

# GUIDELINES FOR FACULTY AND STAFF AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

## Regarding disturbing or disruptive student behavior

University faculty and staff members are sometimes faced with student behavior that is troublesome to them in their role of maintaining an effective learning environment. At the University of Wyoming various student services exist to support faculty and staff members with these difficult situations. UW campus resources listed in this brochure are available for consultation or student referral.

As a faculty or staff member, it may be helpful to talk over your concerns if you're not sure about the action you wish to take. Professionals in the Dean of Students Office, and the University Counseling Center, as well as Department Heads and Program Coordinators are available to assist you. Frequently, just talking with another professional will clarify issues and help you in your problem solving.

Examples of student behavior that you may find disturbing, disruptive, or both are included in this handout. On the matrix you will find UW resources available to assist you should you want a consultation for yourself, or a referral option for a student.

It is useful to distinguish between student behavior that is **disturbing** as opposed to **disruptive**.

### IDENTIFYING DISTURBING BEHAVIOR

**Disturbing behavior** usually causes us to feel concerned, alarmed, afraid, or frustrated. Disturbing behavior of a student may mean that there is negative impact of the behavior of other students, the instructor's ability to teach or conduct class, or the implementation of other professionals' roles in the University. However, it may indicate that particular student is having difficulties that affect his/her academic performance.

#### Specific examples of *disturbing behavior* include:

- A student who jokes in class about killing himself/herself
- A student who perspires profusely when giving a presentation in front of a class
- A student who discloses that his/her mother was diagnosed with terminal cancer
- A student who seems to work harder than most students but can't pass an exam
- A student who appears to be losing significant weight and/or speaks with pride about how little he/she eats
- A student whose writing appears disjointed and fragmented as though s/he cannot maintain a logical sequence or thought
- A student who reports that FBI agents are following him/her around campus
- A student who is aggressive and/or threatens violence.

### INTERVENTIONS FOR DISTURBING BEHAVIOR

Clearly, faculty and staff members have options for responding to student behavior that they find disturbing. They could do nothing. They could initiate a private conversation with the student about the behavior that concerns them. They could consult with other professionals on campus. Faculty and staff members can learn techniques for defusing hostile or emotional situations by consulting with professionals at the University Counseling Center or the Dean of Students Office.

## IDENTIFYING DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

Disruptive behavior, on the other hand, is student behavior that interferes with the educational process of other students. It may or may not be curbed by faculty or staff intervention. It is behavior that may prevent faculty and staff members from carrying out their professional responsibilities.

### Specific examples of *disruptive behaviors* include:

- A student who physically confronts another person
- A student who verbally abuses another person
- A student who interrupts the education process in class by
  - making remarks out of turn
  - taking over the lecture
  - dominating class discussion
- A student who physically acts out toward UW property by
  - breaking windows
  - throwing furniture
  - smashing doors

## INTERVENTIONS FOR DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

The University professional may find the following procedures helpful when dealing with disruptive behavior:

Securing a safe environment is always a top priority. If you have questions about immediate safety, call **UWPD at 766-5179**.

Talk with the student, preferable in the privacy of the faculty or staff member's office. If you are fearful of a violent confrontation occurring, as another colleague, Department Head, or supervisor to be present. Inform the student of the behavior that needs to change, a timeline for when the change needs to be made, and explain the consequences if the change does not occur. Follow-through with the consequences if the change does not occur. After the meeting, commit the content of the meeting to paper. It is sometimes helpful and/or necessary to provide the student with a written copy of your requirements and the disclosed consequences.

### Some procedures for intervention in the classroom or office of the University are:

- **Verbally request that they stop the behavior**
- **Verbally request that they leave the area or classroom (UW Student Code of Conduct, III (B)(4))**
- **Call UWPD at 766-5179 from any campus or cell phone**
- **Consult with the Dean of Students Office about possible violations of the UW Student Code of Conduct.**

## EXCERPT FROM THE UNIVERSITY REGULATIONS 30, REVISION I, 2004

"The University of Wyoming is a community of scholars in which the ideals of freedom of inquiry, freedom of thought, and freedom of expression are sustained. The exercise and preservation of these freedoms require a respect for the rights of all in the community to enjoy them to the same extent. It is clear that in a community of learning, willful disruption of the educational process, destruction of property, and interference with the orderly process of the institution or with the rights of other members of the University of Wyoming cannot be tolerated.

When students enter the University of Wyoming, they assume responsibilities and obligations, including satisfactory academic performance and social behavior consistent with the purpose of the institution. Student conduct, therefore, is not considered in isolation within the University community but as an integral part of the educational process. As such, students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the rules and regulations of the University. Students, like all members of the University community, assume the responsibility to conduct themselves in compliance with the objectives and standards of conduct established by the University of Wyoming."

## EXCERPTS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING: "THE STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT." SECTION V, (A-F)

"The University has the right to take necessary and appropriate action to protect the safety and well-being of the University community. Any student or student organization found to have committed the following misconduct is subject to the disciplinary sanctions outlined herein:

- A. **Offenses Against the University Community** - acts of dishonesty, disruption or obstruction of teaching, research, administration, disciplinary proceedings, other University activities, disorderly conduct, interfering with freedom of movement, illegal or unauthorized possession of firearms/chemical/biological agents, violation of federal/ state/local laws, illegal gambling, failure to comply with directions of University officials or law enforcement officers, and violation of University policies;
- B. **Offenses Against Persons** – physical abuse, verbal abuse, sexual harassment, stalking and hazing;
- C. **Offenses Against Property** – theft, unauthorized entry, and making or communicating false alarms or threats;
- D. **Offenses Involving Alcohol and Drugs...**;
- E. **Abuse, Misuse, of Theft of Computer Data...**; and
- F. **Interfering with the Discipline Process** – failure to cooperate, falsification of information, and failure to comply with disciplinary sanctions

### ADDITIONAL RELEVANT RESOURCES

- **University of Wyoming University Regulations (UniRegs)**  
**University of Wyoming Sexual Harassment Policy**  
**University of Wyoming Academic Dishonesty Policies**  
[www.uwyo.edu/generalcounsel/info.asp?p=1437](http://www.uwyo.edu/generalcounsel/info.asp?p=1437)
- **University of Wyoming "The Student code of Conduct"**  
<http://uwyo.edu/dos>

This publication was used in collaboration with the University of New Mexico  
and

Revised for use by Circuit 10 ASJA Institutions and for use at the  
University of Wyoming by the Dean of Students Office

**For more information, please contact:**

#### **The Dean of Students Office**

Knight Hall, Room 128  
Dept. 3135 1000 E University Ave  
Laramie, WY 82071-3135  
Office: (307)-766-3296  
Fax: (307) 766-3298

#### **University Counseling Center**

Knight hall, Room 341  
Dept. 3708, 1000 E University Ave  
Laramie, WY 82071-3708  
Office: (307)-766-2187  
Fax: (307) 766-3412