveness of leadership communication. Organizational climate overall.

Staff: Operational changes generated uncertainty and affected morale.

Reported by 39% of Visitors



Evaluative Relationships

Faculty and staff sought clear expectations and early communication of performance concerns to allow meaningful improvement.

Communication gaps and lack of trust remained recurring features of these relationships.

Reported by 39% of Visitors



Values, Ethics, Standards

For both faculty and staff, concerns about potential violations of conduct standards were often accompanied by uncertainty or barriers around reporting.

Reported by 25% of Visitors

Also on the Radar in FY2026

Other notable patterns



Increase of 38% from FY2025 in concerns arising from experiences with administrative services and processes



10% of all visitors raised concerns about employee benefits—an 80% increase over FY2025



Staff visitors reported fewer opportunities for career growth, affecting job satisfaction

FY2026: Risks Identified by Visitors

133

VISITORS IDENTIFYING
RISKS

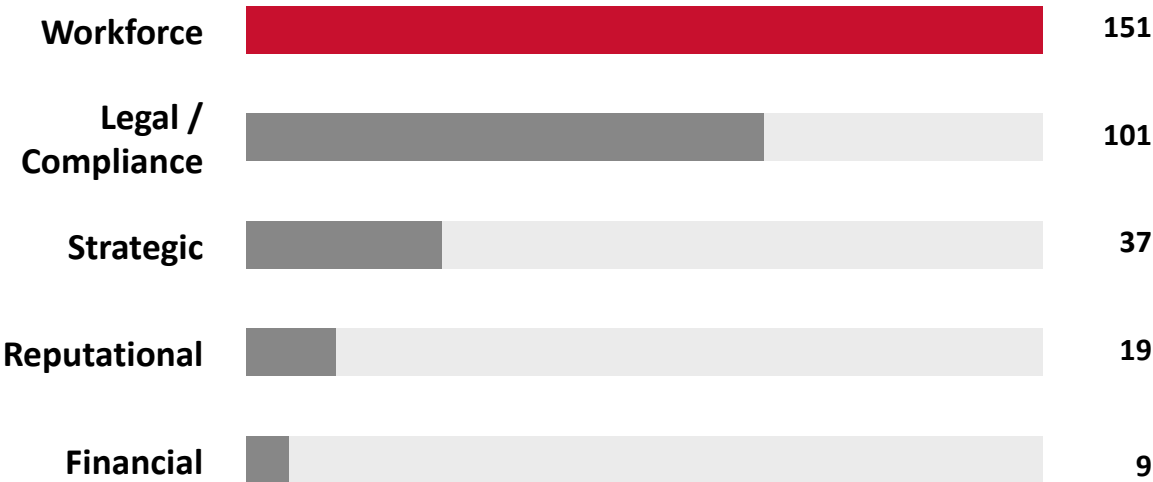
317

RISK SIGNALS
IDENTIFIED BY VISITORS

+51%

RISK SIGNALS
VS. FY2025

NUMBER OF RISK SIGNALS BY CATEGORY



The number of visitors identifying risk was virtually unchanged from FY2025, while reported risk signals increased by 51%.

Workforce risk signals more than doubled over the prior year.

Risk is recorded only when a visitor explicitly identifies an actual or potential institutional risk and describes circumstances giving rise to it.



FY2027: What Visitors Are Discussing Now

Early themes to watch



Institutional stability, job security, and overall climate

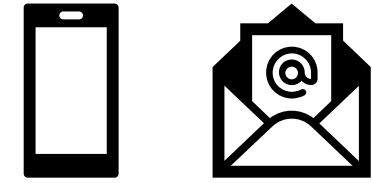


Clarity and frequency of leadership communication



Experiences with administrative services and processes remain a recurring concern

Contacting the Ombuds Office



Diane Levin, J.D. (she/her)
University Ombuds
Certified Organizational Ombuds Practitioner®

Office: 617.373.3362
Private mobile: 351.207.0220
Ombuds@northeastern.edu

<https://ombuds.northeastern.edu>

