

Office of Student Judicial Affairs
Kendall Hall 112

Classroom Disruption

Examples of Classroom Disruption

- Repeatedly leaving and entering the classroom without authorization
- Making loud or distracting noises
- Persisting to speak without being recognized
- Repeated answering of cellular phone or allowing pagers to beep
- Repeated use of text messaging
- Resorting to physical threats or personal insults

Guidelines for Handling Classroom Disruption

- **If a student is posing a threat to the safety of themselves or others, or becomes physically or verbally abusive**, University Police Department (UPD) should be contacted immediately and a report should be submitted to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs (SJA). It is often a mistake to assume that aggressive behavior will stop on its own. Err on the side of safety.
- **In other events of deliberate classroom disruption**, it is important to deal with the behavior in a calm, courteous, and direct fashion before it escalates. During class, you may first make a general comment such as, “We have too many private conversations going on at this time; let’s focus on the same topic.”
- **If the disruptive behavior does not cease** you may ask a particular student to refrain from the disruptive behavior and ask that they come see you after class so you can address the problem(s) in private. When you meet with the student, explain why you consider this type of behavior inappropriate, stress your behavioral expectations for your students, and warn the student that further occurrences of disruptive behavior may result in disciplinary action. Be sure to document the incident in some way.
- **If the behavior is repeated or the student exhibits a different disruptive behavior**, the student should be given a verbal as well as a written warning. The written warning should be copied to your Department Chair and the SJA office. It should contain only factual descriptive information. Consulting with your Department Chair or Student Judicial Affairs may be helpful at this time.
- **If the disruptive behavior continues**, you may ask the student to leave the class and not return until they have met with SJA. If the student refuses to leave, you may call University Police for assistance. A disruptive student who is asked to leave or who is removed from class should, as soon as possible, be given the opportunity to meet with you to discuss their behavior. You may meet with the student alone, with a colleague, or with your Department Chair. The behavior should also be documented and reported to the SJA office. A disruptive student may not be permanently removed from class without a formal review; therefore, it is essential that you work with your Department Chair and the SJA office before taking this step.

The fact that a disruptive student has a disability should not inhibit you from acting on inappropriate behavior. For more information contact the SJA Office, or the Office of Disability Support Services (DSS).

Any information that you learn while speaking with a disruptive student privately should be handled in a confidential manner. You may only discuss the case with campus officials who have a legitimate educational interest such as your Department Chair or SJA. The privacy of a student's educational records (i.e. grades, reports of misconduct, etc.) is protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). For more information contact the SJA Office.

- University Police Department: 5555 or 911
- Student Judicial Affairs: 6897

Tips

- Clarify standards for student conduct at the beginning of the semester. Students may not see certain behaviors as rude, uncivil or disruptive. It is up to you to clarify expectations.
- Both students and faculty have some measure of academic freedom. Students should be allowed to ask questions but not in such a manner as to insult the faculty member or other students.
- It is rarely productive to try to handle the causes of the disruption while in the classroom. Disciplining a student in front of others is not likely to reduce future disruptions.
- There may be times when it is necessary to speak to a student during class about their behavior – do so in a firm but non-threatening manner. Request the student's time after class.
- Be positive rather than negative (i.e. "It seems we have two conversations going on, let's try to focus on the topic at hand").
- If you feel you are in danger, contact UPD at 898-5555. Also contact UPD if any of the following occur:
 - Physical threats are made against you or another student
 - There is a weapon in the room
 - The student appears to be unstable
- Stay calm and do not become defensive.
- Consult with your Department Chair or the Office of Student Judicial Affairs.
- Document Everything.