

## Consultation

Generally, faculty and staff members are clear about which situations they feel comfortable dealing with themselves and which need College conduct or police response. However, 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 their Department Chair or direct supervisor, the Dean of Students, the AVP of Human Resources, and/or University Police to discuss certain behavior and possible methods of response.

The Dean of Students can review campus policies and check campus conduct records to determine whether there is a prior pattern of problem behaviors. This information is useful in determining how to handle the problem. It also points out why it is so important to copy in the Dean of Students when handling problem behaviors internally.

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

## Referral to the Dean of Students

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 the Dean of Students by telephone first. 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, upon request the student may be prohibited from returning to the classroom or office pending a campus conduct review. In addition, orders prohibiting contact with specific individuals can be issued.

If a campus conduct review is necessary, a discussion of the facts in the case takes place, the reviewing

body hears the student's perspective, and a determination of the appropriate response, if any, is made. Campus conduct decisions take into consideration both the needs of the campus community and those of the accused student.

*See the Student Code of Conduct for a more thorough explanation of campus conduct proceedings.*

If a student's behavior does not rise to the level sufficient to initiate a Code of Conduct review, yet the behavior is, nonetheless, described as "disturbing" and/or worrisome to one or more members of the Geneseo community, the Dean can initiate a review by the Behavioral Assessment Committee (BAC). BAC is a team of College personnel identified as key to the effective sharing of information about at-risk/distressed students and issues, and positioned in College roles that contribute to the clear elucidation and evaluation of relevant situations. **Note: since publication, the BAC is now called CARE(S)**

The major purpose of the Committee is consultative, in that it only makes recommendations, and it does not have the authority to confer sanctions.

### Possible recommendations from the BAC include:

- referral to Counseling Services;
- referral to Health Services;
- referral to alcohol or drug evaluation;
- referral to Student Conduct and Community Standards;
- provide guidance to other units at the College (e.g., educate staff on working with students with mental or emotional disorders);
- faculty notification;
- parental notification;
- various forms of victim assistance;
- referral for more intensive counseling or out- or in-patient treatment off-campus.

## Recommendations

- Develop and publish policies on classroom behavior.
- Set expectations and tone for your classroom.
- Learn strategies for diffusing problems.
- Respond immediately to problem behaviors before they increase.
- Consistently enforce published policies.
- Document problem behaviors in writing.
- Keep interactions with students calm and respectful.
- Consult and seek advice from qualified staff.
- Create a safe setting when meeting with a student by having another person close by or present.
- Follow through with stated consequences if problem behavior continues.
- Understand the standards of clear and present danger.

## Important Telephone Numbers

(585-245-xxxx)	
Campus Emergencies	5222
University Police (non-emergency)	5651
Dean of Students	5706
Student Conduct & Community Standards	5714
Human Resources	5616
Student Health & Counseling	5736/5716
Employee Assistance Program	5740
Off Campus Emergencies	911

## For more information, contact:

### DEAN OF STUDENTS

c/o Center for Community  
SUNY Geneseo  
1 College Circle  
Geneseo, NY 14454  
(585) 245-5706; Fax: (585) 245-5729

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# DISRUPTIVE STUDENT BEHAVIOR

## Guidelines for Faculty & Staff



DIVISION OF STUDENT & CAMPUS LIFE  
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT GENESEO

## Disruptive Student Behavior Guidelines for Faculty and Staff

Since the shootings at Virginia Tech in April 2007, faculty and staff members on college campuses throughout the United States have shown increased concern about disrespectful, disruptive, and violent student behavior on campus. Sometimes, student behaviors can be merely frustrating or mildly troublesome, but other cases may require consultation, campus conduct action, or immediate emergency response. Many inappropriate behaviors can be easily and directly dealt with by faculty or staff members. This brochure is designed to help faculty and staff members assess problem behavior and determine the appropriate course of action.

### Definitions

Gary Pavela defines disruptive behavior as "student behavior that a reasonable person would view as being likely to substantially or repeatedly interfere with the conduct of a class." **DISRUPTIVE** behavior persistently or grossly interferes with academic or administrative activities. Such behavior actively inhibits students' ability to learn, instructors' ability to teach, and/or the regular operations of the campus. Occasionally, disruptive behavior may even threaten or endanger the physical or psychological health, safety, or welfare of others. "Obstruction or disruption of regular College activities, including teaching, research, administration, campus services, student conduct proceedings, and organized events; interference with the free speech and movement of members of the College Community; refusal to identify oneself when requested or to obey any other lawful instruction from a College official or faculty member to discontinue or modify any action which is deemed disruptive," as stated in the Student Code of Conduct, is subject to campus conduct action.

**DISTURBING** behavior, on the other hand, usually causes us to feel concerned, alarmed, afraid or frustrated, but generally has no negative impact on other students, the professor's ability to teach or conduct class, or the implementation of other professionals' roles in the college.

### Prevention

Faculty members have significant authority to manage the classroom environment. They may set and enforce reasonable rules of classroom decorum, including prohibitions against speaking without being called upon, using cell phones, or engaging in other disruptive conduct. 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 behavior.

#### Prohibited acts may include:

- persistently speaking out without being called upon;
- persistent off-topic comments or questions;
- refusing to follow instructions;
- leaving and entering the room frequently without authorization;
- using cell phone, email, or other electronic devices.

The following statement provides one example for faculty members to use in their course materials and early class discussions as an indicator of expectations:

SUNY Geneseo 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 College regulations; and to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people.

While the college is a place where the free exchange of ideas and concepts can take place in an atmosphere that allows for debate and disagreement, all classroom behavior and discourse should reflect the values of respect and civility. Both students and the course instructors share the responsibility to maintain an appropriate learning environment that reflects these values. Students have both the right to learn and to participate in the learning process.

Classroom disruption by students constitutes a serious breach of College behavioral expectations described in the Student Code of Conduct. Faculty members are encouraged to respond to behaviors which are disruptive to the academic environment, and they may require students to leave the class pending discussion and resolution of the concerns. Students may be referred to the Dean of Students Office for possible campus conduct action including suspension or dismissal, and/or summon the University Police Department in serious cases of disruptive behavior.

Whether these specific statements are used or not, faculty members should make their individual expectations known for classroom behavior.

### 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 College. Experience indicates that, despite the common fear that responding to problem behaviors will escalate the trouble, the opposite is true. Concurrently, other students have expressed gratitude when faculty members respond effectively to problem behaviors.

Whenever possible, an individual student exhibiting inappropriate behavior should be approached in a private conversation. The conversation should include a description of the problem behavior, why it is a problem, expectations of future behavior, and the specific consequences of continued problems. One possible consequence would be the referral to College student conduct and community standards. At this point it is important to write a letter to the student summarizing the conversation and to copy it to the Dean of Students for his records. If a student continues to disrupt despite the warning, faculty/staff should ask the student to leave the area and may inform the student that the case will be referred for campus conduct action. If a student refuses to leave after being instructed to do so, s/he should be informed that this refusal is a separate violation subject to additional penalties, including a student conduct review and permanent exclusion

from class. If, in the faculty/staff member's best judgment, a disruptive student's threats or refusal to leave creates a safety risk or makes it impossible to continue class or other College functions, s/he should contact the University Police Department and/or dismiss class for that day. All faculty and staff are required to report all threats or violent incidents to their supervisor or department chair, or directly to the Assistant Vice President for Human Resources.

It is important to note, a disruptive student cannot be removed permanently from a class in which s/he is enrolled without formal review. Non-students and students not enrolled in a class may be removed permanently without formal review because they have no right to attend the class without the instructor's permission.

### Immediate Threat

If there is an immediate threat to the safety of any person, the SUNY Geneseo University Police Department should be contacted immediately (585-245-5222). There are over 70 "Blue Light" telephones on campus that are linked directly to the University Police Department; most academic and administrative buildings also have house phones and public coin-operated telephones; many students and staff have personal cell phones; and, each faculty and department office has a telephone that can also be used to call for assistance. The University Police dispatcher can contact other services (e.g., ambulances) if needed. If an individual is unable to make the call themselves, they should designate a specific person to do it. ("You, in the red plaid shirt, go call 245-5222 now.") When making a call to University Police, provide as much information as possible about the nature of the problem.

**DISRUPTIVE STUDENT  
BEHAVIOR OVER**