

Disruptive Student Withdrawal Procedure¹

1) Overview: Central to Skidmore's philosophy is a commitment to freedom of thought, expression, and behavior. The College is also committed to providing supportive assistance to students who may be experiencing academic or personal difficulties. It is never the intention of the College to stifle debate, to discourage the expression of different and provocative points of view, to prescribe a particular behavior pattern in the classroom, or to exclude students from the educational opportunities provided at Skidmore without serious cause. Any initiative to require a student to withdraw from a classroom must reflect Skidmore's care and concern for its students' well being and for their rights and freedoms.

The College also takes seriously the responsibility of all members of a learning community to interact in a respectful and civil manner in every area of community life. Disruptive or disrespectful behavior that subverts the efforts of faculty and students to pursue the teaching and learning process cannot be sanctioned. In some extreme cases of disruptive and/or disrespectful student behavior in the classroom, it may be necessary for an instructor to request the withdrawal of a student from a class in order to insure the educational rights of other students, to protect the personal and pedagogical rights of the instructor, or to protect the personal or academic well being of an individual student.

If a very serious case needing immediate intervention arises, College officials may draw on policy and procedure already outlined in the Student Handbook, which states that "the College has the right and obligation to act upon conduct not in accord with the informing principles of the Honor Code or codes of conduct. Violations of the Skidmore Honor Code and code of conduct include...obstruction or disruption of teaching or other educational activities on the College campus or other property used for educational purposes" (page 6). If the instructor confronts an issue requiring swift attention, he or she should consult immediately with the department chair and the Associate Dean of Faculty for Student Academic Affairs (ADOF), who may recommend to the Dean of Students & Vice President for Student Affairs that the student withdraw from, or be withdrawn from, the class. The Director of Campus Safety may be asked in these situations to interview the student and others who may have witnessed the disruptive behavior. The Director of Campus Safety also has the authority to intervene immediately in any seriously disruptive situation. If the student's withdrawal from the class is the only viable course of action, the student may be allowed to withdraw immediately with a grade of W or WF or be required to do so by the Dean of Students & Vice President for Student Affairs.

2) Definitions of Disruptive Classroom Behavior:

- a)** The student routinely or periodically exhibits language or behavior that makes it difficult for instructional activities to continue.
- b)** The student on one or more occasions exhibits language or behavior of such a disturbing, disrespectful, or threatening nature as to make the student's return to class untenable.

¹ Draft 8/11/2003; rev. 2003-2004; approved by the Committee on Academic Standing (CAS) 9/24/2012, and by the Committee on Educational Policy and Planning (CEPP) 1/28/2013; included in the [Operating Code](#) of CAS.

3) Procedures:

a) Whenever the situation allows, the College will try to resolve behavioral conflicts through a deliberative process. Thus, in cases of disruptive behavior not requiring immediate intervention from the Dean of Students & Vice President for Student Affairs and/or Campus Safety (as described above), the instructor should speak with the student privately and in a confidential setting; however, if the behavior seems threatening to the instructor, she or he should ask the department chair or program director and/or the ADOF to join the initial discussion. (Here, too, the Director of Campus Safety may be asked to aid the process.) The conversation should occur soon after the first sign of disruptive behavior, and the instructor should express clearly the difficulties caused by the student's behavior and describe the changes in behavior that need to take place. If appropriate, the instructor may recommend that the student seek help from the Counseling Center. The instructor is advised to give the student a written summary of expectations and should also retain a documented record of the student's disruptive behavior and of all interactions he/she has with the student regarding the behavior. (Instructor notes should focus entirely on the behavior itself, not speculate regarding motives or underlying causes of the behavior.)

b) If the disruptive behavior persists after the first conversation, the instructor should seek the advice and intervention of the ADOF and department chair or program director, both of whom can help the instructor consider alternative classroom strategies, can speak directly with the student about the situation, or can move to the procedure in (d) below. If the consulting group believes that the student behavior might still be ameliorated, the ADOF will prepare a formal letter for the student that outlines the faculty member's expectations regarding acceptable (and unacceptable) classroom behavior. The ADOF will also indicate in the same letter his/her recommendation in the event there is a recurrence of unacceptable behavior (for example, immediate withdrawal from the course). Copies of this letter will go to the instructor and the department chair or program director.

c) If an involuntary withdrawal seems necessary, the decision-making process will be as follows (except when, as described above, the case has required immediate intervention by Campus Safety and/or the Dean of Students & Vice President for Student Affairs): the instructor, the department chair or program director, and the ADOF will interview the student when possible (if this has not already occurred) and make their recommendation to the Dean of Faculty & Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Students & Vice President for Student Affairs (a letter from the ADOF may already be on file as a result of action in (b) above). If the chair or program director is also the instructor of the class, then a tenured, senior member of the department will join this deliberation. A recommendation for course withdrawal requires the concurrence of the instructor and one other member of the consulting team (either the ADOF or the chair or program director).

d) The Dean of Faculty & Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Students & Vice President for Student Affairs will determine whether the student should be withdrawn from the class or whether a different course of action is more appropriate. Under most circumstances the student will receive a grade of "W" (or a "WF" if appropriate). If the deadline has passed, CAS will deliberate on any petitions for change in status.