CONFLICT & DISRUPTION IN THE CLASSROOM

Division of Student Development

- Disruption: what is it?
  - Repeated, continuous, or multiple student behaviors that prevent an instructor from teaching and/or prevent students from learning
    - Examples include, but are not limited to:
      - Talking on a cell phone in the middle of class
      - Persistently speaking without being recognized
      - Interrupting other speakers
      - Harassing behavior or insults
      - Engaging in content on a laptop that others find disruptive
  - What it is not:
    - Being irritating or rude
    - Simple disagreement

- Effective Steps to Try to Prevent Disruptive Behavior
  - Important strategies early on
    - Define expectations in writing & verbally, including defining disruptive and productive behaviors
    - Get to know students and make sure students know you
    - Create active learning opportunities
    - Seek feedback
    - Model the behavior you want to see
    - Address rude and irritating behavior outside of class upon it occurring

- Responding to Disruptive Behavior
  - Address the disruption immediately
    - Address the behavior specifically
    - Firmly, but friendly
    - Minimize public discussions – ask to meet after class
  - Follow-up with the student after class, in writing and in person, to set clear expectations about their behavior moving forward
    - Use conflict reduction strategies
  - Refer the student to campus resources if you see or sense a concern
  - If the disruption continues after you addressed it, tell the student that they need to leave the class for the remainder of that class session
    - Faculty members have broad authority to manage the classroom environment, including the ability to tell a student to leave a class session
    - Report the behavior to Student Conduct
    - A student cannot be removed from a course without a student conduct process
  - If the student refuses to leave the class session, call Security at 608.663.4321 for assistance
  - If the disruption was severe enough, consider canceling the rest of the class session

Examples of Responding to Disruptive Behavior
- Keep your focus on the student. Rather than say, “Class, we all know that talking during lecture is disruptive,” say, “Jane, your talking during class is disrupting the lecture and I need to ask you to stop.”
- Be clear about the behavior. If the student is talking out of turn, tell them. Rather than ask, “Do you have a question?” say, “Jane, now is not the time for discussion. There will be an opportunity for questions and debate at the end of the lecture.”
- If you need to ask the student to leave, do so clearly and directly. Rather than say, “Get out! Go! Get out of here!” say, “John, your behavior has exceeded what is acceptable for this class and it is time for you to leave. I will be in contact with you via email to discuss future class sessions.” At this point, it is a good idea to pause class until the student exits the room.
• Following-Up After the Disruptive Behavior
  o If possible, set up a time to talk to the student after the class session where the disruptive behavior occurred and before the next class session
    ▪ Explain to the student that you thought their behavior was disruptive and that each person is responsible for their own thoughts, emotions, and actions
    ▪ Upon hearing the student’s story, repeat what was heard to avoid misinterpretations from the beginning
    ▪ Brainstorm with the student regarding possible solutions to the difficulty - feel free to be creative in this process - then try to select the most likely resolution to the difficulty together
    ▪ Clearly articulate the responsibilities of each of you for making the proposed solution a reality.
    ▪ Set a timeline for future meeting(s) to assess the success of the solution, and to make modifications, if necessary.
  o At minimum, always follow-up in an email, documenting what happened and making clear how the behavior was disruptive (and summarizing your conversation)

• Reporting Classroom Disruption
  o Disruptive behavior that results in a removal from the class session should always be reported
    ▪ Report form available online: deanofstudents.edgewood.edu
    ▪ Click on “Report Student Concerns:
    ▪ Or go to the form directly: tinyurl.com/ECCares
    ▪ For incidents that involve bias: diversity.edgewood.edu
  o Other behaviors that are addressed during the class and stop do not have to be reported
  o Reports are then reviewed and investigated
    ▪ Referred to EC Cares or Student Conduct
  o Consults about student behavior are always welcome

• What Happens After Reporting: The EC Cares and Student Conduct Processes
  o EC Cares Process
    ▪ Brought to the attention of a team of individuals from across the College to discuss the concerns and look for patterns of behavior
    ▪ Follow-up meetings held with the student to discuss ongoing issues
    ▪ Referrals to appropriate resources are made
  o Student Conduct Process
    ▪ Student Conduct Officer conducts an investigation into the incident
    ▪ Student provided notice of allegations and a Student Conduct Conference (opportunity to be heard)
    ▪ Student Conduct Officer decides student’s responsibility, and sanctions, if applicable
  o Referrals to appropriate resources are made

How to Report Concerns

deanofstudents.edgewood.edu or tinyurl.com/ECCares

For incidents that involve bias: diversity.edgewood.edu

Dean of Students Office: 608.663.2212
Security Office (Non-Emergency): 608.663.3285
Security Office (Emergency): 608.663.3285
Immediate Threats to Life: 911

Adapted from materials produced by John Carroll University, University of Washington, Iowa State University, and Metro State University of Denver.