

Addressing Classroom Disruption

Defining Disruptive Behavior

Disruptive student behavior is detrimental to the academic community because it interferes with the learning process, inhibits the ability of instructors to teach effectively, diverts university energy and resources away from the educational mission, and may indicate a significant level of personal problems or distress on the part of the disrupter.

Direct threats from a student should not be tolerated.

(i.e. "You are going to be sorry you did that!", "I know where you live", or "Just wait—I'll get you!")

Call Police Services immediately!

Disruptive behavior exists on a continuum and can assume many forms.

Disruptive Behavior IS:

- *The student in your class who is persistently tardy or leaves early;*
- *The student who talks incessantly while you are delivering a lecture;*
- *The student who loudly and frequently interrupts the flow of class with questions or interjections; or*
- *The student who becomes belligerent when you confront his or her inappropriate behavior in class.*

Disruptive Behavior IS NOT:

- *Cultural differences*
- *Disagreements or differences of opinion*
- *Situational frustration*
- *Dealing with stress and emotion*
- *Needing extra time or attention for a special reason*

Preventing Disruptive Behavior

- 1) *Set clear expectations about classroom behavior and include these expectations in the syllabus.*
- 2) *Review these expectations in class*
- 3) *Model professional behavior. Respond to inappropriate remarks in a professional and mature manner. Put-downs or witty comebacks can potentially escalate a situation.*

APPROPRIATE REFERRALS FOR DISRUPTIVE STUDENTS & STUDENTS IN CRISIS

- *If a student has threatened you or someone else—Call Police Services Immediately (911 or 802-656-3473)*
- *Emotional Issues/Anger Management—Please refer to Counseling and Psychiatry Services (CAPS). (802-656-3340)*
- *If you are concerned about a student and are not sure what the appropriate resource is, notify the following offices:*
 - *Your College Dean's Office*
 - *Dean of Students Office (802-656-3380)*

INTERVENTION STEP #1

Ask the student to immediately and respectfully end the behavior by:

1. Ask the student to stay after class so that you can discuss why the behavior is inappropriate or disruptive

(OR)

2. Take a break during class and ask the student to end the behavior

All of these verbal conversations should be followed up via an email to the student which summarizes the conversation.

NOTE: If you feel the student is struggling personally, please contact Counseling and Psychiatry Services or the Dean of Students Office to strategize how best to get the student the support they need.



INTERVENTION STEP#2 (Behavior Continues)

- 1) Let the student know that he/she needs to meet with you and the Department Chair as soon as possible about his/her continued behavior in order for them to return to class
- 2) You and the Department Chair should follow-up in writing to the student via email outlining the behavior and future expectations for class participation

NOTE: Faculty member should keep a log describing disruptive behavior and documenting the meetings and conversations that have occurred with the student. These documents should be kept on file.



INTERVENTION STEP#3

- 1) If the student has not changed his/her behavior, the case should be referred to the Dean of Students Office (6-3380).
- 2) Submit all related documentation and incidents describing disruptive behavior to the Dean of Students Office.

GUIDELINES FOR MEETING WITH A DISRUPTIVE STUDENT

It is appropriate to meet privately with a disruptive student following a confrontation or removal from a classroom. As an educator, you may wish to request a meeting with a student who has displayed unacceptable behavior even when a confrontation has not resulted. In either case, the meeting is an opportunity for the student to understand the inappropriateness of his or her behavior and to develop strategies for continuing successfully in the class.

During the meeting:

- 1) Remain calm. This may be difficult if the student is agitated or confrontational, but your calm and reasoned response will best control the meeting.
- 2) Do not take behavior or remarks personally, even though they may be directed at you. Disruptive behavior usually results from other life problems or a general academic frustration.
- 3) Be specific about the inappropriate behavior the student has exhibited. Describe the behavior, don't focus on the person. Explain why the behavior is a problem.
- 4) Ask questions and summarize what you hear the student saying. Respectful concern may enable you, the educator, to help the student be successful both in your class and in his or her general university experience.
- 5) Focus on areas of agreement between you and the student. Conclude by summarizing any resolution and articulating expectations for the future.

Consultation/Support Resources Include:

- Police Services-(911/or 6-3473)
- Your College Dean's Office
- Counseling and Psychiatry Services-(6-3340)
- Center for Student Ethics and Standards-(6-4360)
- Dean of Students Office (6-3380)
- ACCESS-(67753)