

Behind the Scenes with Veteran Faculty: Discussing Strategies to Work with Disruptive Students

This semester we asked veteran faculty members Dr. Janet Eber and Professor James Hart some questions regarding their experiences with classroom disruption in order to shed light on this relevant issue, and to help remind us of some important factors to consider while working with the "Disruptive Student." In our first article of the semester we had the opportunity to speak with Dr. Eber, chairperson of the English and Philosophy Department, on this very important topic. Today, we have the pleasure in presenting our conversation with Professor Hart, chairperson of the Languages/ESL Department.

Professor Hart began by explaining that body language and other nonverbal cues (posture, eye contact, facial expressions) can be a helpful indication that a student may become disruptive in the future. Factors to be aware of are "Students' posture in their seats, facial expressions, eye contact, and gestures which all send messages about how they feel and what they think." However, Professor Hart warns that the first impression is not always an accurate one. "Body language, however can very often be misinterpreted. I always make mental notes about students' body language, but I never jump to conclusions until I've gotten to know them better." Like Dr. Eber, Professor Hart recognizes that students may simply be unaware of their actions, and points out that often students are not aware that their body language in class can be deemed as not caring, disrespectful, or even aggressive. It can be beneficial for the professor to bring these negative behaviors to their attention so that changes can be made.

Professor Hart explains that preventative actions can be one of the greatest strategies to lessen disruptive behavior in a classroom. Having clear expectations about appropriate and inappropriate behavior can help students become aware of proper protocol right from the start. Reinforcing the positive behavior while making it clear that disruptive behavior is unacceptable is a semester long process. Professor Hart explains, "...I find that I have to be a little extra assertive with these expectations and their enforcement, especially at the beginning of the semester. I want to send a clear message to my students about what behaviors I will and will not accept without coming off as despotic or inflexible. This sets clear boundaries for my students, which helps to lessen disruptive behavior and gives me ground to stand on when I need to bring a student in line." Another big component of establishing acceptable behavior is continuing to make time to acknowledge good behavior, especially from a student who hadn't always started with that precedent. Professor Hart states, "If I've had to speak to a student about talking over me or out of turn, and I observe that in the next class the student had behaved appropriately, I take that student aside again and praise him or her for the positive change and ask that it continue."

It can be difficult to take a step back and not accuse a student of inappropriate behavior especially if this wasn't the first incident. Accusing a student or putting the student on the defense can cause the student to feel negative about the interaction and can cause the student to "shut down" and not hear anything during the conversation. To avoid this from occurring Professor Hart explains that he chooses to "...engage a particularly disruptive student in a way that makes him or her take ownership and responsibility for her or her actions. This may involve confronting a student after class with observations instead of accusations, and open ended questions, such as, 'Today I heard you chatting with your neighbor for 10 minutes during the lecture. What kind of message do you think you're sending when you do that? Why?' I always avoid making my conversations seem like a personal attack, but instead get them to recognize the expectations they're breaking and understand the choice they're making to do that." He also points out that as a student, it can be difficult to view any situation differently, and simply may not be aware that there are different perspectives other than their own, such as the professor's viewpoint.

Professor Hart urges us to remain aware that when students realize that their professor is an advocate for their success, and that the college policy, academic standards and classroom expectations are in place for the student's benefit, there is less rebellious behavior in the classroom. As Professor Hart mentioned earlier, engaging students and establishing a rapport with them can help lessen the likelihood of disruptive behavior occurring in the classroom. Therefore, we thought it would be helpful for faculty to know how Professor Hart has been able to engage his students for the many years he has been a professor. We asked Professor Hart:

What are three tips you would give to faculty to help keep students engaged in the classroom?"

1. "Give your students activities in which they work in small groups. These activities have to be well-designed with clear parameters to keep students on track, but allowing them time to interact with each other gives them ownership and control of their learning. Faculty must always monitor and give feedback, but it becomes much more valuable. I feel, in this kind of setting, because it becomes much more targeted. The added benefit is that faculty get to know their students better, and the better faculty know their students, the less likely students are to be disruptive."
2. "Show enthusiasm and passion for your subject"
3. "Present course material in a variety of formats, and give your students a variety of ways to learn them."

In the event that there is disruptive behavior occurring in the classroom, the C&SS office is available to assist in any scenario that may occur. You can either contact the C&SS office directly or create a Retention Alert case that will be assigned to the appropriate department who will reach out to the student.



Veteran's Services



At the County College of Morris, we appreciate and thank our veterans who have answered the call of duty to serve our country in the name of freedom with the utmost bravery and courage. Now, we answer their call as many come to us to attain the next challenge in their lives of receiving higher education.

The office of Veteran Services can be found within the office of Counseling & Student Success. The office is a great place for any new student veteran and family member of a veteran to begin their academic journey at County College of Morris. Our aim is to try to make the beginning steps of becoming a college student as seamless and effortless as possible. We introduce them to the admissions process, the academic curriculums we have to offer, new student registrations, important offices they should be aware of on campus, and how to apply for, utilize and maximize their VA Educational Benefits.

In addition, we offer the same services to student veterans as we do with all students. We provide assistance in the career and major decision making process, workshops, information sessions, information on transferring to a 4-year institution, and personal counseling. This year, in November, we hosted a very successful Veterans Day 5K Run & 1 Mile Walk on our campus, in which all the proceeds benefited a newly formed *CCM Fund for Veterans and Families*. We also presented a patriotic Veterans Day celebration with a powerful performance from the CCM Choir. A special thanks goes to Professor Mammon for conducting the special ceremony.

Our mission is to provide as seamless of a transition as possible for the student veteran from military life to civilian. We want to celebrate and thank the student and their families for making the ultimate sacrifice of serving our country, and ensuring our freedom.

What Do You Want to SEE?

Now it's your turn! Tell us what you would like to read about in the Counseling Corner Newsletter. Let us know if there is anything you would like more information on or if there is any specific article you would like to see.

(973) 328-5140
counseling@ccm.edu

Look for Our Current Events and Resources on Our Website:

<http://www.ccm.edu/studentLife/CampusServices/CounselingServices>

The Idea Behind the Late Withdrawal

What is a Late Withdrawal and who is eligible?

Now that the last day to withdraw for the 16 week semester, November 12, has passed, the college is officially in the Late Withdrawal period (please review the Records and Registration site for the withdrawal dates for the late start mini terms). This period is intended for students who have failed to withdraw before the withdrawal deadline because of extenuating circumstances. Since CCM gives students about 75% of the semester to withdraw, the only time a Late Withdrawal is appropriate is when extenuating circumstances have occurred **AND** documentation of the incident is provided. Some examples of extenuating circumstances include a death in the family or a student that has been hospitalized for any reason.

The following does **NOT** constitute as permissible reasons for a late withdrawal:

- If a student forgot to withdraw even though they knew they were not attending class.
- A student failed to recognize that he/she was doing poorly in a class, or wanted to wait to see how they did on the next exam before withdrawing - when the withdrawal date has passed; students **CANNOT** complete a late withdrawal for this instance because it is not considered extenuating circumstance.

Keep in mind that students are able to appeal for a withdrawal at any time after the semester has ended and a grade is given. In this case, a student must provide documentation and write a letter to either Dr. Bette Simmons or Dean Jan Caffie explaining why he/she is asking for a withdrawal. Please call (973) 328-5140 with any further questions.