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# Managing Difficult Student Behavior

Guidelines for Faculty and Staff  
of the University of Utah



**U**niversity faculty and staff sometimes face student behavior that is troublesome to them in their role of maintaining an effective and safe learning environment. Various student services exist to support faculty and staff with these situations. The campus resources listed in this brochure are available for consultation or student referral.

If a student behaves inappropriately with you or makes you feel uneasy, it may be helpful to talk over your concerns if you are not sure about the action you want to take. Your Department Chair, the Dean of Students Office, the University Counseling Center, and/or Program Coordinators are available to assist you. Frequently, just talking with another professional will clarify issues and help you resolve the problem.

Examples of student behavior that you may find **troubling, disruptive, and threatening** are included in the middle section of this brochure. On the flowchart you will find the University resources available to assist you should you want a consultation for yourself or a referral option for a student.

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## IDENTIFYING TROUBLING BEHAVIOR

**Troubling behavior from a student usually causes us to feel alarmed, upset, or worried.**

When faculty or staff members encounter troubling behavior, they feel concerned about the student's well being. Students exhibiting troubling behavior may have difficulties in and out of the classroom.

**Examples of troubling behavior may include:**

- A student who jokes in class about killing himself/herself.
- A student who perspires profusely when giving a presentation in front of the 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 yet speaks with pride about how little he/she eats.
- A student whose writing appears disjointed and fragmented as though he/she cannot maintain a logical sequence of thought.
- A student who reports that FBI agents are following him/her around campus.

## INTERVENTIONS FOR TROUBLING BEHAVIOR

Clearly, faculty and staff have options for responding to student behavior that they find troubling.

**If a University professional is unsure how to respond to a troubled student here are some suggestions:**

- Seek advice and counsel from the Department Chair, the Dean of Students Office, or the University Counseling Center.
- Initiate a private conversation with the student about the behavior that is of concern.
- Refer the student to campus departments or offices that have the necessary expertise and personnel to help them.

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## IDENTIFYING DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

**Disruptive behavior is student behavior that interferes or interrupts the educational process of other students or the normal business functions of the University.**

A disruptive student typically resists intervention or corrective action. ***Specific examples of disruptive behavior include:***

- A student who verbally abuses or intimidates another student.
- A student who is overly demanding of faculty or staff.
- A student who interrupts the educational process in class by:
  - making hostile remarks out of turn
  - aggressively taking over the lecture

## INTERVENTIONS FOR DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

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

- Verbally request that the student stop the disruptive behavior.
- If the problem persists, ask the student to leave the class or the area.
- Talk privately with the student, preferably in the faculty or staff member's office.
- 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.
- After meeting with the student, 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 discussed consequences.
- Consult with the Dean of Students Office about possible violations of the Student Code of Conduct.

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## IDENTIFYING THREATENING BEHAVIOR

**Threatening behavior from a student typically leaves us feeling frightened and in fear of our personal safety. *These behaviors should be taken very seriously.***

If you have concerns about immediate safety call the University Police at 585-COPS (2677).

Examples of threatening behavior include:

- A student who implies or makes a direct threat to harm themselves or others.
- A student who displays a firearm or weapon.
- A student who physically confronts/attacks another student.
- A student who stalks or harasses a faculty member.
- A student who sends threatening emails, letters, and other correspondence to a staff member.

### INTERVENTIONS FOR THREATENING BEHAVIOR

The safety and well being of the campus community is the top priority when a student exhibits threatening or potentially violent behavior.

*Specific interventions include:*

- **Immediately contact the University of Utah Police at 585-COPS (2677).**
- Contact the Department Chair for advice and support.
- Inform the Dean of Students Office and file a student behavior complaint.
- Consult with the Counseling Center to debrief and assist you, staff members and other students.

### Troubling Student Behavior

Student is troubled, confused, very sad, highly anxious, irritable, lacks motivation, exhibits odd behavior, and/or thinking/talking about suicide.

#### Consultation Resources

Questions about emotional and behavior issues and getting help:

**University of Utah  
Counseling Center  
581-6826  
Dean of Student Office  
581-7066**

**Administrative or  
Judicial Concerns  
(if any)**

**Dean of Student Office  
581-7066**

**Academic Status  
Concerns (if any)**

**Contact Dept Chair**

### Disruptive Student Behavior

Student disrupts or interferes with the educational process or normal business functions of the University.

#### Consultation/Intervention Resources

- Verbally request that the student stop the disruptive behavior.
- If the problem persists, ask the student to leave the class or the area.
- Talk privately with the student, preferably in the faculty or staff member's office.
- After meeting with the student, commit the content of the meeting to paper.

**Dean of Student Office  
581-7066  
University of Utah  
Counseling Center  
581-6826**

**Administrative or  
Judicial Concerns (if any)**

**Dean of Student Office  
581-7066**

**Academic Status  
Concerns (if any)**

**Contact Dept Chair**

### Threatening Student Behavior

A threatening student leaves you feeling frightened and in fear of your personal safety or the safety of others.

***These behaviors should be taken very seriously!***

- A student who makes a direct threat to harm themselves or others.
- A student who displays a firearm or weapon.
- A student who physically confronts/attacks another student.

#### Consultation/Intervention Resources

**If you have concerns about immediate safety call the University Police at 585-COPS (2677)**

**Administrative or  
Judicial Concerns**

**Inform the Dean of Student Office and file a student behavior complaint  
581-7066**

**Academic Status  
Concerns (if any)**

**Contact Dept Chair and/or Dean or Associate Dean of the College**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH RESOURCES FOR CONSULTATION AND REFERRAL**

	Student Health Services	U of U Counseling Center	Dean of Students Office	Dept. Chair or Program Coordinator	U of U Public Safety (Police Dept.)	Office of Equal Opportunity	Center for Disability & Access	Learning Success Center	Women's Resource Center
	581-6431	581-6826	581-7066		585-2677	581-8365	581-5020	581-8726	581-8030
University Public Safety is available 24 hrs/everyday. All other office operating hours are M-F 8:00 am to 5:00 pm									
<b>You are concerned about a student who:</b>									
Poses an immediate threat to self or others.		2	1	2	1				
Writes or verbalizes a direct threat to another person.		2	1	2	1				
Displays anger or hostility inappropriately.		2	1						
Brandishes a gun or other weapon					1				
Talks about homicide or suicide.		1	1	2					
Exhibits behavior that seems bizarre or out of touch with reality.		1	1						
Is a victim of sexual assault.			2		2				1
Seems overly emotional, e.g., aggressive, depressed, demanding, suspicious.		1	2						
Continuously disrupts class and refuses to stop.			1	1	2				
Is the subject of complaints by other students regarding class behavior.			1	2					
Comes drunk or high to class.		1		2					
Shows signs of alcohol or drug abuse.	2	1							
Appears to have an eating disorder or a distorted body image.	1	1							1
Is a victim of violence, stalking, or intimidation.			1		1				
Is having difficulty due to illness or death in the family.		1	1						
Appears to have a chronic illness or medical problem e.g. seizure, fainting, illness.	1		2						
May have a disability.							1		
Appears to have a learning problem; may need diagnostic evaluation.				2			1		
Needs help with test taking, learning strategies, time management, tutoring.		2						1	
Is suspected of cheating.			2	1					
Reports sexual harassment or civil rights discrimination.			1			1			

**1 = Initial Contact(s) 2 = Further Contact(s)**

"Students at the University of Utah are members of an academic community committed to basic and broadly shared ethical principles and concepts of civility. Integrity, autonomy, justice, respect, and responsibility represent the basis for the rights and responsibilities that follow. Participation in the University of Utah community obligates each member to follow a code of civilized behavior."

**Excerpt from the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities  
Part I: General Provisions and Definitions. Policy 8-10**

"The University endeavors to maintain an educational and working environment free from violence and intimidation. It is the responsibility of all administrators, faculty, staff employees, and students to maintain a University environment free from violence."

**Excerpt from the Violence in the Workplace and Academic Environment Policy  
Part IV: Policy A.**

"In order to promote personal development, to protect the University community, and to maintain order and stability on campus, students who engage in any of the following acts of behavioral misconduct may be subject to behavioral sanctions:

1. Acts of dishonesty, including but not limited to the following:
  - a. Furnishing false or misleading information to any University official.
  - b. Forgery, alteration or misuse of any University document, record, fund or identification.
2. Intentional disruption or obstruction of teaching, research, administration, disciplinary proceedings or other University activities.
3. Physical or verbal assault, sexual harassment, hazing, threats, intimidation, coercion or any other behavior which threatens or endangers the health or safety of any member of the University community or any other person while on University premises, at University activities, or on premises over which the University has supervisory responsibility pursuant to state statute or local ordinance."

**Excerpt from the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities  
Part III: Student Behavior. Policy 8-10**



## ADDITIONAL RELEVANT RESOURCES

- U of U Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities: [www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/8/8-10.html](http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/8/8-10.html)
- U of U Faculty Code of Rights and Responsibilities: [www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/8/8-12-1.html](http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/8/8-12-1.html)
- U of U Sexual Harassment Policy: [www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/2/2-6a.html](http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/2/2-6a.html)
- U of U Student Academic Conduct: [www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/8/8-10.html#SECTION%20V](http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/8/8-10.html#SECTION%20V)
- U of U Violence in the Workplace and Academic Environment Policy: <http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/2/2-76.htm>  
FAQ's: <http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/2/2-76FAQ.htm>
- (Full text of policies available at: [www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/](http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/))



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**200 S. Central Campus Dr.**  
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**Office: (801) 581-7066**  
**Fax: (801) 585-5114**

**The University Counseling Center**  
**426 Student Services Building**  
**201 South 1460 East**  
**Salt Lake City, UT 84112-9061**  
**Office: (801) 581-6826**  
**Fax: (801) 585-6816**

