AN ENVIRONMENT OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM

The University of Massachusetts Amherst strives to create an environment of academic freedom that fosters the personal and intellectual development of all community members. In order to do this, the University protects the rights of all students, faculty and staff to explore new ideas and to express their views. A necessary condition for these pursuits is an acceptance of the spirit of inquiry and a respect for diverse ideas and viewpoints. For true academic freedom to exist, this acceptance and respect must exist in both the overall campus environment and in the classroom.

While the principle of academic freedom protects the expression and exploration of new ideas, it does not protect conduct that is unlawful and disruptive. The University preserves a high standard for members of the community in terms of mutual respect and civility. While each member of the community holds a number of rights, privileges and responsibilities, those individuals who disrespect the rights of others or who act in a ways that discredit themselves or the University may forfeit privileges or receive sanctions. As members of an academic community, we are obligated to be exemplary, both in our behaviors and in our attitudes. This obligation is especially important within the classroom context since this is one of the primary ways that learning and growth are fostered.

EXPECTATIONS FOR CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

Learning and the exchange of ideas may take place in many settings, including the formal classroom. When students and faculty come together, the expectation is always that mutual respect and civility will prevail to ensure that every student has the optimum opportunity to learn and that each faculty member has the best opportunity to teach. Disruptions of any kind affect the atmosphere of civility that is expected and interfere with the opportunity for learning and growth to which both faculty and students are entitled.

Differences of opinions or concerns related to the class should be welcomed if presented in a mutually respectful manner. The challenging of viewpoints is part of the academic experience, but should occur in a manner that opens up dialogue and does not threaten any member of the learning community.

Each faculty member is responsible for the classroom environment, which includes creating a setting for the safe and open exchange of ideas by all students. Each student is responsible ensuring that his or her own behavior promotes these goals. Disruption of the learning process will not be tolerated and may lead to disenrollment or disciplinary action, as outlined in the accompanying procedures.

PROCEDURES RELATED TO DISRUPTIVE CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

Course instructors at the University of Massachusetts have the professional responsibility and authority to maintain order in instructional settings, which include but are not limited to classrooms, libraries, group meetings, tutorials, lab sessions, office hours, and off-campus venues. To assure the best presentation of the course material, a course instructor shall determine the manner and times during which students may ask questions, request clarification or express opinions or points of view in the instructional setting.

Student behavior or speech that disrupts the instructional setting or is clearly disrespectful of the instructor or fellow students will not be tolerated. Disruptive conduct may include, but is not limited to:

1. rude or disrespectful behavior
2. unwarranted interruptions
3. failure to adhere to instructor's directions
4. vulgar or obscene language, slurs or other forms of intimidation
5. physically or verbally abusive behavior.

Instructors are advised to keep careful written records regarding any incident of disruptive behavior, including dates, times, names of those present, and details of the incident. Instructors should inform their department chair or supervising faculty and the Dean of Students Office of any such incidents and provide written documentation, if requested. The parties involved, in conjunction with the department chair or supervising faculty and Dean of Students staff, should strive for acceptable solutions or mediate appropriate intervention strategies.

The instructor may disenroll the student by notifying him or her in writing (with copies to the Undergraduate Registrar and the Dean of Students Office) if:

1. a solution cannot be achieved
2. the disruptive behavior continues
3. the student conduct seriously disrupts the learning process.

If disenrolled, a student may appeal to the Dean of Students Office within 5 business days. If the student appeals, the Dean of Students Office staff will keep the instructor, the department chair or supervising faculty and the student informed of the status of any action to be taken.