



**The University of Texas at San Antonio**

Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs  
Student Ombudsperson's 2006-2007 Annual Report

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## **I. Introduction**

The 2006-2007 annual report includes the following:

- a description of the role of this position,
- promotion efforts,
- a comparison of the individuals served including areas of concern for 2006-2007 and 2005-2006, and
- recommendations for change and/or improvement.

## **II. Role of the Student Ombudsperson**

The primary role of the Student Ombudsperson is to assist students who are encountering challenges within the campus community by listening to concerns, providing and clarifying information, identifying and evaluating options, acting as a facilitator or mediator, serving as a referral agent, and making recommendations for change to enhance the mission of the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA).

The Student Ombudsperson offers confidential services to all students in a welcoming and safe environment and communicates with various representatives and offices to respond to and help resolve concerns in a timely manner. Parents and other individuals are also assisted within Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) guidelines in an effort to possibly remedy a particular situation. The Student Ombudsperson reports to the Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) and can be reached by appointment, email, fax, phone, and mail. Walk-ins are also welcome.

## **III. Promotion**

The role of the Student Ombudsperson was publicized on a welcome slide show at orientation for new undergraduate students and through co-presentations with the university's Diversity Trainer and Executive Director of Advising. The Student Ombudsperson also met with Retention and Graduation Analysts and the Assistant Dean of the Graduate School. An article was also published in the September 2006 issue of the Paisano (student newspaper) and an online Student Concern Form was created and added to the Student Ombudsperson web page - <http://www.utsa.edu/students/ombudsperson/>. The position is also referenced in the Information Bulletin.

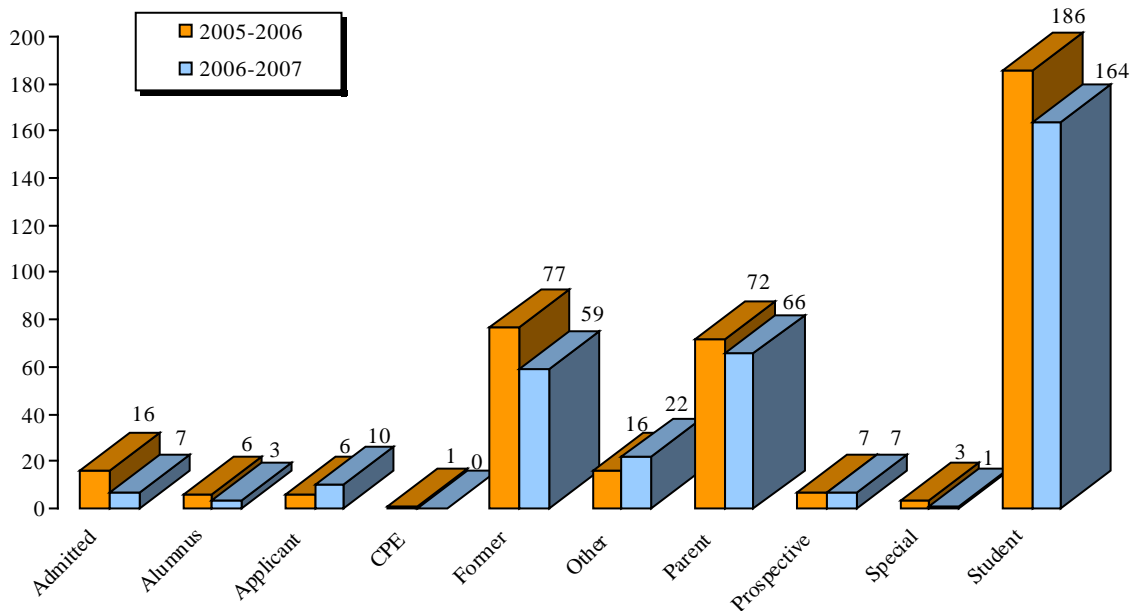
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## IV. Statistics

### Person Type

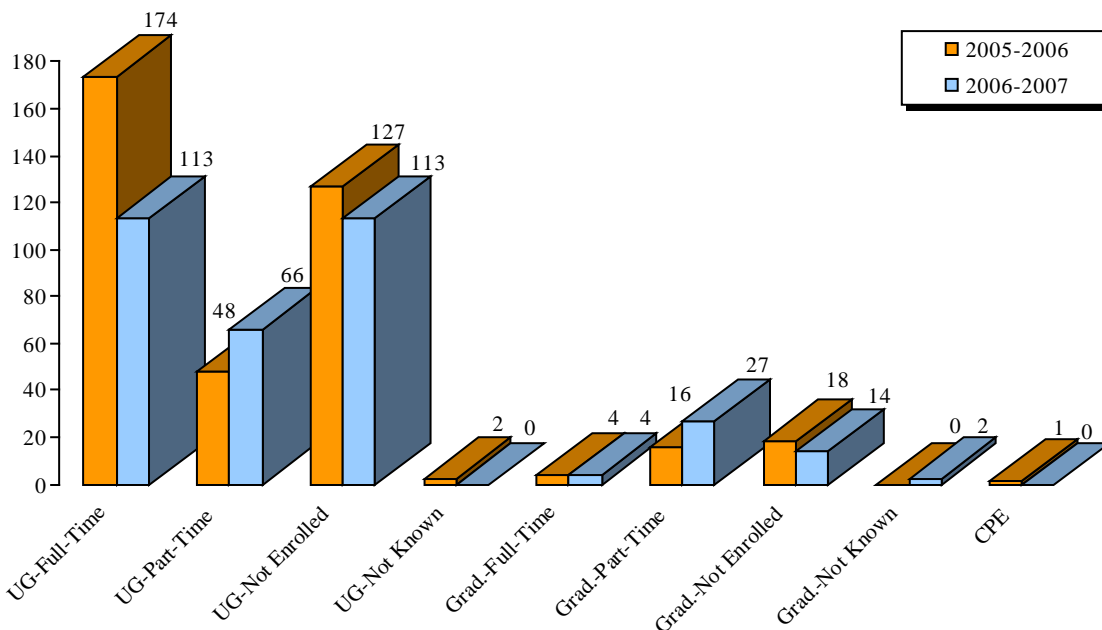


A total of 339 individuals were assisted by the Student Ombudsperson in 2006-2007 versus 390 in 2005-2006. This represents a difference of 51 contacts which could be attributed to a better understanding of the role of this position including the Student Ombudsperson web page which offers general guidance on attempting to resolve concerns. The individuals assisted were as follows:

- Admitted Accepted to the University.
- Alumnus Graduated from the University.
- Applicant Applied to the University.
- CPE Enrolled in classes through the Center for Professional Excellence.
- Former Previously attended the University (not currently enrolled).
- Other Third party inquiry (e.g. aunt, uncle, counselor, etc.).
- Parent Inquiry by mother, father, step parent, or legal guardian.
- Prospective Interested in applying to/attending the University.
- Special Non-degree seeking.
- Student Currently enrolled at the University.

The majority of those assisted continued to be currently enrolled students (48% for both years), former students (17% in 2006-2007 versus 20% in 2005-2006), and parents (19% in 2006-2007 versus 18% in 2005-2006).

## Enrollment Status



\* UG = undergraduate students and Grad = graduate students

Undergraduates constituted 86% of the contacts in 2006-2007 versus 90% in 2005-2006. Most continued to be categorized as either full-time or not enrolled. In 2006-2007, there was also an increase in contacts for UG-Part-Time and Grad.-Part-Time and a slight increase for Grad.-Not Known.

Enrollment statuses included the following:

- Undergraduate Full-Time Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior, or Special student enrolled at least 12 semester credit hours.
- Undergraduate Part-Time Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior, or Special student enrolled less than full-time.
- Undergraduate Not Enrolled Not currently enrolled.
- Undergraduate Not Known Enrollment status not confirmed.
- Graduate Full-Time Doctoral, Master's degree, or Special student enrolled at least 9 semester credit hours.
- Graduate Part-Time Doctoral, Master's degree, or Special student enrolled less than full-time.
- Graduate Not Enrolled Not currently enrolled.
- Graduate Not Known Enrollment status not confirmed.
- CPE Center for Professional Excellence student.

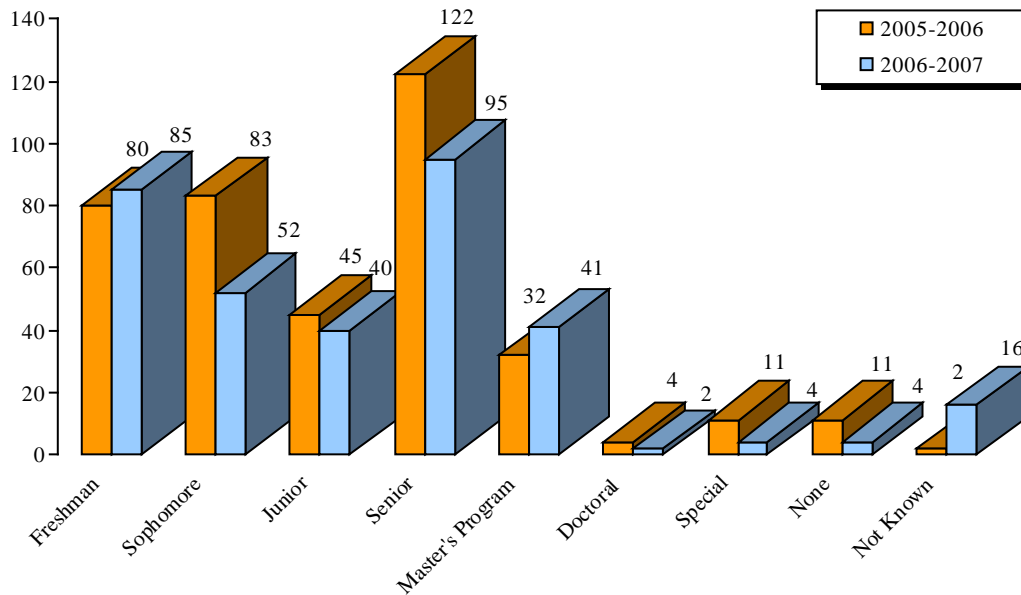
Note: If a parent or other (e.g. aunt, uncle, etc.) were assisted, enrollment of the student was checked.

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## Classification



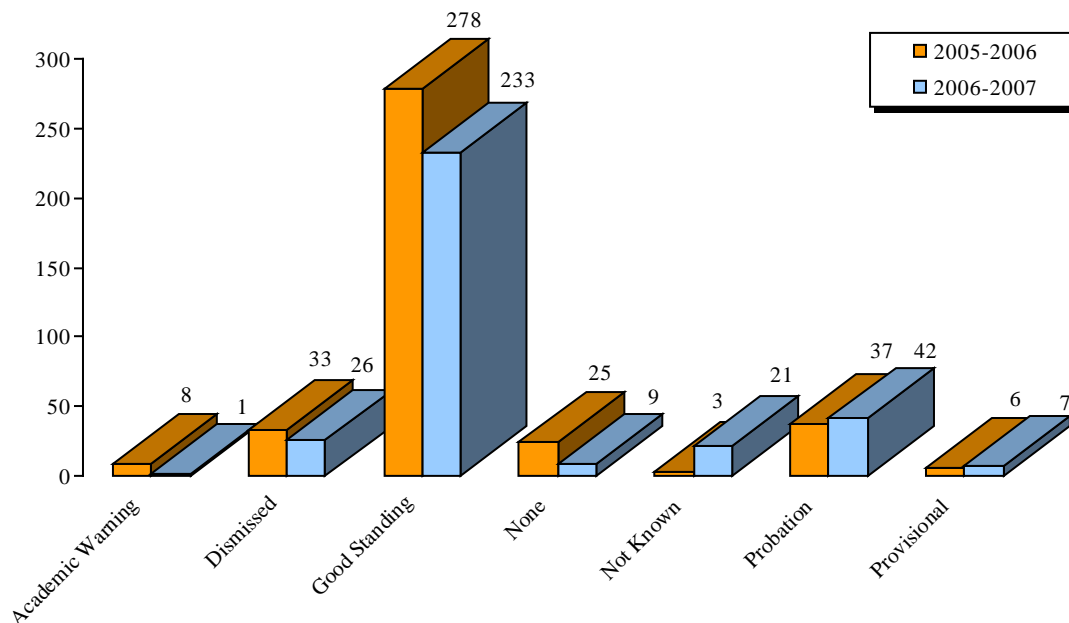
In 2006-2007, the bulk of the undergraduate contacts continued to be comprised of the same classifications as in 2005-2006. Seniors (28%) remained as the population served most often followed by freshmen (25%) and sophomores (15%). In 2005-2006, seniors (31%), followed by sophomores (21%), and freshmen (21%) made up the majority of the undergraduate contacts.

Classifications included:

- Freshman 0–29 semester credit hours earned.
- Sophomore 30-59 semester credit hours earned.
- Junior 60-89 semester credit hours earned.
- Senior 90+ semester credit hours earned.
- Master's Program Enrolled as a graduate student in a master's degree program.
- Doctoral Enrolled as a graduate student in a doctoral degree program.
- Special Non-degree seeking at the undergraduate or graduate level.
- None Classification not available (e.g. prospective student, new admit, etc.).
- Not Known Classification not confirmed.

Note: If a parent or other (e.g. aunt, uncle, etc.) were assisted, classification of the student was checked.

## Academic Status



While the percentage (22%) of students experiencing academic difficulties remained the same for both years, most continued to be in good standing with the university (69% for 2006-2007 and 71% for 2005-2006). The academic statuses consisted of:

- **Academic Warning** First-time undergraduate, admitted in good standing, who earned between a 1.00 and 1.99 semester grade point average during his/her first semester at UTSA.
- **Dismissed** Undergraduate on probation who earned below a 2.00 semester grade point average or a graduate who earned a grade point average of less than a 2.00 in any term, earned a grade of “F” in any course, or who was on probation and would be placed on probation again under the probation provisions listed below for graduate students.
- **Good Standing** Undergraduate who maintained at least a 2.00 or higher UTSA grade point average or a graduate who maintained at least a 3.00 or higher UTSA grade point average who did not fall into any of the categories which would cause a graduate student to be placed on probation or dismissal.
- **None** Academic status not available (e.g. prospective student, new admit, etc.).
- **Not Known** Academic status not confirmed.

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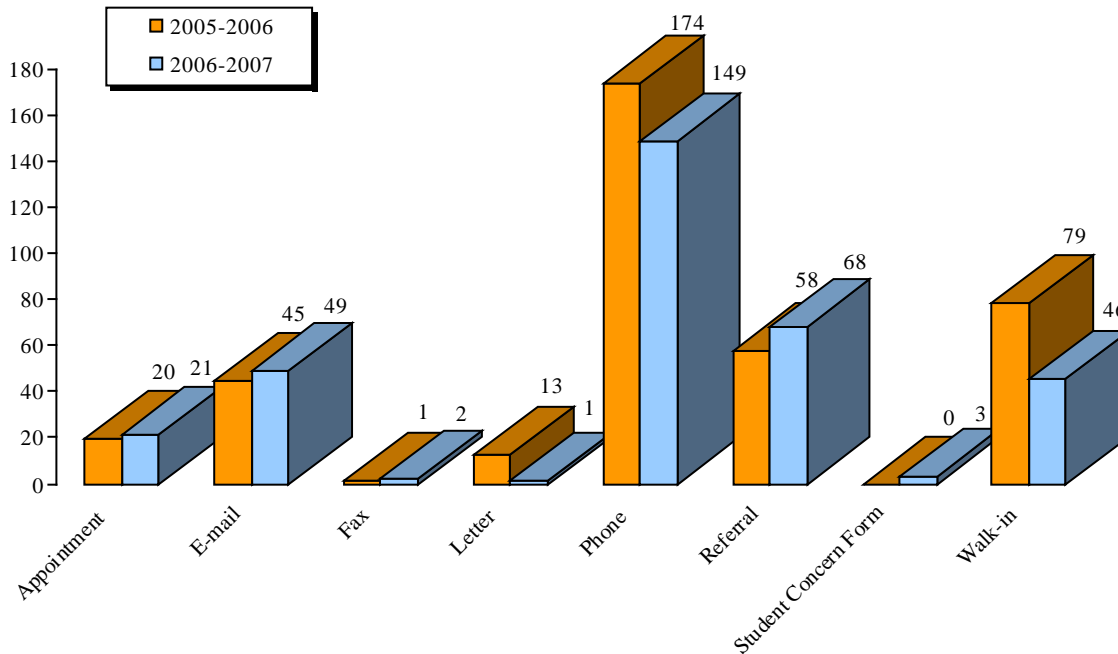
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- Probation Undergraduate in good standing whose overall UTSA grade point average fell below a 2.00 or a graduate who failed to achieve a grade point average of 3.00 in any term at UTSA, or who earned a grade of “D” in any course in a term, also includes undergraduates and graduates admitted on probation and those who have been reinstated following dismissal.
- Provisional Undergraduate admitted as provisional due to deficiencies in entrance scores or high school records.

Note: If a parent or other (e.g. aunt, uncle, etc.) were assisted, academic status of the student was checked.

**Contact Type**

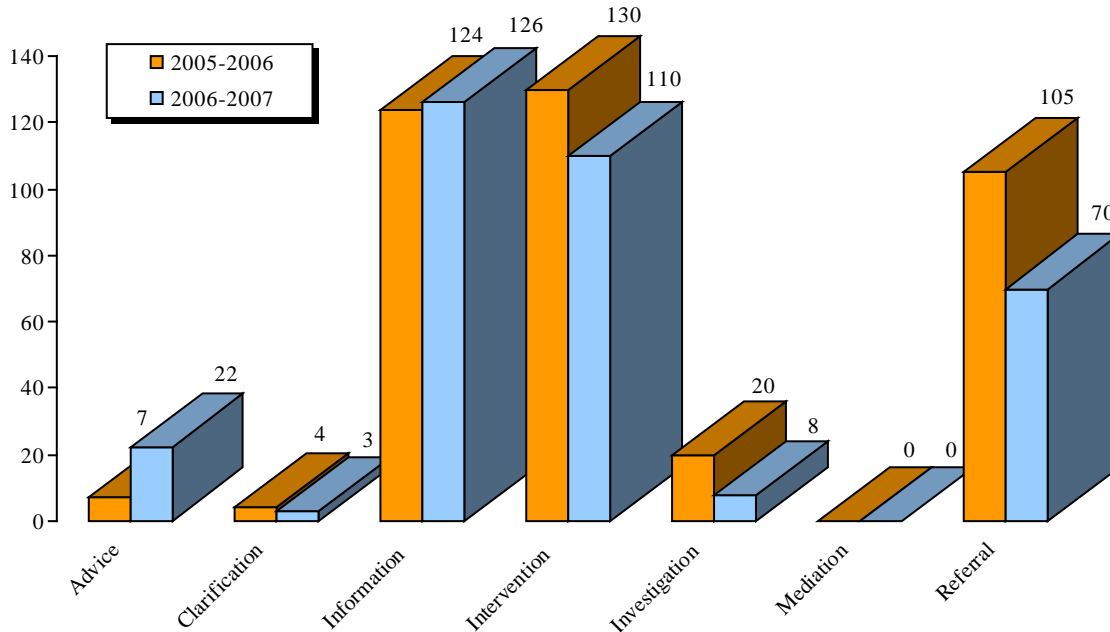


\*Student Concern Form was created in 2006-2007

In 2006-2007, phone (44%) contact continued to be the main method used to express concerns followed by referrals (20%) and email (14%). In 2005-2006, contacts were primarily initiated by phone (45%), followed by walk-ins (20%), and referrals (15%).



**Action Taken**



In 2006-2007, the actions used most often to aid individuals seeking assistance from the Student Ombudsperson included providing information (37%), intervention (32%), and referrals (21%). These three actions, intervention (33%), providing information (32%) and referrals (27%), were also carried out most often in 2005-2006.

Note: Some actions included multiple actions. The primary action taken is listed above.

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## V. Areas of Concern

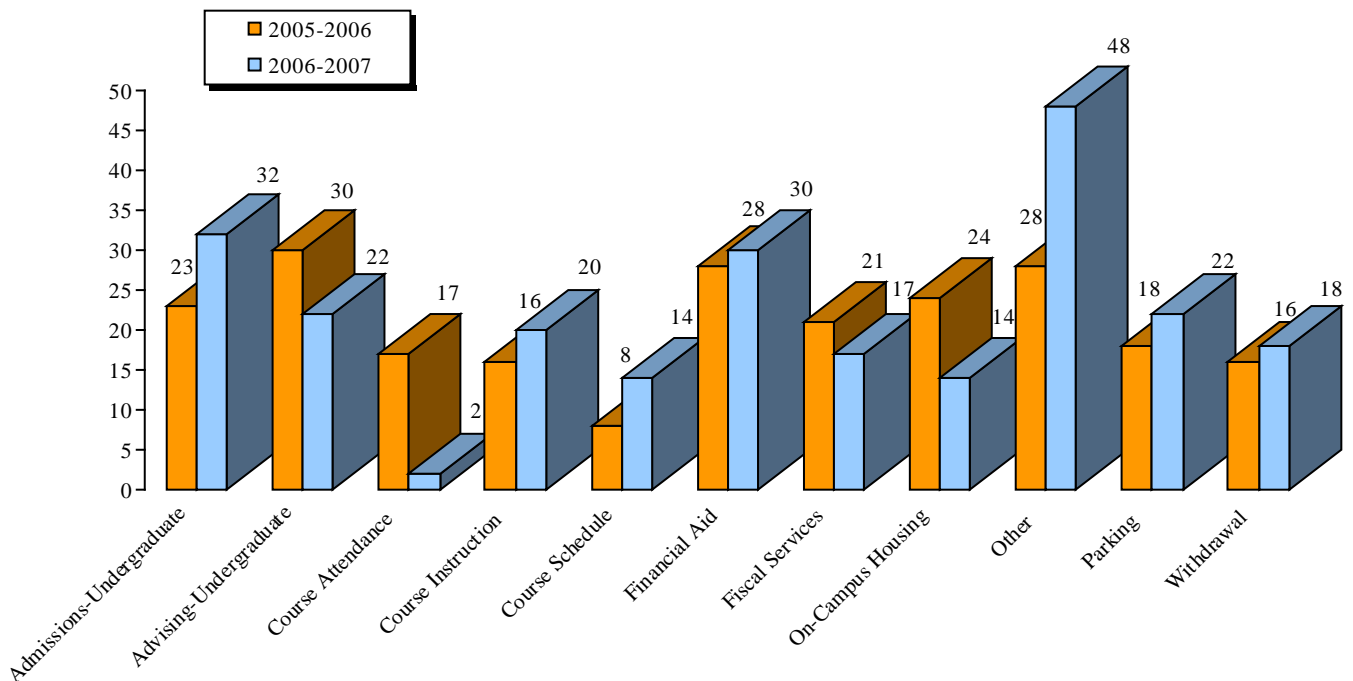
Area of Concern	Total 05-06	Total 06-07	Area of Concern	Total 05-06	Total 06-07
Accessibility	1	0	Fiscal Services	21	17
Admissions - Undergraduate	23	32	Grade Grievance	11	12
Admissions - Graduate	0	1	Grade Point Average	2	0
Advising – Undergraduate	30	22	Grades	2	1
Advising - Graduate	7	4	Graduation	12	9
ASAP	1	0	Grant	2	0
Bookstore	2	0	Health Services	3	2
CAP Program	3	3	International Programs	0	2
Card Office	1	0	Internship	1	2
Challenge Exam	0	1	Judicial Affairs	3	3
Change of Grade	1	2	Library	2	1
Classification Change	1	0	Lonestar/myUTSA email	1	1
CLEP	1	0	Military Orders	2	0
Computer Lab	2	0	Off-Campus Housing	8	2
Core Curriculum	2	1	On-Campus Housing	24	14
Course – Attendance	17	2	Other	28	48
Course – Drop	6	5	Paisano	0	0
Course – Grading Process	7	8	Parking	18	22
Course – Instruction	16	20	Registration	2	2
Course – Make-up Exam	1	1	Reinstatement	11	8
Course – Missed Quiz	1	0	Repeat Policy	1	0
Course – Schedule	8	14	Residency	3	2
Course load Reduction	0	1	Safety	1	0
CPE	1	0	Scholarship	3	3
Dance Team	1	0	Student Organization	6	1
Diploma	0	2	Study Days	1	0
Disability Services	1	1	Testing Services	1	0
Dissertation	1	0	Transcript Request	8	6
Enrollment Verification	1	0	Texas Success Initiative	5	0
ExCET/TEExES	4	0	Tuition	1	0
FCSA Evaluation	2	0	University Police	6	1
Fees	1	1	University of Texas -Telecampus	2	0
FERPA	1	1	Veteran Affairs	0	2
Field Placement	0	1	Visa	0	1
Final Exams	10	6	WebCT	1	0
Financial Aid	28	30	Withdrawal	16	18
			<b>Grand totals</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>339</b>

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In 2006-2007, areas of concern that were brought forward for assistance continued to apply to all components (academic, business, and student affairs) of the university. The areas of concern that were expressed most often were similar for both years. However, there was one difference. In 2006-2007, course schedule was expressed most often in conjunction with the other categories, whereas, in 2005-2006, it was course attendance. The category of other also showed the greatest increase in activity from one year to the next.



The summary below provides details on the subject areas communicated most often to the Student Ombudsperson.

## Admissions – Undergraduate

- Admission hold which prevented registration due to outstanding final high school transcript, dual credit transcript, etc.
- Questions about the admissions process for international students.
- Evaluation of credit (e.g. advance placement, transfer courses, etc.).
- Request to delay payment of application fee due to economic hardship.
- Prospective students interested in applying to UTSA.\*
- Status of incomplete files during peak periods.\*
- Appeal process for those who missed the application deadline or were denied admission.\*
- Other process issues such as when to reapply, electing academic fresh start, changing admission status (e.g. degree seeking to transient), etc.\*

\* Similar for both years.

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## Advising – Undergraduate

- Questions about academic dismissal, intervention programs, and teacher certification requirements.
- Seeking advising for early reinstatement.
- Core complete and prerequisite inquiries.
- Clarification of information and receiving responses from advisors.
- Clearance from advisors in order to register for courses.
- Understanding that non-course based instruction (NCB) does not apply to hours enrolled at the university.
- Questions about appeal and petition processes, advising holds, returning after medical withdrawal, etc.\*
- Inquiries about changing majors, course equivalents, math placement, Texas Success Initiative, transfer courses, etc.\*

## Course Instruction

- Difficulty understanding instructor; language barrier.
- Questions about course content, grading policies, passage rates, and teaching style.\*
- Communicating with instructors to discuss concerns.\*
- Instructor behavior, racial statements, and classroom management.\*

## Course Schedule

- Courses needed for degree program/graduation were full; lack of/limited course offerings.
- Courses dropped due to non-payment and back to back scheduling issues with downtown and 1604 classes.
- Difficulty accessing online course schedule.
- Full-time enrollment necessary for financial aid and residency purposes.

## Financial Aid

- Adjustments to financial aid awards due to audits, changes in enrollment status, graduation, etc.
- Corrections needed to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA); FAFSA rejected because it was incomplete.
- Availability of work-study jobs; how to find a work-study job.
- Questions about book loans, part-time budgets, eligibility for financial aid under House Bill (HB) 1403, etc.
- Special circumstance and financial hardship requests.

\* Similar for both years.

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## Financial Aid

- Questions about processing College Access Loans (CAL), Federal Stafford Loans, and Federal Parent Loans for Undergraduate Students (PLUS) and reinstating and canceling loans.
- Status of file and when funds would be disbursed.\*
- Appeal process for those who did not meet Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards or missed the SAP deadline.\*

## Fiscal Services

- Questions about paying online, installment payment options, posting of payments, and payment deadlines.
- Fiscal services hold on account; unable to register.
- Account sent to collections, balance owed from previous terms, and scheduling payment arrangements.\*
- Process for appealing to the University Bursar.\*
- Status of appeals, refund checks, and loan disbursements.\*
- Courses dropped due to non-payment.\*

## On-Campus Housing

- Questions about when to submit deposit, posting of payments, contract renewals, and payment deadlines.
- Request for contract release and housing cancelations.
- Housing hold on account; unable to register.
- Process used to assign rooms; status of housing assignment.
- Understanding housing charges on bill, scheduling payments arrangements, and eviction concerns.\*
- Inquiries about living on-campus, wait lists, and other options when on-campus housing was filled to capacity.\*

## Other

- Inquiries about making arrangements to close out affairs (e.g. move belongings out of dorm room, return books, etc.) for deceased students and notifications about other extenuating circumstances.
- Discussions about various processes, policies, and resources for a better connection to and understanding of the university.
- Infrastructure and customer service concerns.
- Inquiries about tuition and fees.

\* Similar for both years.

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## Other

- Questions about contacting students, computer access, providing more academic options, relocating due to military service, etc.
- Student behavior in classes/at university.

## Parking

- Inquiries about disabled student parking and shuttle services.
- Permit charge exemption for children of disabled Texas firefighters and law enforcement officers.
- Holds for parking citations, removal of holds, immobilization boot on car, and purchasing a permit.\*
- Questions about parking policies, garage and visitor parking, wait lists, the availability of on-campus parking, etc.\*
- Process for appeals including status of appeals.\*

## Withdrawal

- Questions about the withdrawal process including where to find the online withdrawal form.\*
- Inquiries about medical/mental health withdrawals including the appeal process when a request is denied.\*
- Retroactive withdrawal requests due to mitigating circumstances.\*

Note: If there were multiple areas of concern, the primary area of concern was tracked.

## **VI. Recommendations**

As follow-up to the 2005-2006 report, WebCT email addresses were included in the FERPA directory information section of the information bulletin. The Military Student Handout for Withdrawing Due to Deployment was also updated and a Toolbox for Students was created and added to the Student Ombudsperson web page - <http://www.utsa.edu/students/Toolbox.html>. In 2006-2007, a new policy was implemented in the library electronic classroom as follow-up to a student concern. Computer terminals would be logged off automatically if left unused for twenty (20) minutes. This would prevent users from leaving their terminals unattended for long periods of time and would enable other students the opportunity to use a computer if needed. Password resetting information was added to the Air Rowdy login page as a way to improve communication about this process to students. A suggestion was also submitted to the Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOP) Revision Committee to consider addressing funeral and military leave for students.

\* Similar for both years.

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## Abbreviations

Air Rowdy	Campus Wireless Network
ASAP	Automated Student Access Program
CAL	College Access Loan
CAP	Coordinated Admissions Program
CLEP	College Level Examination Program
CPE	Center for Professional Excellence
ExCET/TEExES	Examination for the Certification of Educators in Texas/Texas Examinations of Educator Standards
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid
FCSA	Foreign Credentials Service of America
FERPA	Family Education Rights and Privacy Act
HB	House Bill
HOP	Handbook of Operating Procedures
NCB	Non-Course Based Instruction
PLUS	Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students
SAP	Satisfactory Academic Progress
WebCT	World Wide Web Course Tools