

Faculty Resources: Working with Students in Distress in the Classroom

Navigating students in distress can be difficult if faculty members do not have a plan on how to address students who are in distress or cause a disruption in class. It is important that faculty members develop expectations for students on how to communicate with one another, engage with Faculty members, and addressing issues. It is important that these expectations are discussed during the first day of class and are consistently upheld.

When addressing disruptive behavior in the classroom, we recommend that you address the behavior immediately and in a calm manner.

- If the behavior happens during class, provide clear instructions to the student about how they can positively contribute to the classroom discussion and have them meet with you after the class.
 - Discuss how the behavior impacts the class and how to better address their concerns/thoughts. Lastly, check in with the student to see if they are doing okay and if there is anything going on outside of class that is influencing their behavior.
- If the behavior reoccurs, you can ask them to stop and if it continues they will be asked to leave the class and that the Office of Community Standards will contact them to assist.
- When meeting with the student, determine an appropriate space to discuss the concerning behavior with the student that is free of disruption.
- Present your concerns.
 - Be forthright, direct, and non judgmental.
 - Ground your concerns in direct observations.
 - Discuss how the behavior not only impacts them, but also the students who are in the class.
 - Discuss how the behavior can be better address in the future.

If the student's behavior is clearly and imminently reckless, disorderly, dangerous, or threatening, including self-harm behavior or suicidal statements call:

- Public Safety: 312-808-6363 or 911

Important Phone Numbers

Office of Student Affairs

Phone: 312.567.3081

Email: dos@iit.edu

Office of Community Standards

Phone: 312.567.5172

Email: conduct@iit.edu

Student Health & Wellness Center

Phone: 312.567.7550

Email: student.health@iit.edu

If you believe a student is displaying distressing behaviors (such as: sudden changes in behavior, disregarding basic hygiene, and increase hostility), it is important to address your concerns immediately. You can accomplish this by:

- Creating the right conditions and initiate conversation.
 - Whenever possible, approach a student during a break or after class if concerned.
 - Determine an appropriate space that is free of distractions.
 - Be prepared to listen.
- Present your concerns.
 - Be forthright, direct, and nonjudgmental.
 - Ground your concerns in direct OBSERVATIONS:
 - “I’ve noticed that you have been more quiet in class lately, how are you doing?”
 - Respond emphatically.
 - Try to focus on asking OPEN questions to elicit more talking and information from the student.
- Offer resources and develop a plan.
 - Understand you do not have all the answers and do not make them up.
 - Walk through the resources with the student and follow up.
 - Follow up with them.

www.iit.edu/incidentreport. Once an incident report is submitted, a professional staff member will follow up with the student appropriately.

We recognize how complicated classroom issues can be. These tips, while providing a helpful framework, may not fit your particular circumstance. If you are unsure how to present your concerns or address students of concern, please feel free to contact the Office of Community Standards (312.567.5172), Office of Student Affairs (312.567.3081), and/or the Student Health & Wellness Center (312.567.7550).

F.A.Q. ON DEALING WITH A PERSON IN DISTRESS

Q. How do I refer a student to counseling?

A: If you believe that the student would benefit from seeing a counselor, it is important to de-stigmatize seeking help and that talking to a therapist is healthy. It is also important that this conversation is private and there are no distractions. Discuss the observations you have made and why they might benefit from seeing a therapist from the Student Health & Wellness Center.

Q: How do I know if a student has visited the Student Health & Wellness Center?

A: Due to federal law and the privacy of the student, the Student Health & Wellness Center will not disclose if a student has visited the center.

Q: If I have walked a student to the Student Health & Wellness Center, what should I do next?

A: For many, seeking help can be a vulnerable and hard to discuss. When walking a student to a triage appointment to the Student Health & Wellness Center, we ask faculty members to leave and empower the student to follow up with them if they need anything.

Q. Who should be made aware when I think there is a student who is in distress?

A: If you have a student who is exhibiting distressing behavior, but it does not require immediate action, submit an Incident Report at iit.edu/incidentreports. If you are unsure if the situation requires immediate attention, please feel free to call the Office of Student Affairs. The Dean of Students and/or designee will walk through the situation with you and discuss options.