

Tips for Faculty in Assisting Challenging Students

Teaching challenging students can often be difficult, as it's hard to know the right approach to take with these unique situations. By learning the best approach for each situation and empowering yourself with the support/resources within the campus, you can make these tough situations go more smoothly. This tip sheet was created in conjunction with Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS).

Managing Disruptive Students

- Suggest that you want everyone's ideas. If the problem persists, ask students to suggest what might be done to give all students a chance to participate.
- Have two to three students act as process observers for a day. At the end of the class session, have them report on their observations of how the discussion went, what problems they noticed, and what suggestions they have.

Managing Angry, Aggressive, Challenging Students

- Remain calm. Slow down and regularize your breathing. Don't become defensive.
- Don't ignore them. Attempt to diffuse their anger. Arrange to meet them during a break or after class. Listen. Talk in a professional and courteous manner.
- Arrange to talk with the student in a more private setting, asking the student to explain reasons for his/her conduct.
- Don't duck controversy. Indicate that if conduct is repeated the student may be subject to university disciplinary proceedings.
- If the student does not comply or is violent or threatening, ask him/her student to leave the academic setting. If student refuses, call campus police (274-7911).
- Document the incident. An IUPUI Disruptive Reporting form is available from the Dean of Students Office.

Recognizing Depressed Students

- Behaviors that can be observed:
 - ✓ Decrease or change in energy level.
 - ✓ Social or classroom withdrawal (e.g., sits alone).
 - ✓ Increasing levels of irritability and/or negativity.
 - ✓ Concentration problems as seen in classroom.
- Changes a student might discuss or report
 - ✓ Change in sleep patterns (e.g., insomnia, waking through night, early morning waking, or lethargy in the morning).
 - ✓ Change in appetite and eating habits.
 - ✓ Loss of interest in activities formerly enjoyed.
 - ✓ Feelings of hopelessness and despair.
 - ✓ No obvious external stressors (e.g., losses, disappointments, long-term frustrations).
 - ✓ Family history of depression, drug abuse, other mental health difficulties.

Recognizing Suicidal Students

- Talking openly about suicide or indirectly talking about wanting out or ending it all.
- Expressing a sense of hopelessness: “What’s the use?”
- Withdrawing from friends and social activities.
- Taking unnecessary or life-threatening risks.
- Giving away personal possessions.
- Losing interest in personal appearance.
- Increasing use of alcohol/drugs.
- Having attempted suicide in the past.

Campus Resources

- CAPS Consultation Services - <http://www.iupui.edu/~sldweb/caps/>
- CAPS Newsletter for Faculty - <http://www.iupui.edu/~sldweb/caps/counseling.html>
- Center for Teaching and Learning – <http://ctl.iupui.edu>
- Office of the Dean of Students - <http://www.iupui.edu/~sldweb/dos/>
- Adaptive Educational Services <http://www.iupui.edu/~sldweb/aes/>
- Student Advocate Coordinator - <http://www.iupui.edu/~sldweb/advocate/>

References

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