



Student Access & Services:

Navigating Challenging Conversations

Middlesex Community College

Professional Day

April 3, 2014



Introductions

- Patricia Bruno, Associate Dean, Academic, Career & Transfer Advising
- Maria Campechano, Associate Director of Student Accounts
- Alisa Chapman, Director of Compliance
- Patricia Demaras, Assistant Dean of International & Multicultural Affairs
- Susan Woods, Associate Dean of Student Support Services



Dealing with Hostile Student Behavior

- Don't personalize the situation.
- What does the angry student want.
 - Diffuse the hostility.
 - Address the problem
- Take care of yourself.



Diffusing Hostility

- Practice self-control and remain calm.
- Maintain a friendly and professional attitude.
- Notice your non-verbal messages.
- Listen carefully.
- Be as “unbureaucratic” as possible.
- Make a distinction between the person and their behavior.
- Practice empathy and validate feelings.
- Explain the situation in a neutral and reflective way.
- Try to understand the person’s motivations.



Breaking Bad News

- Prepare ahead of time and have all the facts.
- Deliver the news face to face.
- Assess the other person's feelings.
- Choose your words based on your relationship with the individual.
- Be prepared for any emotional fall-out.
- Listen to the other person; let them talk.
- State what you are prepared to do to help.



Attitudes that Keep You from Expressing your Feelings

- Conflict phobia
- Emotional perfectionism
- Fear of disapproval and rejection
- Passive-aggressiveness
- Hopelessness
- Low self-esteem
- Spontaneity
- Mind reading
- Martyrdom
- Need to solve problems.



Difficult Conversations: Common Mistakes

- We fall into combat mentality
- We try to oversimplify the problem
- We don't bring enough respect to the conversation
- We lash out-or shut down
- We react to thwarting ploys
- We get "hooked"
- We rehearse
- We make assumptions about intentions
- We lose sight of the goal



Tips/Strategies to be Proactive

- Practice empathy, not “enabling”
- Model the kind of behavior you want from students.
- Reinforce “positive” student behavior
- Hone your communication/conflict resolution skills
- Ask for help and take action early!
- Documentation: Dean of Students - Small Incident Form
- <https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/deanofstudents/incidentform.aspx>



Dealing with Sensitive Issues Reported to You

- **Sympathy & reassurance**
- **Understand his/her safety risk**
- **Provide him/her with their options**
- **Provide assistance with a short-term plan**
- **Obtain important details about the incident**
- **Report to appropriate College officials**
- **Take care of yourself post-incident**



Scenario 1

Joshua is a highly intelligent, highly verbal student who is creating a problem within the class. The faculty has filed a report to the Dean of Student's office. In the report, the faculty states that the student incessantly asks questions, constantly brings in comments that are off topic or focused only on his area of interest, tends to invade the personal space of other students, and has a great deal of difficulty working as part of a group. Other students in the class are reluctant to sit near him or include him in small group discussions. Other students are visibly annoyed, displaying lots of "eye rolling" and snickering. The faculty has asked for assistance with an intervention with the student as this is now interfering with her ability to teach the whole class.



Scenario 2

Terrell is a student in his third semester at MCC. He is interested in pursuing a degree in Engineering. Terrell took Math Ramp-Up in his first semester and failed it.

He took it in his second semester and just barely passed. He is now in his third semester of Math Ramp-Up and it is likely he will fail the class again. He has pursued some tutoring to help, but continues to struggle greatly in the course. He has taken and been successful in his developmental reading courses, but due to his math work, has yet to be eligible to take the math and science requirements of his major.



Scenario 3

John registered for 4 courses in fall of 2010, after several months of billing him; his account was placed with collections and the state-intercept program. During tax season of 2012,

John received a letter from the Dept. of Revenue (DOR) informing him that his state refund was intercept on behalf of MCC because of an unpaid balance. John contact the Student Accounts Office very frustrated because we took his money, and he demands a refund. He claims that he did not attended classes. However, he did not drop his courses, nor was he dropped for non-attendance by his instructors. Instead, he was given F/W's grades at the end of the semester which indicates earned grades.



Scenario 4

Lily is an international student from Vietnam. This is her third semester at MCC and recently she notified the International Office that she was pregnant and the baby is due in May. She has no family in the United States and is feeling very isolated. She is having a difficult pregnancy and has not been attending classes. Lily would like to take the next semester off to raise her child.



Scenario 5

You oversee several faculty members in your department. A student comes to you and says that on several occasions a faculty member has made comments about her clothing and also has rubbed her back a day that she said she felt stressed out. The student goes on to state that she does not want anything done but just wanted you to be aware.



Resources

- Dean of Students Office

- Pam Flaherty, Dean of Students

flahertyp@middlesex.mass.edu

- Susan Woods, Associate Dean

woodss@middlesex.mass.edu

- Pat Demaras, Assistant Dean

demarasp@middlesex.mass.edu

- Rebecca Newell, Assistant Dean

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- Advising

- Pat Bruno, Associate Dean

brunop@middlesex.mass.edu

- Alissa Mendes, Coordinator of Advising

mendesa@middlesex.mass.edu



Resources

- Personal Counseling
 - Lynn Gregory, Personal Counselor- Bedford
gregoryl@middlesex.mass.edu
 - Marilyn Yeo, Personal Counselor- Lowell
yeom@middlesex.mass.edu
- Public Safety
 - Dan Martin
martind@middlesex.mass.edu
 - Tom Hickey, Campus Resource Officer-Lowell
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Resources

- Affirmative Action Plan
 - Darcy Orellana,
Affirmative Action Officer
orellanad@middlesex.mass.edu
 - Alisa Chapman, Title IX
and ADA Compliance
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- Human Resources
 - Gary McPhee, Director
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 - Kimberley McMahon,
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- Student Accounts
 - Chris Fiori, Director of
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 - Maria Campechano,
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Questions?