

Case Scenarios for Confronting with Care

Confrontation, by definition, is negative. It assumes a hostile environment or interaction must be created in order to address behavior.

In order to support everyone utilizing proactive safety measures such as wearing face coverings and social distancing, any member of our campus community may be called upon to address another member of our community who is not abiding by campus expectations.

The following scenarios are shared as a tool for preparing yourself, your peers, your employees, or any group of our campus community in addressing such instances with care, as best as possible.

Scenario One: Susie & the face covering

Think through the following scenario.

We've just started week two of class, as a faculty member you walk into your classroom and are getting things ready for class to start in a few minutes. Your students have started to trickle in and take their assigned seats. You notice Susie walk in without a face covering on.

You proactively communicated your expectations related to face coverings and COVID-19 with students before the first day of class through email and through your syllabus. You even shared with students on day one that you would remind them verbally to put a face covering on, giving them the benefit of the doubt that they had forgotten if a student came into the classroom without a face covering.

Susie sat down in her seat and is paying attention to her phone. You notice a few other students look at her and then at you, waiting to see how you will respond. You kindly say, "Susie, could you please put your face covering on?" Susie looks up from her phone, rolls her eyes at you, and then looks back at her phone.

It is fair to say you're annoyed. This is not how you wanted to start class. You give Susie a minute as you prepare a few other items to see if she makes the choice to put her face covering on. Susie has still not put a face covering on. You kindly, but firmly say, "Susie, the expectation on our campus is that we're all wearing a face covering. Please put a face covering on if you have one, remove yourself from the classroom to go to Essentials (or another location) to buy one, or leave class for today."

Susie grabs her backpack, stands up and leaves the classroom. She doesn't return to class that day.

What went well in this scenario?

- You were able to address and immediately resolve the situation by reiterating your expectations by being firm but kind in your language.
- It is only week two and now the majority of your students have seen how you will hold students accountable to the expectations you outlined.
- By both your choices and ultimately Susie's choices, you're able to move on with the class period.

What follow up steps might you take?

- Ultimately, Susie complied with your request. She made the choice to leave the classroom and not return. If Susie continued to repeat this behavior, coming to future classes without a face covering on, forcing you to verbally reiterate expectations and ask her to leave, it would be appropriate to refer her to the student conduct process through the Dean of Students office.
- If you haven't heard from Susie in the hours following class, you may send her an email that reiterates the classroom expectations and kindly, but firmly, offers her the opportunity to find a class that is online if she isn't comfortable meeting the expectation of wearing a face covering moving forward.

Scenario Two: George and the struggle to distance

Think through the following scenario. What choices would you make?

You work in an office setting associated with a larger open space (this scenario may apply best to spaces like Rod Library, Maucker Union, offices in Gilchrist Hall, or advising/faculty spaces near a common space in academic buildings). George is a phenomenal student. This is his third year on campus and for the past two years he has frequented the open gathering space outside of your office/office suite as a place to study, interact with his peers, and engage with faculty/staff.

Due to COVID-19, the open area seating has been reduced and furniture has been moved to support physical distancing. It has been your experience that individuals still interact, but with decreased frequency.

George still loves to sit at his favorite table and interact with others as they're walking by. His enthusiasm and energy is nice in the midst of everything going on. A few weeks into the semester, you notice that George is slowly starting to slip in adhering to social distancing expectations. While he consistently wears a mask, you've noticed him pull a chair up to other tables and sit closely to other students, subsequently not supporting physical distancing.

What do you do?

- Let the other students George is talking to address the behavior. *This is an option. Peers may not have as much comfort addressing George. If you've previously established any sort of relationship with George (regardless of your role) he may respond better to you than a peer he's just getting to know.*
- Address the behavior directly. *This is an option. You've noticed this behavior on more than one occasion and have noticed the behavior with more frequency. Someone else may not have seen the same pattern. You can use language that addresses this from a factual perspective rather than opinion or feeling driven language.*
- Other options?

You decide you will address George directly the next time you see him move tables and chairs that have been marked in certain spaces to address physical distancing, but want to try and do it when there aren't other students around.

The following day, George is back. You've watched him move a chair to go sit by another student. You go back to your office to work on a project, not wanting to confront George in front of his peers. A bit later you notice that the other student is gone and it's just George at a table. You approach George.

What do you say to George?

- "Hey George, I've noticed over the past week or so that you're moving chairs and tables around which isn't promoting physical distancing. I really appreciate in the midst of everything that has changed this semester, you spending time out here is still a constant. Simultaneously, I need you to remember that the chairs and tables are physically distanced for a reason."
- "Hi George. Can I talk to you about a concern I have for a couple minutes? You started the semester doing a great job of role modeling physical distancing out here, but in the past couple weeks you've started moving furniture and sitting closer to other people. I'm not sure if anyone else has said anything to you, but I'd really appreciate it for my safety and the safety of our campus community if you could make sure you go back to practicing six feet of physical distancing. I know this isn't always easy."
- "Hey George, just a quick reminder. The chairs and tables are set apart for a reason. Please leave them where they belong and make sure you're physically distancing yourself from others while you're in this space."

Scenario Three: The classroom disruption

Think through the following scenario. What decisions can you make that best support the entire space and all individuals present?

It is week one of class and everyone is still getting used to the campus expectations related to COVID-19. Your first class period went well although a few students did not attend class. You anticipate having to spend a few minutes at the beginning of class getting those who did not attend caught up and into assigned seats.

You walk into class and immediately notice a student not wearing a face covering. This isn't a student you remember from the first day of class, but with everyone using face coverings you don't want to assume the student wasn't previously in class.

What do you say?

- "Hi there. Could you remind me of your name as I make adjustments to the seating chart?"
- "Good morning. Just a quick reminder that we wear face coverings in class and if you had an assigned seat from last class period you should be in that seat."
- "Face coverings on please."
- Others?

You opt to say good morning and remind the student about the face covering and assigned seats. The student quickly responds with, "I wasn't here last class. I don't know where to sit." The student doesn't address your reminder about the face covering. Other students are continuing to come into the classroom.

You respond with, "Thank you for letting me know you weren't here. We'll get you into a permanent seat, but before we figure that out, I'll need you to get out your face covering and put that on."

The student says, "I forgot my face mask at home. The faculty member in my class before this said I could sit through that class without one. Just this once. I'll remember one next class."

You respond with, "I'm sorry to hear that your other faculty member made that type of exception for you. It's not one I can make in this class for the safety of everyone. If you don't have a face covering you can either leave class to go buy one from Essentials (or other location) and come back, or leave class for the day. The choice is yours, but you need a face covering."

Although still sitting in their seat, the student starts to yell at you in response. You're surprised by this reaction.

What are your options?

- Reiterate your expectations. You say, "That is not an acceptable response. I'll give you one final chance to remove yourself from the classroom."
 - *You've remained calm, positively represented yourself, and given the student ample opportunities to correct their behavior.*
- Ignore the behavior of the student yelling and calmly address the rest of the students in your class, recognizing this behavior may be catching them off guard as well. "All, I'm not going to ask any of us to stay in an environment that isn't adhering to our campus expectations and is potentially exposing individuals to COVID-19. Class is dismissed. I will follow up via email and will be referring your peer to the student conduct process."
 - *You've upheld your expectations, protected yourself and your students, and shown the rest of the students in your class how you'll address such behavior.*
- Call the department office to see if the Department Head is around.

- *This may get you additional assistance, particularly if this was shared as an option, but how will this change the students behavior or de-escalate the situation?*

Referral points:

- If the student starts to engage in physical behavior that is threatening towards you or other students in the classroom (for example, picking up books, chairs or other items threatening to throw them), you could call UNIPD at 319-273-2712 due to the threatening behavior and classroom disruption (not the failure to wear a face covering).
- The student should be referred to the [student conduct process](#) through the Dean of Students office, as soon as possible, but no more than 24 hours after the incident. You gave the student multiple opportunities to comply with your reasonable requests.
 - Concerns with UNI staff failing to adhere to campus COVID-19 expectations can be referred to toni.babcock@uni.edu.
 - Concerns with UNI faculty failing to adhere to campus COVID-19 expectations can be referred to john.vallentine@uni.edu

What is next?

- If you dismissed your class, you may send a follow-up email to your class (excluding the student who caused the disruption) apologizing for the missed class day, providing any relevant course information, reiterating classroom expectations related to COVID-19, and sharing the student's behavior/the student has been referred to the student conduct process through the Dean of Students office.
- Dean of Students staff will work to address the behavior utilizing the student conduct process as quickly as possible. The more information you provide in your referral form, the quicker we will be able to take next steps.
 - More severe disruptions to any environment can result in [Interim Actions](#), prior to the student conduct process moving forward, as determined by the Dean of Students office. To uphold a students rights, a student must receive two business days notice of their administrative hearing. Interim Actions may keep them from returning to a particular space until their behavior has been addressed by the conduct process and it is determined if it is or is not appropriate for them to return to the space they disrupted.
 - General information on how the student conduct process will work to support campus safety during COVID-19 is available [online](#).

While this scenario is presented in the classroom setting, make adjustments to other spaces on campus. How would this apply:

- For a student organization leader at the front of a classroom leading a student org meeting with a member who refuses to wear a face covering?
- For an academic advisor in an office setting with a student who refuses to wear a face covering?
- Other scenarios?