

Throughout the country, colleges are experiencing an increase in classroom disruptions and Delgado Community College is no exception. The number of faculty members contacting the Office of Student Life and Judicial Affairs to discuss such behavior also has been increasing.

Most inappropriate behaviors can be handled by you at the time of the disruption; however, some may require consultation, judicial action or immediate emergency response. This brochure has been designed by the Office of Student Life and Judicial Affairs to help you assess problem behavior and determine the appropriate course of action.

What Constitutes Disruptive Behavior?

The Delgado Community College Student Judicial Code defines disruptive behavior as:

- “Any student who displays intentional obstruction or disruption of teaching, research, administration, disciplinary procedure, or other authorized college event;
- “Any student who displays physical abuse or threat thereof against any person on campus or at any college authorized event, or other conduct which threatens or endangers the health and safety of any such person;
- “Any student who displays conduct which adversely affects the student’s suitability as a member of the academic community (such as drunkenness, use of profanity, or disorderly conduct).”

Examples of Classroom Disruption

- Answering cell phones and having pagers beep.
- Interrupting lectures and talking without being called on.
- Leaving and entering the classroom without permission. (Reporting to class late)
- Threatening or verbally insulting the professor or other students.
- Borrowing text books or other class materials while class is in session.
- Basically just being loud and distracting.

Suggestions for Prevention of Classroom Disruption

Remember that as a faculty member, you have the prerogative to establish and enforce reasonable behavioral standards for each of your classes. The following suggestions may be helpful:

- Include course and behavioral norms and expectations for you and your students in the syllabus. You should include a copy of the Student Judicial Code as part of the syllabus.
- On the first day of class, ask your students what they think the behavioral norms and expectations should be, add their suggestions to your list. You will find that students are often the strongest supporters of classroom decorum.
- Discuss these norms and expectations with your students, so they can gain an in-depth understanding of how they should act in your class.
- Draw up a “contract” on classroom behavior, including academic integrity, and ask students to read and sign it the first week of class.
- Serve as a role model and exhibit the type of behavior you expect from your students.

Guidelines for Handling Classroom Disruption

If a student is posing a threat to the safety of himself/herself or others, becomes physically or verbally abusive, Campus Police should be contacted immediately and a report should be submitted to Office of Student Life and Judicial Affairs. It is often a mistake to assume that aggressive behavior will stop on its own. Always err on the side of safety.

In other events of deliberate classroom disruption, it is important to deal with the behavior in calm, courteous, and direct fashion before it escalates. During class, you may first make a general comment, such as, “We have too many private conversations going on at this time; let’s focus on the same topic.” If the disruptive behavior does not cease, you may ask a particular student to refrain from the disruptive behavior and ask that he/she come to see you after class, so you can address the problem in private. When you meet with the student, explain why you consider this type of behavior inappropriate, stress your behavioral expectations for your students, and warn the student that further occurrences of disruptive behavior may result in disciplinary action.

If the behavior is repeated or the student exhibits a different disruptive behavior, the student should be given a verbal as well as written warning regarding possible consequences of continued behavior. The written warning should be copied to your Department Chair and The Office of Student Life and Judicial Affairs. It should contain only factual and descriptive information. Utilize form 1448/001 contained in DocuShare to report incidents not requiring Delgado’s police assistance.

If the disruptive behavior continues and is posing a threat to the safety of others you may ask the student to leave the class. If the student refuses to leave, you may call campus Police for assistance. A disruptive student who is asked to leave or who is removed from class should, as soon as practicable, be given the opportunity to meet with you to discuss his/her behavior. You may meet with the student alone, or with the Office of Student Life and Judicial Affairs or with your Department Chair. The behavior also should be documented utilizing form 1448/001 and reported to Office of Student Life. A disruptive student may not be permanently removed from class without a formal judicial hearing; therefore, it is essential that you work with The Office of Student Life and Judicial Affairs before taking this step.

Any information you learn while speaking privately with the disruptive student should be handled in a confidential manner. You only may discuss the case with campus officials who have a legitimate educational interest such as your Department Chair or the Judicial Officer. The privacy of a student’s educational record (i.e.: grades, reports of misconduct, etc.) is protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974.

What Happens if You Refer a Student to the Office of Student Life and Judicial Affairs?

If the Office of Student Life and Judicial Affairs receives a report of misconduct, the student will be asked to meet with the Judicial Officer for a Resolution Conference. If the complaint cannot be resolved through the Resolution Conference process, the case will be referred to the Campus Judicial Committee. Should a case go to a hearing, you will be asked to be present and provide information. If the Judicial Committee finds that the allegations have merit, it can impose sanctions ranging from Probation to Expulsion from the college without privilege of re-admission.

Disruptive and disorderly conduct is a violation of the Student Judicial Code.