

Program Areas in the Dean of Students Office

- Student Conduct and Outreach
 - Student Conduct
 - Off-Campus and Community Engagement
 - Campus Safety Programming
 - Veteran's Support
 - Advising Student Government Association
- New Student and Family Services
 - New Student Programs (SOAR and WOW!)
 - Minority Student Support Services
 - Women's Programs
 - Parent and Family Services
- Fraternity and Sorority Life

Ombudsman Role

- Students go to the Dean of Students Office if they:
- Experience a personal or medical crisis resulting in extended absences from classes. NOT for a single class period
- Medical withdrawals
- Request Incompletes in classes due to a medical emergency or family crisis at the end of a semester
- Experience a death in the immediate family which requires them to miss class
- Have a problem at UNC Charlotte and don't know how to get the proper guidance and help
- Feel their concerns are not being listened to or addressed
- Find themselves entangled in bureaucratic red tape
- Need assistance in mediating or resolving a conflict with another student, faculty, or staff member
- Feel they are being treated unfairly
- Believe the University has made an error
- Need information and clarification about UNC Charlotte policies and procedures
- Have suggestions on how to improve our university
- Feel they have been harassed or discriminated against

Process for Receiving Assistance from the Dean of Students Office

- Contact the DSO to notify us of the particular situation
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- Students must submit appropriate written documentation before any action is taken on their behalf
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- Once documentation is received and reviewed, written notification is sent to student's faculty members documenting the absence and asking professors to work with the student during this time.
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- Understand that we can only request the accommodation of faculty and cannot mandate their assistance
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- Inform students they must contact faculty directly to learn about miss assignments and to determine strategies for making up missed material
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- When requesting incompletes in class, make students understand that we can only request this grade and that faculty members may not be willing to assist them, especially if they are not passing the class at time of emergency.
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- Once students have received a final grade in a course, no action may be taken by the Dean of Students Office. Students are then referred to the Dean of their academic college for additional assistance.

Characteristics of Disruptive Students

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- The California Community College Chancellor's Ad Hoc Committee on Disruptive Student Affairs defines a disruptive student as a person who “verbally threatens or abuses college personnel, physically threatens or assaults others, willfully damages college property, misuses drugs or alcohol on college premises, habitually interferes with the learning environment by disruptive verbal or behavioral expressions, or persistently makes inordinate demands for time and attention from faculty and staff” (Armada, p. 69)
- According to Amada, “disruption applies to behavior that persistently interferes with academic and administrative activities on campus. Ordinarily, such behavior actively hampers the ability of the other students to learn and of instructors to teach.” (Armada, p. 100)
- Examples of disruptive behavior may include students with poor hygiene, students who fall asleep in class, talk to other students, use cell phones or text, and arrive late.
- More serious examples of classroom disruptions include verbal abuse, physical threats or assaults, damage to university property, misuse of drugs and/or alcohol, inappropriate student demands for time and attention from faculty members

Signs and Symptoms of Students in Distress

- Erratic or infrequent class attendance
- Frequent missed assignments, poor preparation
- Increasing dependence, high demands on faculty time
- Isolation, withdrawal, lethargy
- Inability to focus (in a conversation or activity)
- Disorganized thinking and speech—‘out of touch with reality’
- Expressions of strong mistrust or persecution
- Chronically disruptive behavior
- Signs of alcohol or drug abuse
- Direct or indirect threats that cause you to worry about the safety of the student or others (range: “I’m going to kill myself” to “I am not going to be around much longer”). Can be in writing, verbal, or email.

Suggestions for Responding to Students in Distress

- Consult with your supervisor and make him/her aware of the situation
- Approach the student directly and openly
- Express concern honestly
- Set clear limits about your role—as evaluator, someone who might refer the student judicially, someone who is not a trained counselor
- Do not promise confidentiality
- Hear what the student has to say
- Be compassionate and understanding about the problem, while at the same time maintaining clear expectations
- Develop response options, including referral to Counseling Center, Student Health Center, Dean of Students Office, or another resource
- Create an action plan
- Follow-up

TA Responsibilities in Dealing with Disruptive Students

- Teaching Assistants need to try to develop some skill level and comfort in dealing with disruptions in the classroom. This will greatly help to alleviate situations in the future.
- SHARED RESPONSIBILITY with DSO and Counseling Center serving as coaches and support in these situations, NOT a dumping ground!
- Faculty members and department chairs play an active role in the intervention with the disruptive student and should, in essence, be the first point of contact in these situations.
- TEAM APPROACH with focus on creating win/win situations for the TA, faculty member and student is optimal. Adversarial relationships with students in these situations only tend to make matters worse and more volatile at times.
- TA and faculty must determine if the behavior is disruptive and does it affect the educational process.
- Minor disruptions should be addressed by the TA (or tolerated if they do not disrupt the overall classroom environment) while major disruptions to the educational process should be addressed through disciplinary action.
- When interacting with a disruptive student, it may be helpful for you to learn what extenuating circumstances may be contributing to their behavior.

Syllabi Considerations

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- **To prevent violations of *the Code of Student Responsibility*, including disruptive behavior**, TAs may include the following statement. “All students are required to read and abide by the *Code of Student Responsibility*. Violations of the Code, including disruptive classroom behavior, will result in disciplinary action as provided in the Code.” *The Code of Student Responsibility* is available in the Dean of Students Office or online at <http://www.uncc.edu/policystate/ps-104.html>.
- By including university policies and classroom behavioral expectations in the syllabus, “faculty members can **clearly set forth their expectations** for classroom behavior, and **students will be duly notified** of those expectations at the outset of the course” (University Attorney Website)
- **To clearly notify students of classroom expectations**, TAs may want to include a variation of the following statement in their syllabus. “This syllabus contains the policies and expectations I have established for (COURSE NAME). Please read the entire syllabus carefully before continuing in this course. These policies and expectations are intended to create a productive learning atmosphere for students. Unless you are prepared to abide by these policies and expectations, you risk losing the opportunity to participate further in the course” (University Attorney Website)
- **To encourage orderly and productive classroom conduct**, TAs may want to consider addressing the concept of mutual respect by including a statement similar to the following in the course syllabus. “You should expect that if your conduct during class discussions seriously disrupts the atmosphere of mutual respect I expect in this class, you will not be permitted to participate further.” (University Attorney Website)

Strategies to Prevent and Respond to Disruptive Behavior

- Clarify standards for the conduct of your class.
- Serve as a role model for your students.
- If you feel inappropriate behavior is occurring, consider a general word of caution, rather than warning a particular student.
- If the behavior is irritating, but not disruptive, try speaking with the student after class.
- There may be a rare circumstance when it is necessary to speak to a student during class about his or her behavior. Do so in a firm and friendly manner, indicating that further discussion can occur after class.
- A student who persists in disrupting a class may be directed by the TA to leave the classroom **for the remainder of the class period**. The student should be told the reason(s) for such action, and given an opportunity to discuss the matter with the TA as soon as practical. Prompt consultation should be taken with your supervisor and the department chair.
- **Suspension for more than one class period requires appropriate disciplinary action.**
- If disruption is serious, and other reasonable measures have failed, the class may be adjourned, and the campus police contacted.

Ways to Address Disruptive Students

- Use common sense and good judgment when dealing with disruptive students. Never endanger yourself or other students in these situations. Utilize available campus resources such as the Dean of Students Office, Counseling Center, or Police and Public Safety if you feel uncomfortable or at risk when dealing with student disruptions.
- TAs may want to give students a verbal (or even written) warning about inappropriate classroom behavior. It is certainly acceptable to make them aware that you can pursue disciplinary action against the student if disruptions continue in the future.
- One way of dealing with disruptive students is to ask to meet with them outside of the class setting. It is certainly appropriate for you to have another faculty or staff member present, particularly if you feel uncomfortable in meeting with the student alone.
- If there is potential for immediate harm to the TA or to other students in the classroom, immediately contact campus police and dismiss the class to remove yourself and your students from this situation.
- If you must ask a student to leave your class due to disruptive behavior, notify Police and Public Safety and the Dean of Students Office so that we may be aware of this situation.
- When disruptive behavior threatens the welfare of faculty, students, staff, or other members of the university community, disciplinary action may be necessary to address the situation.

Reporting Disruptions

- TAs may be apprehensive about reporting or documenting disruptive behavior in the hope that it will somehow discontinue in the future. This is frequently NOT the case.
- TAs may also feel they will not be supported by department heads, deans, or university administration when reporting student disruptions. This should certainly NOT be the case here at UNC Charlotte because we are here to help support your work and to maintain a positive educational environment conducive to learning.
- TAs, faculty and staff members may also be afraid of retaliation from the student and of threats to their personal safety and security. Unfortunately, these fears are not always unfounded, as we have seen on many college campuses in recent years.
- Reporting incidents of disruptive student behavior to the Dean of Students Office is very important. While these behaviors may seem to be rather insignificant or isolated to your class, we may be dealing with other issues of disruptive or disciplinary violations for this student. This additional information you share with us could enable us to successfully intervene with this student and get him/her help or to initiate more stringent disciplinary proceedings against this offender. This information helps to give us more cumulative documentation on the student, which may enable us to enforce more severe sanctions and interventions.
- After reporting disruptive behavior to the Dean of Students Office, we will actively work to keep you informed of any judicial proceedings or interventions we are implementing with the student offender. We will do all that we can to keep the lines of communication open with all reporting TAs and faculty members.

Campus Behavioral Intervention Team (CBIT)

- The Campus Behavioral Intervention Team consists of representatives from the Dean of Students Office, Police and Public Safety, the Counseling Center, Housing and Residence Life, Human Resources, the Graduate School, Academic Affairs, and Legal Affairs who meet twice a month to discuss students of concern.
- This group serves as a threat assessment team to review information submitted about disruptive or disturbing behaviors by students and to formulate intervention strategies as needed and warranted.
- An online mechanism for members of the University community to report students of concern will be available during 2010. Until this software is in place, instructors may simply report this information to the Dean of Students Office via email or telephone.
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Importance of Documentation

- All student disruptions (in or outside of the classroom) should be properly documented.
- Documentation should be specific and concise in describing the exact disruptive and inappropriate behavior that has occurred.
- Documentation of disruptive behavior should be kept on file by the Ta and faculty member and shared with the department chair in addition to the Dean of Students Office as appropriate.
- It is also important and very helpful to ask for students or other witnesses to write a statement detailing their observations of the disruptive behavior. This is especially helpful if the case is referred to the campus judicial process.

Due Process and the Campus Conduct Process

- When dealing with disruptive students, many instructors desire to have these students permanently removed from their classroom. Some even go as far as to tell students they can no longer attend their class and may withdraw them from the course.
- While instructors MAY ask a disruptive student to leave a class, they cannot permanently remove them from the course without the appropriate disciplinary proceedings and administrative intervention.
- In dealing with disruptive students who have posed a serious threat to a faculty member or to the university community, the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs may impose an interim suspension of this student until the appropriate judicial hearing can be conducted.

Campus Judicial Process

- Process is initiated by the Disciplinary Referral Form which is available in the Dean of Students Office and online at <http://dso.uncc.edu/judicial/Disciplinaryreferral.htm>
- Any student, faculty, or staff member may initiate charges against currently enrolled students.
- Instructors complete the form detailing specific information about the violation including the names of any witnesses to the altercation.
- It is **very important and helpful** for instructors to also include a remedy or resolution on the Disciplinary Referral Form. This information is used by the Senior Associate Dean and/or the hearing panel to determine the appropriate sanction if the student is found responsible for this violation of the Code.
- Disciplinary Referral Forms are reviewed by staff members in Student Conduct who then meet with each student charged with a violation of the Code.
- If the student pleads responsible, staff will then determine the appropriate sanction for this violation. Sanctions could range from disciplinary probation, targeted counseling sessions, essays or research papers based on the violation, written apologies to the instructor, or even disciplinary suspension.
- Punishment should “fit the crime”. The severity of the sanction would be directly related to the magnitude of the violation and disruption and, if any, prior disciplinary record.
- Students may decide to go to a hearing rather than “settle out” with the conduct officer. In this case, the instructor, in addition to any witnesses, would need to testify at the campus judicial hearing

Mediation

- An alternative to pursuing disciplinary action against a disruptive student is mediation conducted by members of the Dean of Students staff.
- We frequently meet with students and instructors to address conflicts and create a resolve acceptable to all parties involved.
- Both instructors and students who are involved in conflict must be agreeable to participating in mediation. Furthermore, they must be in complete agreement to any outcomes or actions determined by the Dean of Students Office after facilitating the mediation.
- At the conclusion of the mediation, a written statement is presented to the student and instructor for each to sign and acknowledge their agreement and commitment to uphold this resolution.
- It should be noted that mediation is not considered disciplinary action and the mediation agreement is not part of a student's judicial record.

Questions?

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