

DISRUPTIVE STUDENTS AND SAFETY THREATS

By Kristine Fertel

As a brief introduction, my name is Kristine Fertel and I'm an ESL faculty member at ARC. Currently, I am also serving as the Dispute Resolution Chair for LRCFT. In this publication, I will be regularly giving you general advice about commonly reported problems faculty are having and how to best manage them. One such problem right now is student disruption.

As many have noticed, our student demographic seems to be changing along with our economy. Cuts to social services, unemployment, an overcrowded penal system and returning veterans with various combat-related problems are resulting in more students who have psychological or physical needs that most of us are not educated or trained in handling. So what can we do?

6

- Know the rights and procedures of all involved: student rights, faculty rights and civilian rights. Search "Student Rights and Student Standards of Conduct" on your campus homepage, as different campuses have this link in different places, and read the sections on the student standards of conduct and student disciplinary procedures. Look up Article 21 in your LRCFT contract and read your rights. In cases involving threat, you may also want to research the process for filing a restraining order through the "California Courts Self-Help Center." <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp/protection/introresord.htm>
- Incorporate the "Student Standards of Conduct" and a system of progressive discipline into your syllabus. Add a line saying something like, "Students are also responsible for following the Student Standards of Conduct. Breaking the rules of conduct will result in..."
- Follow the disciplinary process you've outlined. Make sure to document everything you do in emails and send them to your Area Dean to keep him/her in the loop. Save the emails. Make sure to let the student know what he/she has done wrong and what steps will be taken if he/she does it another time. Consider keeping a copy of student conduct rules and prewritten warning forms in your course folders to refer to and fill out when situations present themselves.
- Call in appropriate support services for assistance. Utilize counseling to help with mental health issues and to help best explain digressions and reeducate students, particularly when disabilities you are not qualified to handle are involved. Counselors are



trained in crisis intervention. However, make sure to also follow the standard disciplinary procedures.

- Call in campus police when needed. Campus police are available to walk you to your class or car, stand outside of your class or office, come to your house to give you security recommendations and help you process informational police reports and restraining orders when necessitated. Do not put yourself in danger. If safety is jeopardized in your classroom, call them in. Put their number in your cell phone.
- Keep LRCFT in the loop. You are not alone. If at any time you are unsure of something, feel dissatisfied with advice and/or help you are given, or just want support, let one of your campus representatives know. Always "cc" LRCFT representatives or LRCFT College Presidents on important written correspondence. ■

If you have any questions about the aforementioned advice, or ideas for future columns, please let me know (fertelkd@arc.losrios.edu).