

Memorandum

To: Ramapo College Faculty **From: Pamela M. Bischoff, Vice President for Student Affairs**

Re: Dealing with Disruptive Students/ **Date: September 2007**
Syllabus Statements

A number of faculty members have indicated that they would welcome advice on how to better deal with disruptive students. I offer the following with those requests in mind:

1. Provide clear guidelines for acceptable behavior through your syllabus. Start with a statement that it is necessary to maintain a classroom environment fully conducive to teaching and learning. Follow this with short but explicit policy statements concerning eating, drinking, leaving early, coming late, leaving and returning to class, talking or making other disruptive noises or gestures, offering remarks not related to the subject matter of the course and treating you and other students with respect.
2. If you think that any of the behaviors you are witnessing may be related to a student's disability, consult with the Director of Specialized Services. Students with disabilities, including psychological disabilities, must adhere to all conduct standards of the institution and cannot use their disabilities as an excuse for disruptive behavior. Students may, however, request "reasonable accommodations" in order to academically succeed and bona fide requests should be granted. For example, a student with kidney disease could need to leave the room during class and then return a reasonable number of times but, of course, he or she must do so without interfering with the teaching/learning process.
3. Be aware of the policies and procedures in the Student Handbook that apply to classroom (as well as to other) situations. The most important of these policies are the following:
 - Code of Conduct (including policies on Interim Disciplinary Suspension and Interim Suspension from Class)
 - Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
 - Complaints Against College Employees
 - Student Dissent/Disruption of College Functions
 - Grade Appeals
 - Policy Prohibiting Discrimination, Harassment, or Hostile Environments in the Workplace
 - Standards and Procedures for (Involuntary) Administrative Withdrawal for Students with Possible Mental Disorders
 - Student Records

(Continued on the reverse)

4. The Student Affairs Office (C-212) x7456/7 and all other offices within our Division stand ready to offer specific assistance to you at any time. These offices include the Center for Health and Counseling Services and the Security Department.
- Unacceptable student behavior should be brought to the attention of the student by the instructor as soon as possible after it occurs preferably in a private moment just after the class in question. Problematic behaviors should not be tolerated but rather should be clearly described by you as unacceptable.
 - Instructors should make brief written notes about a student's specific disruptive behaviors and the dates when those behaviors occurred. Instructors should not hesitate to send written messages to students about their inappropriate behaviors, keeping a copy for themselves and giving one to their School Dean at the time it is sent.
 - Instructors should practice progressive discipline with disruptive students beginning with an oral notification that the behaviors observed are unacceptable, adding written notification if the behaviors are not changed and then finally moving to the College's formal disciplinary procedures, if necessary. Knowing the College's policies as noted above will make a stepwise progression flow more easily and will help to avoid situations where either you or the student risks a loss of emotional control. Of course, if a student's behavior is dangerous or otherwise intolerable, progressive discipline may not be possible.
 - Students who cannot comply with reasonable standards of conduct can be removed from the classroom. While an individual's right to due process must be preserved in a public college's disciplinary process, other students' rights must also be preserved. You as the instructor set the tone and strike the balance for what is appropriate by having command of your classroom in an affirmative and positive sense. Consult the "Interim Suspension From Class" policy first if a student must be promptly removed.

PMB:IP

cc: Provost
Associate Provost
Assistant Provost
Faculty Assembly Chair
Judicial Affairs Director
Director of Health and Counseling Services
Director of Specialized Services