Managing Disruptive Student Behavior

Division of Student Affairs

Colorado State University
Disruptive Student Behavior

Have you witnessed an increase of incivility in your classroom? If so, you are not alone. Because of national discourse regarding safety on college campuses, faculty and staff seem more conscious of disruptive, threatening, and concerning behaviors. Examples include: use of email, list-serves, or Facebook to verbally attack or slander classmates as well as bullying through the intentional isolation of colleagues on team projects. Reactions to students’ differences can lead to class conflict, impacting a student’s ability to learn and an instructor’s ability to teach. Join the staff of Conflict Resolution & Student Conduct Services as they share some interesting case studies where one’s age, ability, veteran status, and religion played a role in classroom conflict. All participants will leave this session with strategies to address difficult situations and promote inclusivity.

Definition of Disruptive Behavior

“Disruption or obstruction of teaching, classroom or other educational interactions, research, administration or disciplinary proceedings, or participation in an activity that disrupts normal University activities, and/or threatens property or bodily harm or intentionally interferes with the right of access to University facilities or freedom of movement of any person on campus” as stated in the Student Conduct Code are subject to disciplinary sanctions. Disruptive behavior persistently or grossly interferes with academic or administrative activities. Such behavior actively inhibits students’ ability to learn, instructors’ ability to teach, or the regular operation of the campus. Occasionally, disruptive behavior may even threaten or endanger the physical or psychological health, safety, or welfare of others.

Prevention

In order to foster a campus culture of respect and civility, it is important to articulate expectations, encourage discussion, and respond to problems consistently. Faculty members encounter fewer problems with student behavior when they clearly state their expectations about the importance of respectful classroom behavior and/or create classroom expectations in collaboration with students. The following statement can be used by faculty members in their course materials and early class discussions.

“Colorado State University expects students to maintain standards of personal integrity that are in harmony with the educational goals of the institution; to observe national, state, and local laws, and University regulations; and to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people” (Conduct Code).
Faculty or Staff Response

Individual faculty or staff members are encouraged to provide a first-level response to problem student behavior unless they feel threatened or the behavior warrants more serious attention by the University. Experience indicates that, despite the common fear that responding to problem behavior will escalate the trouble, the opposite is primarily true. Concurrently, other students have expressed gratitude when faculty members respond effectively to problem behavior.

An individual student exhibiting inappropriate behavior should be approached in a private conversation whenever possible. The conversation should include a description of the problem behavior, why it is a problem, expectations of future behavior, and the specific consequence of continued problems. One possible consequence would be referral to University discipline. It is important to write a letter to the student summarizing the conversation and to copy it to Conflict Resolution and Student Conduct Services for their records.

Recommendations

• Set expectations and tone for your classroom.
• Learn strategies for diffusing problems.
• Respond immediately to problem behavior before it escalates.
• Document problem behavior in writing.
• Keep interactions with students calm and respectful.
• Consult and seek advice when needed.
• Create a safer setting when meeting with a student by having another person close by or present.
• Follow through with stated consequences if problem behavior continues.
• Provide opportunities for GTAs and less experienced faculty or staff to discuss problems without fear it will negatively reflect on their abilities.

Consultation

Generally, faculty and staff members are clear about which situations they feel comfortable dealing with themselves and which need University disciplinary or police response. Consequently, if the behavior feels intimidating, threatening,
or disturbing, it is wise to consult. Many faculty and staff members find it helpful to first consult with the Department Chair, Conflict Resolution and Student Conduct Services, or other campus agencies on specific situations to discuss the behavior and possible methods of response.

During early consultation, the Conflict Resolution and Student Conduct Services staff can check disciplinary records to determine whether there is an established pattern of problem behavior. This information can be useful in determining how to handle the problem or if it is appropriate to refer the student to the Conflict Resolution and Student Conduct Services office.

In summary, if faculty and staff members have any concerns on how to handle a particular situation, they should consult.

**Referral to Conflict Resolution and Student Conduct Services**

If a student’s behavior is disturbing, or the student has not responded to clear communication about appropriate behavior, additional assessment and response is needed. To make a referral, contact Conflict Resolution and Student Conduct Services. Complete written documentation of the problem behavior is required. The student is entitled to see this documentation, so make sure it contains only factual, descriptive information. If the student interferes with the orderly functioning of a classroom or office, the instructor’s ability to teach, or the safety or welfare of others, the student may be prohibited from returning to the classroom or office pending the disciplinary hearing. In addition, orders prohibiting contact with specific individuals can be issued.

The purpose of the disciplinary hearing is to discuss the facts in the case, hear the student’s perspective, and determine an appropriate disciplinary response, ranging from a warning to expulsion from the University. In addition, educational requirements, such as referrals for psychological counseling, may be made. Disciplinary decisions take into consideration both the needs of the campus community and the accused student.

Please call the Office of Conflict Resolution and Student Conduct Services for a copy of the Student Conduct Code, or visit: http://www.conflictresolution.colostate.edu

To report an incident, please visit https://publicdocs.maxient.com/incidentreport.php?ColoradoStateUniv
Immediate Threat
If there is an immediate threat to the safety of any person, the Colorado State University Police should be contacted immediately (911). Media telephones, located in many of the academic classrooms, can be used as emergency telephones. Ask Instructional Services personnel to immediately summon Colorado State University Police (CSUPD). The average CSUPD emergency response time to on-campus locations is under two minutes. The CSUPD emergency dispatcher will contact other services, such as ambulances, if needed. If you are unable to make the call yourself, designate a specific person to do it. ("You, in the red plaid shirt, go call 911 now.") When making a call to CSUPD, provide as much information as possible about the nature of the problem.

Emergencies ................................................................. 911
Campus Police (non-emergency) ...................... 491-6425
Conflict Resolution and
Student Conduct Services .......................... 491-7165
Counseling Center .............................. 491-6053

**Conflict Resolution and Student Conduct Services**

8015 Campus Delivery
325 Aylesworth Hall NW
Ft Collins, CO 80523-8015
(970) 491-7165 • FAX (970) 491-1800

**Hours:** 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday-Friday.
Please call to make an appointment.

**Our Purpose**
- Support students as they overcome mistakes.
- Engage in character development with an emphasis on ethical decision-making and integrity.
- Resolve conflict at the lowest level possible through education, facilitation and support.
- Foster a safe and welcoming community.