A Faculty Guide to

Addressing

Disruptive Behavior

in Class

*This guide is designed to serve as a quick reference tool to help instructors address behaviors that impact the learning environment, specifically those that occur in class. This is not intended as a comprehensive guide to the CCS Standards of Conduct for Students and all related procedures.*

*Campus resources are listed on the last page of this guide.*



**Disruptive Behavior**

Disruptive behavior in the classroom can be one way students act out their emotional stress and academic problems. Classroom disruption refers to behavior a reasonable person would view as substantially or repeatedly interfering with the conduct of the class. Disruptive behaviors can range from an isolated incident of mildly annoying or irritating behavior to the more aggressive, dangerous and or violent behaviors.

**DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIORS**

Some disruptive behaviors may be due to a change in the student’s health, living situation, or other circumstances. If the instructor knows the situation that is affecting their behavior, it may be beneficial to consult with the Dean of Student Support Services, who functions as the Student Conduct Officer at SFCC.

**Unwelcome behavior may include, but is not limited, to these examples:**

* Stalking, intimidating, or harassing an instructor or other students.
* Attempting to form close attachments to an instructor(s) and, as a result, shadowing or pursuing a relationship by excessive phone calls, emails, and letters.
* Continuous attention-seeking behaviors such as asking unnecessary questions.
* Sleeping.
* Consuming food and beverages.
* Cell phone texting and social media activity.
* Arriving late and leaving early.
* Poor personal hygiene that impacts other class members.
* Threatening behavior toward an instructor or classmates.
* Talking in class without permission, talking over others, dominating class discussions.
* Verbally abusive behavior toward an instructor or other students.
* Emotional outbursts.
* Inappropriate sharing of personal information.

**Preventing Disruptive Behavior**

**Identify issues that may arise and address them in the syllabus and on the first day of class.** For example:

* Proper way to address faculty (e.g., Dr. Mr., Ms.).
* Rules regarding attendance, punctuality, late assignments, make-up exams, etc.
* Expectations for how to be recognized in class (e.g., raising a hand to be recognized).
* How to engage in civil classroom discussion.
* Standards of academic integrity (e.g., cheating and plagiarism).
* Cell phone and computer usage.
* Decorum (sleeping, eating, guests, inappropriate language, etc.).

Include a reference to the CCS Standards of Conduct for Students in the syllabus.

Establish student/instructor boundaries (office hours, appropriate and inappropriate times to contact).

**PREVENTION TIPS**

After disruptive incidents, many students rationalize their interruptions by suggesting that the faculty are not available for their questions outside of class. Let students know that they will be held accountable to the information provided on the syllabus.

**CARES Team**

**Early Alert is a mechanism for helping students who are not progressing or succeeding academically.** Indicators may include irregular class attendance, poor test and homework outcomes, and students who appear not engaged in classroom activity. The CARES team oversees the Early Alert Process. Please use the Student Conduct, Care, and Behavior Form. The link to the form is available on the Employee Portal Landing Page.

**Early Alert is NOT designed to handle disruptive behavior situations.**

Once the report is submitted, a CARES team member will attempt to contact the student to determine how best to help get them back on track This may include connecting the student with a tutor, a counselor, Disability Access Services, or other campus resources. The student may be referred to off-campus resources such as the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).

**Student Conduct/Safety Concerns Reports**

When a student’s behavior causes a reasonable person to be alarmed, a CARES report may be submitted, but it is more appropriate to submit a Student Conduct/Safety Concerns Report, which can be found through the Student Conduct, Care and Behavior Form link on the employee portal landing page. (Threats of suicide, threats to do harm to others, strange or erratic behavior, etc.).

Once the Dean of Student Support Services receives a report, which goes to them automatically through the on-line form submittal, they will assess the situation and make a determination on the appropriate course of action.

Be specific in describing what the student says or does that is the cause for concern. The Dean of Student Support Services or designee may follow up with additional information collection as needed.

**Addressing Disruptive Behavior**

In addressing disruptive behaviors, there are several options below to consider depending on the severity of the student’s behavior. When a student’s behavior is such that your requests to stop are ineffective then a more serious approach may be necessary. In these situations, it will be necessary to fill out a Student Conduct Incident Report (SCIR), especially in situations when a student has been suspended.

* **Verbal Request**. Inform the student, in a calm, respectful and non-threatening manner, to refrain from the behavior because it impedes your ability to teach and their fellow students’ ability to learn.
* **Verbal Reprimand**. Remind a disruptive student of the agreed upon rules defined in the syllabus and hold violators accountable for their actions (i.e., consequences versus punishment).
* **Meet with the student outside of class**. Attempt to diffuse the situation by asking the student to meet with you outside of class time.
* **Suspension/Dismissal from Class**. If the situation does not immediately de-escalate, you may need to dismiss the student from class. If the student is so disorderly or disruptive that it is difficult to impossible to maintain classroom decorum, an instructor has the authority to exclude the student from any single class or program session up to three days.
* **Dismiss the Class**. In situations when an out of control student refuses to leave, it may be better to dismiss the class and to call Campus Safety.

**Don’t ignore your “gut” feeling!**

**Student Conduct/Safety Concerns Report**. In situations where a student has been counseled or suspended for disruptive behavior, fill out a Student Conduct/Safety Concerns report located on the SFCC employee portal landing page. *The form is located on the SFCC intranet, Initiatives, Behavioral Intervention Team link.*

**ADDRESSING BEHAVIORS**

**When Meeting with a Student …**

Not addressing disruptive behavior when it occurs creates the risk of losing credibility and a learning opportunity to hold the student responsible for their actions.

**In advance of meeting with a student …**

* Prepare for the meeting by writing specific points to address.
* Invite another faculty member, administrator, or staff member to attend the meeting.
* Remember that you can request Campus Safety presence.

**During the meeting …**

* Describe the behavior you observed or comments that were heard.
* Explain why you believe the student’s conduct is disrupting the classroom.
* Emphasize the desire for all students in the class to succeed.
* Remind the student of your expectations spelled out in the syllabus.
* Inform the student of the potential consequences if their actions continue.

**There are times when a student may try to provoke you into an argument…**

* In such situations be mindful of your emotions.
* Simply explain the consequences of his/her behavior.
* At that point, dismiss the student from your office.

**After the meeting …**

* Make notes about the date, time, and location of the meeting as well as the content of the meeting. Record any main points that were emphasized, any new information that came up during the meeting, and any “next steps” that were discussed.

**Do not:**

* Audio or video record the meeting or allow a student to record the meeting.

**Suspending a Student from Class**

Faculty and administrators have the right to suspend students from class for 1, 2, or 3 days “***IF the student's misconduct creates disruption to the point that it is difficult or impossible to maintain the decorum of the class, program or the learning and teaching environment.”***

**CLASS SUSPENSIONS**

Consider whether a student needs to be suspended for 1, 2, or 3 days. There may be situations in which a one or two day suspension is more appropriate. For example, a student that has a rare outburst may need to only be suspended for one day rather than the full three days. An incident on a Thursday might only require a Thursday-Friday dismissal rather than extending the absence into the next week, which could escalate or prolong the disruption.

The student may appeal the classroom suspension to the Vice President of Student Services who would consult with the faculty member or Division Dean.

Additional steps are necessary if further sanctions are desired. Please contact the Student Conduct Officer for options.

**If you suspend a student for 1, 2 or 3 days …**

* inform the student
* submit a Student Conduct/Safety Concerns Report

**Submitting a Student Conduct/Safety Concerns Report**

The Student Conduct Incident Report is now called the Student Conduct/Safety Concerns Form and is found on the employee portal landing page: Student Conduct, Care, and Behavior Report. When you click this link, click on the Student Conduct/Safety Concerns Form in the center of the page and complete the form.

Once a report has been submitted, it will be forwarded to the Conduct Officer.

In completing the report …

* **Provide all pertinent information concerning the student’s actions** (verbal comments, physical gestures) and how the student’s actions impacted others. In any situation in which you feel threatened or otherwise unsafe, it is important to describe what actions by the student caused you to feel that way.
* **Keep your statement factual since the form becomes part of the student’s record and the student will see it.**
* **Describe any actions you took to address the situation, have others assist, etc.** It is extremely helpful to know if the student’s behaviors have been addressed and how they reacted to that interaction.

**What Then?**

**INCIDENT REPORTS**

You may get a call or email from the conduct officer to gather more information and to ask if, in your opinion, the student will continue to pose a threat to the class after their suspension. If the student has been suspended from class, a conduct officer can lengthen the suspension until a meeting with the student can take place.

A formal Notice of Complaint will be sent to the student requiring them to meet with a conduct officer, student conduct board, or administrative panel.

* A hearing panel may be convened to determine whether the student was responsible.
* When a student is found responsible, they have the right to appeal the decision.
* The Appeal Board is made up of the Vice Presidents of Student Services at SFCC and SCC.
* Sanctions can range from a verbal warning to expulsion from the college.
* Upon adjudication of the case, the student conduct officer will notify the instructor, department chair, dean, and Campus Safety of the determination.

**Campus Resources**

**Campus Safety**

Building 16, Room 125, 509-533-3333

**Counseling Services - Academic**

Academic Counseling

Building 30, Second Floor, 509-533-3525

**Counseling Services – Mental Health**

Mental Health Intern Supervisor

Building 30, Second Floor, 509-533-3525

**Disability Access Services**

Building 30, Room 104, 509-533-4166

[sfcc.das@sfcc.spokane.edu](mailto:sfcc.das@sfcc.spokane.edu)

**Dean of Student Support Services/Student Conduct Officer**

Building 17, Room 128

**Title IX Coordinator**

Falls Gateway, Building 30,

Room 223, 509-533-3514

**CAMPUS RESOURCES**