

Responding to Disruptive Behavior at Sacramento State

While the University is a place where the free exchange of ideas and concepts allows for debate and disagreement, all classroom behavior and discourse should reflect the values of respect and civility. Disruptive behavior is defined as behavior that “interferes with university or university-sponsored activities, including but not limited to classroom related activities, study, teach, research, intellectual or creative endeavors, administration, service or the provision of communication, computing or emergency services.” Disruptive behavior by students occurs on a continuum of low-risk to high-risk behaviors.

Minimally Disruptive Behavior: ACTION- Talk to Student

In cases where the behavior is minimally disruptive, it is recommended that the staff or faculty member talk with the student immediately upon observing the behavior. The purpose of this discussion is to review the disruptive behavior and its impact on the learning environment. This discussion should include behavioral expectations: how the student can correct the behavior and probable consequences should the behavior persist. Examples include:

- being late to class
- beepers and cell phones going off during class
- reading the newspaper
- ignoring the instructions of a university official
- yelling or blocking access to university resources.

Significant Disruptive Behavior: ACTION- Call Judicial Affairs

There are times when behavior is so disruptive that an immediate referral to the Judicial Affairs Office is appropriate. The term “classroom disruption” means behavior a reasonable person would view as interfering with the conduct of a class. Examples of increasing seriousness include:

- making distracting noises
- persistently speaking without being recognized
- repeatedly interrupting
- resorting to physical threats or personal insults.

Threatening Behavior: ACTION- Call Public Safety

When a very serious or threatening incident of disruptive behavior occurs in the classroom, academic building, or on the campus, the Public Safety Office should be contacted immediately. **IF YOU FEEL ANYONE’S SAFETY IS IN DANGER, THEN CALL 911.**

When to call for immediate assistance:

- Threats of physical assault
- Threat of violence or other unlawful behavior
- Intimidation or harassment of another person through words and/or actions
- Presentation of an overt or veiled threat
- Exhibition of extreme emotional and/or psychological behaviors that could result in them harming themselves or others.

Judicial Affairs
Leonard Valdez, Director
3008 Lassen
Phone 278-6060

Public Safety
Ken Barnett, Chief/Director
Phone 278-6851
Emergency Dial 911

Responding to Distressed Behavior at Sacramento State

Faculty and staff can play an extremely important role in referring students for help. You are frequently in a position to first observe signs of distress and, although it's not always apparent, students typically hold faculty and staff in high regard. Distressing behavior by students occurs on a continuum of low-distress to high-distress behaviors.

Low Distress: ACTION – Talk to Student

A simple and straightforward expression of concern is, in most cases, the most powerful way of helping a student. Tell them what you have observed and that you are concerned about their well-being and their success. Explain that there are services available on campus (see below) to help students get back on track when life circumstances are getting in the way. Examples of distress:

- excessive class absences
- declining academic performance
- poor emotional control
- excessive moodiness
- sleeping and/or eating habits that change dramatically
- excessive concern about personal health, persistent depression

Significant Distress: ACTION – Referral

There are times when behavior is so distressing that an immediate referral to the counseling center is appropriate. Assure the student that counseling services are a confidential place to discuss their concerns. It is helpful if someone can walk with the student to the center, as well as calling the center to let them know the student will soon arrive. Of course, you cannot force the student to go but you can suggest you or someone escort them. Examples of behavior leading to this:

- writing or talking openly about suicide in a serious fashion
- repeatedly engaging in risky behavior.

Emergency Situations: ACTION – Call Campus Police or 911

If you have answered the question, “Does the behavior place anyone in immediate risk?” in the affirmative, call campus police or 911.

If you are unsure about whether or how to intervene with a student who appears to be distressed, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is this student's behavior distressingly out of the ordinary?
- Is this beyond my skill level? Does the behavior place anyone at (immediate) risk?
- Am I feeling like I want to talk with someone about my observations and concerns?

If you answer “yes” to any of these questions, it is probably a good idea to consult with a colleague. Call Psychological Counseling Services (PCS) and ask to talk with a counselor. PCS can help you evaluate the situation and assist you in considering your options for intervention.

If *you* are feeling unnerved by distressing situations and could use someone to talk to, Employee Assistance Services are available at no charge. Call or come by (see below.)

PCS
2nd Floor, Student Health Building
Phone 278-6416

Hours: 8am-5pm Drop-In Hrs:
M-F 10-11:30 and 1-2:30, M-TH 5-6:30 in Union

EAP
1st Floor, Student Health Bldg.
Phone 278-5018
Hours: 8am-5pm

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