Classroom Management:

Classroom instruction is a complex endeavor. Faculty strive to create positive learning environments that are respectful, organized, and goal-oriented. General classroom management strategies are an important element of effective instruction. Expectations for behavior, as well as consequences for not meeting expectations, should be discussed at the beginning of the semester and in course syllabi.

There are multiple resources on campus to assist faculty in creating positive and engaging learning environments. The UTSA Teaching and Learning Services office offers a variety of workshops and services. Persons in the Counseling Services office, the Behavior Intervention Team (“BIT”), and the Student Disability Services office provide consultations about concerning behavior. As a faculty member, you may also refer students to Equal Opportunity Services for issues related to discrimination, retaliation or harassment; the Student Ombudsperson, Student Conduct and Community Standards (“SCCS”) and the academic grievance process, which can be found at Student Grievances Information Bulletin. Students may also benefit from referrals to The Center for Collegiate Recovery, if applicable.

Responding to distracted versus disruptive behavior in the classroom:

Distraction

Faculty may need to determine how best to address students who demonstrate distracted behaviors, such as not paying attention or using electronic devices inappropriately.

Additional examples of distracted behavior include:

- Overt inattentiveness;
- Persistent and unreasonable demands for attention;
- Obsessive behavior;
- Actions that intimidate others direction (although extreme examples of this could be disruptive);
- Refusal to comply with faculty or staff direction (although extreme examples of this could be disruptive; and
- Loud and/or inexplicable behavior (although extreme examples of this could be disruptive).

Distracted behavior should be addressed if it is safe to do so. Several intervention strategies exist to address disruptive behavior. The following are some examples:

- Faculty may ask a student to refrain from specific behaviors in the classroom.
- Faculty may ask a student to meet outside of class to discuss specific behaviors.
- Faculty may ask a student to meet prior to returning to class.
- Faculty may ask a student to leave the classroom.
Disruption

Faculty may be faced with situations where disruption occurs. Disruptive behavior causes an unexpected interruption to the instructor’s ability to complete a lesson plan.

Examples of disruptive behavior include:

- Exhibiting clear distress or violent actions and there is an immediate danger to self or others of some kind;
- Damaging University property; or
- Threats to injure, harm, kill or risk the safety of self or others.

The extent of the disruption should inform which intervention is selected in response. Requesting to meet with a student outside of class is typically an effective intervention. During this meeting, identifying the behavior of concern and learning what may be motivating that behavior can often produce some viable solutions. If the faculty member is uncomfortable meeting with the student one-on-one, the faculty can make arrangements to have a colleague present or communicate with the student by e-mail. Faculty may also dismiss class if the disruption is significant enough that continuing to teach is not feasible.

What if the disruption is significant enough to warrant asking the student to leave class or dismissing the class?

There may be times when a disruption is significant enough to warrant asking the student to leave the class. If a student refuses to leave class after being instructed to do so and continuing to teach is not feasible, a faculty member may dismiss the entire class. If the student demonstrates behavior that is violent or dangerous, the faculty member should call UTSA Police (210-458-4911) or ask someone to place the call. All members of the community are encouraged to place the UTSA Police number in their phone. Downloading the UTSA App or LiveSafe App allows a convenient way to reach the UTSA Police Department.

If a student is asked to leave class and/or dismissing class is necessary, the incident should be reported to the BIT, the Chair of the Department, and the Dean of the College. BIT reports can be filed at BIT Report. Faculty can also file a complaint with the SCCS when the student’s behavior may be a violation of the Student Code of Conduct. A complaint with SCCS may be filed by accessing this website: Behavioral and Scholastic Dishonesty Referral Form.

What should I do if a student comes to class and appears to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol?

If the student appears to be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs while in class and is not disruptive, the faculty can request a meeting with a student outside of class, can state what behaviors were of concern, and inform the student about the Counseling Services (210-458-4140) and/or The Center for Collegiate Recovery (210-458-8317).
If a student appears to be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs while in class and is disruptive, the faculty should respond to the disruption (see “Responding to disruption in the classroom”) and may contact the SCCS office at 210-458-4720 (Report an Incident).

If the student demonstrates behavior that indicates possible violence or danger, UTSA Police should be immediately contacted (210-458-4911).