GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING
DISRUPTIVE STUDENT CONDUCT IN THE
CLASSROOM OR OTHER LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

Students, faculty and staff have the responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty has the professional responsibility to treat students with understanding, dignity and respect and to effectively manage the learning environment. Disruptive students in the academic setting hinder the educational process. "Disruption," applied to the academic setting, means behavior that a reasonable faculty/staff member would view as interfering with normal academic functions. Examples include, but are not limited to: persistently speaking without being recognized or interrupting other speakers; behavior that distracts the class from the subject matter or discussion; refusal to comply with faculty/staff direction; or in extreme cases, physical threats, harassing behavior or personal insults. Civil expression of disagreement with the course instructor, during times when the instructor permits discussion, is not in itself disruptive behavior and is not prohibited.

Preconditions for the classroom

At the beginning of the semester, the faculty member's expectations and standards for appropriate classroom behavior should be discussed with the students. These expectations and standards also may be included in the course syllabus.

If a student’s behavior is mildly disruptive, such as, distracts other students from the task at hand, talks loudly out of turn during lecture, monopolizes the discussion, makes disrespectful comments (written or verbal) to the instructor or to another student, comes late and is disruptive settling in, and the behavior impedes the learning process, then the faculty member should make a reasonable attempt to talk to the student about the inappropriate behavior. A private conversation with the student may be more productive than a verbal reprimand or a warning in the presence of other students. When the faculty member acts reasonably and the student remains disruptive, the faculty member may choose to contact the department head and/or the counseling office. The department head may choose to observe the behavior in class, meet with the student to discuss the situation, or facilitate a communication process between the faculty member and student. Depending on the nature and perception of the disruption, the student may be referred to the counseling office.
Disciplinary Action

If a student is considered disruptive to the point of disturbing the learning process, the faculty member is expected to inform the student that the behavior is disrupting the class and to request the student to stop the behavior. If the student persists, the faculty member is authorized to ask the student to leave the class. If the student fails to comply with the request to leave the class, the instructor should call security (2937) to assist with the student's removal. The faculty member must then file a report, with the charges specified, with the Student/Faculty Disciplinary Committee within 24 hours of the incident. The department head should be informed of the incident and can assist with the process. The faculty member may not exclude the student from the classroom or other academic area while a resolution of the matter is pending.

Any student, faculty member or administrator can refer student conduct violations to the chairperson of the student-faculty disciplinary committee. Student conduct cases of an unusual or emergent nature can be referred to the dean of student development when immediate action is deemed necessary. All other cases are handled by committee hearings.

Special Notes:

1. Documentation. The faculty member should document all incidents of disruptive, disrespectful, offensive and/or threatening behavior as they arise, even though they may appear to be minor at the time. Documentation needs to be objective and include the date, time, location, persons involved and what took place (the specific actions/behaviors that occurred). If a subjective judgment about the behavior is made, then the faculty member must substantiate it with objective and specific examples, using direct and accurate quotes and give an explanation of the context in which it was said. A pattern of disruptive behavior can be used to substantiate charges made against the student and/or bring about some mediating action. Submit the documentation to the department head.

2. Disciplinary action. Disciplinary actions which the College may impose, after guilt is confirmed by the Student/Faculty Disciplinary Committee, include a formal warning, probation, suspension and dismissal. An instructor referring a student for disciplinary action does so under the provisions of the Student Conduct code, which can be found in the Appendix of the College catalog.

REV. April, 2008