

## Addressing Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom

All students at UC San Diego have the right to a learning environment free from harassment, discrimination, and other behaviors that disrupt the learning process, and one that also allows for the protection of free speech and academic freedom. Students come to our classroom with a variety of experiences, values, and beliefs that contribute to how they respond to course content and how they engage with each other. In order to create an open and respectful environment, one of the most important things to remember is that students are learning and faculty guidance is crucial to their development as learners. To minimize the potential for disruptions and other behavior that can negatively impact the learning environment, faculty are encouraged to provide students clear expectations regarding appropriate ways to engage in class discussions and forums at the start of each quarter. Below is a list of recommendations for creating a positive learning environment and managing disruptive student behavior.

1. **Set clear expectations:** Setting clear expectations regarding appropriate interactions at the beginning of the course will provide clarity for your students and allow you to return to your established expectations should disruptive or inappropriate student behavior need to be addressed. Include your expectations in your syllabus (see this [syllabus template](#) as an example). Remind students that as members of our Triton community, they are expected to positively contribute to the learning environment while upholding UC San Diego's [Principles of Community](#).
2. **Uphold free speech and encourage respectful behavior:** UC San Diego encourages free, civil discourse that is respectful and reasoned. Some free speech may be upsetting and unsettling to students. Remind students of the unique opportunity they have to learn with and from those who hold differing opinions, ideas, and beliefs and how essential it is to a vibrant, intellectual, academic environment. Establish communication guidelines such as balancing air time, listening for understanding, and avoiding assumptions, and hold students accountable for adhering to the guidelines. These reminders will be important to guiding respectful discourse in the classroom while protecting students' First Amendment rights. Additional information regarding free speech at UC San Diego can be found at [Free Speech](#). If students use disrespectful or offensive language, challenge them to think critically about the impact their words have on others and the learning environment. Validate, support, reach out, and provide resources to those who are targeted.
3. **Address inappropriate behaviors early and consistently:** Addressing problematic behaviors early and with a level of consistency is key to effective classroom management. If a student engages in rude or irritating behavior, but it does not rise to the level of disrupting the learning environment, speak to the student privately out of class as soon as possible after the incident. If the behavior is so disruptive that addressing it cannot wait until a private conversation after class, address the behavior immediately in a firm but polite manner and then follow up with further discussion after class. Intervention must

happen immediately and respectfully in order to create positive behavioral changes. A calm and direct approach is best.

### **Tips for Discussing and Documenting Disruptive Student Behavior:**

If it becomes necessary to discuss inappropriate behaviors with a student outside of class, the following guidelines can ensure that both your and students' rights are protected and that the student is aware of potential consequences should the behavior continue.

- Ensure your safety in the environment.
- If safe, wait until after class and speak to them privately. If remote, email immediately after class to set up a Zoom or videoconference meeting.
- Start the conversation from a place of care. Disruption often stems from distress.
- Be steady, consistent, firm, yet respectful.
- Be specific about the behavior that is disruptive, discuss appropriate behavior, and set expectations.
- Listen to the student and acknowledge their feelings.
- Inform necessary parties (e.g. department chair, dean, etc.)
- It is always important to follow up in writing after your meeting with the student. This documents your conversation with the student, reinforces your expectations and makes it easier to take further action should the unwanted behavior continue.

### **Responding to Threatening or Violent Behavior**

If a student exhibits behavior that is threatening or violent, you will want to have a safety plan in place. Consider the following recommendations to ensure safety.

- If there is an immediate safety concern for you, members of your class or the distressed student, dismiss the class and contact the UC San Diego Police department by calling 911.
- If the situation can be diffused and you feel comfortable speaking to the student after class, find a safe place to meet. Do not isolate yourself with the individual.
- Keep the door open and position yourself so that you are closest to the exit.
- Make someone else in your office space aware that you will be meeting with the student.
- Have a code word or phrase in your work space to indicate an emergency. For example, saying to a coworker, "Excuse me, can you bring me the red folder," would signal them to call the police.
- Stay calm and use a non-confrontational approach with the student. Let the person describe the problem without interruption. Sometimes a person just wants to feel as if they have been heard.
- Do not mention discipline or calling the police as that may increase their agitation.

### **Student Conduct Action**

A student engaging in disruptive behavior may be subject to student conduct action as outlined in the [University of California's Policy on Student Conduct and Discipline](#). If the disruptive behavior continues following a corrective conversation and follow up documentation, the instructor may report the behavior to the [Office of Student Conduct](#) for further disciplinary action. In order for the Office of Student Conduct to take appropriate action, the faculty member must submit their concerns through the [Non-Academic Misconduct Report Form](#). Once the report is filed, the Office of Student Conduct will follow up with the student as outlined in the University's [Student Conduct Policies and Procedures](#).

### **Additional Consultation Resources for Faculty**

Faculty may want to explore additional options for addressing disruptive student behavior and restoring a positive classroom environment. For consultation with campus resources, you may consider contacting the following offices:

- [Office of Student Conduct](#) - Supports faculty to ensure that students comply with university policies related to non-academic misconduct.
- [Academic Integrity Office](#) - Supports faculty by promoting and supporting a culture of academic integrity in order to reinforce quality teaching and learning.
- [Teaching + Learning Commons Engaged Teaching Hub](#) – Provides confidential teaching consultations to both faculty and graduate student instructors.
- [Office of the Ombuds](#) - Assists faculty by providing confidential, neutral, and informal dispute resolution services such as mediation.
- [Office for Students with Disabilities](#) - Works with faculty who provide accommodations to students with disabilities in classrooms and labs.
- [Student Affairs Case Management Services](#) - Supports faculty through consultation services regarding disruptive or other students who may be experiencing emotional distress.
- [Office for the Prevention of Harassment & Discrimination](#) - Assists faculty with the reporting and resolution of incidents of bias, harassment and discrimination.
- [Deans of Student Affairs - Undergraduate Colleges](#) - Supports faculty through consultation regarding challenges faced by undergraduate students.
- [Graduate Student Affairs](#) - Supports faculty through consultation regarding challenges faced by graduate students.
- [Triton Care Line](#) - If you have a student that you are concerned about, contact the [Triton Care Line at \(858\) 246-1111](#). This 24/7 line is for non-emergency concerns that will be routed to the appropriate university personnel for follow-up the next business day.
- [UC San Diego Police](#) - Responds to classroom emergencies including dangerous and threatening behavior.