

Managing Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom

What is Disruptive Behavior?

Generally, disruptive behavior is any behavior that interferes with the instructor's ability to conduct the class, or the ability of other students to profit from the instruction. Such behavior may take various forms and can be dependent upon many factors including class size, subject matter, and the relationship between faculty and students.

Examples may include:

- Persistent speaking without permission or interrupting other speakers
- Inappropriate use of electronic devices and cell phones
- Sleeping in class
- Entering class late or leaving early (without permission)
- Threats of any kind and/or harassment

Preventative Measures Faculty Can Take

- Include specific expectations for classroom behavior (cell phones, tardiness, side conversations, etc.) and consequences in your syllabus
- Use the first class meeting to set expectations for classroom behavior
- Confer with colleagues on how they prevent and address disruptive behavior
- Model the behavior that you expect from students
- Become familiar with the Code of Student Conduct and other resources (ucdenver.edu/csw)
- Address concerns immediately, do not wait for disruptive behavior patterns to emerge

Steps for Responding to Disruptive Behavior

- Clearly articulate classroom expectations concerning behavior and participation
- Inform the student that the expectations are not being met and that the behaviors are disrupting the learning and teaching taking place in the class
- Document the concerns in writing and communicate with the student, department chair, Office of Community Standards and Wellness, and/or associate dean
- Give the student an opportunity to address/correct their behavior
- Hold the student accountable for failure to correct the behavior and ask them to leave the class if the behavior continues; (any time a student is asked to leave a class because of behavior please communicate this in writing to your department chair or associate dean) then follow up with the office of Community Standards and Wellness, visit ucdenver.edu/csw to submit a report
- A Student Code of Conduct violation and action may follow your report

Reporting Disruptive Behavior

When there are immediate concerns about the health or safety of the student or others please call 911 from a campus phone (or 303-556-5000 from your cell phone to access AHEC Police and 303-724-2000 for CU Denver Police). Follow up by submitting concerns at ucdenver.edu/CARE.

When You Address Disruptive Behavior with a Student

- Be specific about the behavior you are observing
- Explain the effect that the behavior has on your ability to teach and the class's ability to learn
- Communicate your concern and express clearly how the student can correct or change the behavior to meet classroom expectations
- Allow the student to respond and listen carefully to what they have to say
- Restate your expectations for the student's future behavior and potential consequence should these expectations not be met (referral to Community Standards, honor code or other professional code, being asked to leave the class, etc.)
- Follow-up with the student in writing via email to summarize the meeting and expectations, and share the email with your chair, associate dean, and/or the Office of Community Standards and Wellness (ucdenver.edu/csw)

Your Rights and Responsibilities as a Faculty Member

CU Denver respects the right of instructors to teach and the right of students to learn. Protection of these rights requires that certain classroom conditions be met. To ensure these rights, faculty members have the prerogative:

- To establish and implement academic standards
- To establish and enforce reasonable behavior standards in each class
- To involve appropriate offices when a classroom disruption arises
- To address students with problematic behavior and articulate behavior expectations
- To document any incidents and outcomes in writing and with the appropriate offices
- To make a determination about an appropriate response or outcome, within the scope of the class, excluding permanent removal or withdrawal from class