DEALING WITH DISRUPTIVE STUDENTS:
A FACULTY PERSPECTIVE

Sean P. Murphy, Ph.D.
Fall 2006
# Table of Contents

I. Introduction 3

II. Root Causes of Disruptive Student Behavior 8

III. Responses to Disruptive Student Behavior 15

IV. Suggestions for CLC 24

V. Works Cited and Annotated Bibliography 27

VI. Appendices

A. Sample Contract for Classroom Behavior

B. Guidelines for Interpersonal Communication

C. CLC Survey of Disruptive Behavior Results

D. Indiana University’s Survey on Academic Incivility

E. Guidelines for Conflict Management

F. CLC Code and Sample Student Conduct Code

G. Classroom Civility: A Faculty Guide,

   Jamestown Community College
I. Introduction

During a recent Orientation Week, educational theorist Terry O’Banion delivered the keynote address to the College of Lake County (CLC) community. O’Banion called upon colleges to transform themselves from teaching to learning institutions, thus shifting focus from the act of teaching to the processes of learning. Whether or not individual professors heed O’Banion’s call, we can all recognize our role as leaders of the classroom, leaders who foster and protect the educative process for students. When one student disrupts the educative process, many students suffer.

This unacceptable interruption of the learning process for many by one or a few troublesome students plays itself out in classrooms for complex reasons, and administrative intervention into unruly student behavior often occurs only after entire classes of students have endured their peers’ maladaptive behavior. As such, effective, dynamic, faculty-inspired strategies for intervening in disruptive student behavior fits into the notion of CLC as a “learning college,” one where students and faculty work together productively to learn received knowledge and create new insights. These activities should take place in an environment free from impeded instructional delivery and truncated student learning. Of course, they do not. The complexity of human interaction marks each classroom with its inevitable joy and sorrow.
Designed to help faculty members at the College understand the root causes of disruptive behavior and fashion adequate responses to such behavior, this grant project report surveys available relevant literature, suggests a standard model for documenting conflict management, proposes strategies for effective classroom management, and suggests ways the CLC administration and faculty can work together to make conflict management a successful component of faculty members’ professional practice.

Unfortunately for professors at CLC and other colleges, the literature concerning classroom management is thin, at best. The Works Cited and Annotated Bibliography (Section V) of this project presents to readers some of the best resources I discovered during my literature review. The list also contains the bulk of what I found. Indirectly reflecting the dearth of literature concerning classroom management at the college level, CLC’s Faculty Handbook offers scant conflict resolution guidance to professors. The 2005-2006 version of the Faculty Handbook advises instructors to create an “educationally sound” atmosphere to prevent discipline problems. The Handbook goes on to indicate ways faculty members can respond to discipline problems, but does so from the perspective of administrators and campus safety officers. Missing from our own Handbook, and from literature in general, is a sustained discussion of the root causes of student disenchantment with school, hostility toward professors, and lack of regard for peers from the perspective of professors who work to integrate conflict management into their practice.
Dealing with Disruptive Students: A Faculty Perspective supplements available information about conflict management in college classrooms with “answers” to the following key questions:

1. What motivates disruptive behavior in the classroom?

2. What conflict management strategies prove effective for faculty members apart from enlisting the help of a third party (police, security, counselors, deans, or the Vice President for Student Development)?

3. How can CLC create or enhance college-wide systems to help faculty members respond to disruptive student behavior, if formal intervention is prudent?

I reproduce below the “Classroom Management” section of the CLC Faculty Handbook to frame our discussion of these questions.

**CLC Faculty Handbook, 2005-2006 Academic Year**

**Classroom Management**

While the details of managing the classroom are not always at the top of one's mind, there are a number of points that contribute to successful teaching and learning. They help maintain the level of cooperation among colleagues that assures efficient operations.

**DISCIPLINE**

Both the instructor and the students contribute to the atmosphere maintained in the classroom. For the most part, the instructor sets the tone that either encourages or discourages a healthy learning environment in the classroom. If the instructor's presentations are educationally sound and the instructor personally is non-threatening, desired outcomes are more easily obtained.

Discipline problems can occur in the college classroom. If the problem is severe, the Campus Safety staff should be called to give you aid (Ext. 2081).
OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER WHEN DEALING WITH DISRUPTIVE STUDENTS

Due Process: The College can remove students from class or dismiss them from school provided we can demonstrate due process. This means that we have treated the student fairly and provided a legitimate opportunity to appeal the action.

Intervention:

1. Carefully observe the student’s behavior. You should keep a written record of your observations.

2. Meet with the student in private to share your observations and indicate that the behavior must stop.


4. Show support where possible. You may refer the student to the Counseling Center to speak with a Counselor regarding the behavioral concern.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DEALING WITH DISRUPTIVE STUDENTS

Faculty are often uncertain regarding how to deal with students who fall outside of normal classroom management procedures. Listed below are suggestions that may assist faculty in dealing with students whose conduct disrupts classes or threatens physical harm to others.

1. Most importantly, any physical assault or threat of assault by any person should be reported immediately to Campus Safety (Ext. 2081). If the person responsible for the threat or assault is a student, also alert the Vice President of Student Development Office (Ext. 2048). The Vice President of Student Development will review the incident and initiate the appropriate disciplinary procedures. If there is any doubt about whether or not an incident represents a threat of physical danger, call Campus Safety to consult with them about the appropriate response.

2. A student whose conduct is so disruptive that it immediately prevents the continuation of a class should be told clearly to stop the behavior because it interferes with the class. If the student continues the disruption, Campus Safety should be called for immediate assistance. Again, call the Vice President of Student Development to initiate a disciplinary investigation and appropriate disciplinary action.

3. There may be instances when a student’s behavior may have disrupted a particular class session or a student’s behavior has been intermittently disruptive to the class or the instructor is concerned that there may be a further problem with disruption. In those instances, the instructor should discuss the situation with the Dean, and if appropriate, call the Vice President of Student Development to discuss the concerns.
Often, it is important that the instructor, or the Vice President of Student Development, or both warn the student as clearly and as precisely as possible about the behavior that disrupts the class. Emphasize that the College will take the appropriate disciplinary action, if necessary, to protect the integrity of the class. (9-10)
II. Root Causes of Disruptive Student Behavior

One name appears time and again in literature about disruptive college students: Gerald Amada. A counselor at the City College of San Francisco, Amada regards classroom management at the college level as a skill, one eminently teachable to faculty. Advocating a clear, workable discipline code on every campus, Amada urges faculty members to practice meticulous documentation of disturbances: “clearly and specifically identify the nature of the disruptive behavior(s), link these behaviors to a specific code of student conduct, carefully document their findings, and transmit their reports to the proper college authorities” (xiv). Privileging the behavioral basis of conflict in the classroom over psychological determinants, Amada strongly asserts that students’ bad behavior occurs in the absence of complex psychological causes, by and large. As such, faculty members should develop basic behavior modification techniques or dispute resolution skills combined with a rigorous documentation protocol. They need not attempt to read the latest DSM-IV and become pseudo-psychologists. Outsourcing student-faculty conflict resolution to counselors, while seductive, involves forcing students to go to counselors. Even if they have psychological problems, pushing students into counseling against their will rarely resolves problems, as coercion generally sits poorly with human beings.

Amada’s book titled Coping with Misconduct in the College Classroom: A Practical Model serves as the primary source for this project. A pioneer in the
study of disruptive student behavior in post-secondary education, CLC’s faculty members should be aware of his views, even if they disagree with his chief findings. His status as a counselor at an open-admissions two-year college makes Amada’s conclusions all the more relevant to our own educational setting. Additionally, I will cite some of the findings of the Survey Monkey instrument created and distributed in March of 2006 to get a preliminary sense of CLC faculty members’ ideas concerning classroom misbehavior (Appendix C). Not a social science project intended to produce an empirically sound data set on which researchers could base extrapolations, the survey sought responses from faculty members to facilitate a conversation about an issue—classroom conflict—that interferes with attempts at pairing access to college with excellence in instruction. I believe Amada when he writes: “rather than disdainfully shun the responsibility, college instructors need to accept the fact that good teaching includes not only breadth of knowledge and expertise in one’s chosen field, but capabilities to manage and quell disorder in the classroom so that teaching and learning can be maximally achieved” (20).

The first section of the CLC survey asked respondents to review a list of disruptive behaviors in light of three questions: Do you have a policy prohibiting or addressing the behavior? Have you observed this behavior in your classes? Do you consider this behavior disruptive? I will not reproduce that section here, as readers can turn to Appendix C and review the survey, but I will cite the most
common disruptive classroom behaviors Amada lists in his study, especially since his list informed the CLC survey:

grandstanding, sleeping in class, prolonged chattering, excessive lateness, poor personal hygiene, overt inattentiveness, eating, drinking, gum chewing [“students who chew their gum in a manner much like alligators devour their prey” (6)], smoking, cell phones, passing notes, unexcused exits from class, verbal or physical threats directed at students or faculty, disputes of instructor’s authority and disciplinary expertise. (1-8)

Although some of these behaviors look like they belong to elementary or junior high school lists of student disturbances, Amada confirms they are the most common disturbances on his campus and others’ campuses, given his experience as a lecturer and consultant.

Our attempt to understand the causes of student behavior should include a consideration of the varying degree to which faculty label certain behaviors “disruptive” in the first place. The related behaviors of “excessive lateness” and “unexcused exits from class” (Section 1, Questions 8 and 21 of the CLC Survey) seem to me both common and disruptive. Confirming my impression, In the CLC Survey, 99% of respondents observe students arriving late to class, and 80% find this behavior disruptive. Does this mean 19% of professors who responded to the survey allow late arrivals to their classes? Furthermore, 29% of professors have no policy regarding lateness. How might students interpret these mixed
Regarding “unexcused exits from class,” 29% of respondents to the CLC Survey have a policy, 83% observe the behavior in their classes, and only 44% find the behavior disruptive. Again, one assumes students must decipher mixed messages, if any at all are transmitted.

Sometimes a match between observing a behavior and regarding it as disruptive appears, as in the case of “prolonged chattering” (Amada) or, as I phrase it in the survey, “Students who conduct side conversations” (Section 1, Question 17). Of respondents to the CLC survey, 94% observe the behavior in their classes and 94% find the behavior disruptive. On the other hand, “overt inattentiveness” (Section 2, Question 36) and sleeping in class (Section 1, Question 11) are common occurrences that seem disruptive to less than half of the respondents. Apparently students must learn to function within the heterogeneity of college classrooms by navigating ever-shifting professorial expectations, and they simply may not have the skill set to do so effectively—yet. Homogeneity does not address the problem, though, since the world and the professional workplaces to which we hope students will aspire do not conform to homogeneity on any level.

Be that as it may, I do not suggest that professors create policies covering every behavior that may be annoying to others or disruptive of learning. I propose, however, that faculty members explore the extent to which they allow or condone, implicitly or explicitly, behaviors disruptive of students’ learning. Utilitarian ideas of the greatest good for the greatest number may change some
of our responses to students who sleep in class, for example. As David D. Perlmutter notes in “Thwarting Misbehavior in the Classroom”: “Students will always misbehave. So will professors. But educators have a duty to encourage the best behavior in our charges” (B14). We are the leaders of the classroom.

Possible responses to conflict in the classroom and systemic changes for CLC will be discussed in Sections III and IV of this report. Let us turn our attention now to the possible causes of disruptive behavior in CLC classrooms. As I wrote earlier, the scarcity of research into what many faculty members report as the most frustrating part of their careers (Seidman 40) opens up a space for faculty to conduct research. The heavy teaching load of community college faculty positions them at the forefront of efforts to understand behavioral patterns of contemporary college students.

In the meantime, we rely on the available research to understand the array of behaviors college students display in the classroom. Alan Seidman suggests in his article “The Learning Killer” that “many behavior problems are beyond the control of the instructor” (41). He cites physical causes of behavior – ranging from medication to substance abuse, fatigue to illness – when attempting to uncover root causes of misbehavior (41). On the other hand, two well-regarded experts in the emerging field of study concerning conflict management in the college classroom, Sally L. Kuhlenschmidt and Lois E. Layne, warn against “[j]umping to conclusions about the source and nature of a problem,” moves that are “a recipe for failure” (46). To be sure, reflective faculty members explore their
own behavior in problem situations (48), but the same faculty need to guard against personalizing student misbehavior. Sometimes instructors do not act in any given way to elicit a student “reaction” (46). That said, faculty members do well to explore their own lesson plans, assignment sequences, tasks, directions, and demeanor when patterns of conflict emerge over the course of their professional practice.

Why do students behave uncivilly? Faculty respondents to Section 3 of the CLC Survey most strongly endorse three “definite” root causes of student incivility: “Insufficient understanding of collegiate-level study among students,” 56%; “Psychological disorders of students,” 51%; and “Popular culture influences,” 47%. The broadly interpretable nature of “popular culture influences” may make the category an empty one. “Psychological disorders,” however, appears as a category a good deal less ambiguous than popular culture. Ironically, popular culture may bear some responsibility for faculty members’ assessment of aberrant student behavior as caused by mental illness. In all likelihood, “persons with mental illnesses are less dangerous than the rest of the population. Their behavior may be unusual but is not generally purposefully disruptive. They may, in fact, be at greater risk of being overlooked in the classroom because of their inhibitions” (Kulenschmidt and Layne 50).

The literature does not clearly delineate root causes of maladaptive student behavior on college campuses. Some behavior may have physical bases, some cultural, some socio-economic, some stress-induced, some mysteriously
induced. I have heard people at CLC urge faculty to understand that students’ “disorders” may prevent them from relating well to authority figures. Regardless of the causes, whether biological or sociological, Amada makes clear the ultimate source of responsibility for student behavior when he writes, “Instructors will probably find it reassuring to know that a college is not legally prohibited from disciplining seriously disruptive students even when the students’ acts of disruption are manifestations of a documented impairment” (13). An idea obviously worth repeating, Amada later re-asserts: “Again, an instructor may use disciplinary sanctions in dealing with a disruptive student even if that student’s disruptiveness is a symptom of his or her physical or mental disability” (38).

If the cause of most disruptive behavior falls outside the locus of mental disabilities, referring students to counseling may not “solve” the problem. Neither will ignorance of or excuses for poor behavior lessen its impact on student learning and professional satisfaction.

CLC cannot fashion coherent student codes, policies, or enforcement procedures without recognizing first—on policy levels, in administrative ranks, and within the faculty community—that disruptive student behavior, regardless of its root causes, cannot exist unchecked lest irreparable harm to the educative process be visited upon the vast majority of enrolled students.
III. Responses to Disruptive Student Behavior

Even though I have not definitively named root causes of poor student behavior, I have established two important ideas from the available literature on the topic:

1. Mental illnesses generally do not cause students to create conflict in the classroom or behave uncivilly, so faculty should resist the impulse to attribute disruptive behavior to undefined mental illnesses;

2. Regardless of the causes of troublesome behavior, faculty members must respond to conflict proactively in order to preserve the sanctity of the learning environment for other students.

As a corollary to points 1 and 2 listed above, especially in regards to point 2, faculty should respond proportionally to offenses and should consider a behavior modification strategy as the most efficient response to vexing student behavior. As Amada argues, “the primary purpose of disciplinary sanctions is to improve and correct unacceptable behavior, not rehabilitate character” (39).

Individual faculty members can set the rules for their classrooms, within the confines of the law and the College’s student code (see Appendix F for CLC’s Policies Concerning Student Life as well as a more detailed student conduct code from another college). How shall they inform the students of and enforce the rules of the classroom? (See Appendix G)
Informing students is probably most efficiently accomplished in a detailed syllabus. Some faculty also encourage or force students to sign contracts on the first day of class (see sample contract, Appendix A). As noted earlier, faculty members might do themselves a disservice by listing every disruptive student behavior, a list whose sheer length might overwhelm all parties involved in the educational enterprise. But students should know faculty expectations for the class, and they should be assured of faculty members’ status as leaders who will protect them from harassment and untoward behavior. “Whether an instructor is aware of it or not,” Amada reminds us, “the assignment of an instructorship requires that one, in the course of carrying out his or her professional duties, at once upholds federal, state, and municipal statutes, maintains behavioral standards in the classroom that are consistent with the college code of student conduct, and fulfills the various ethical obligations that are intrinsic to the profession of education” (44). Faculty should familiarize themselves with CLC’s Policies Governing Student Life and link behavior expectations for their classes to the College’s code. Lastly, faculty members are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that all members of the class—faculty, visitors, and students, alike—adhere to the code.

Ensuring code adherence is tricky, at best. Each faculty member who wishes to develop classroom management skills will need time to establish a protocol consistent with her/his pedagogical philosophy and with CLC’s student code. In general, during the planning and implementation phase of their
classroom management preparation, faculty should:

1. plan for graduated disciplinary measures: spoken warning, written warning (copy sent to administrator), formal reprimand, removal for two consecutive classes with conditions established for re-admission to course, suspension from course or campus, expulsion (possibly permanent) (Amada 30-31);

2. draft warning notices and documentation charts for the upcoming semester;


Gerald Amada repeatedly stresses the importance of documentation and communication to any process aimed at mitigating classroom conflict. The process works best when faculty members know their professional assessment of and reaction to conflict will find external or third-party support, if administrators must be involved in the dispute. Many of the articles I read cited lack of administrative support and fear of failure as two potent forces that prevent colleges and their faculties from establishing cultures of classroom civility and open inquiry.

In the interest of providing a detailed template to faculty members who have not yet created a documentation system for handling disruptive student behavior, I will cite the Holton Model for Conflict Management in this section.
Properly documented incidents of classroom disruption can aid all parties—students, faculty members, and administrators—in creating solutions appropriate to the infraction.

First, we should recognize in ourselves the necessity of remaining calm during moments of classroom aggravation. By and large, authors of the pieces I researched conclude that disruptive students do not mean their behaviors as personal attacks against instructors. Even if students verbally attack instructors, said instructors should not respond in kind. The University of Colorado at Boulder’s Ombuds Office Website includes a list of behaviors faculty might exhibit when confronted with conflict. When at all possible, faculty are called upon to respond to behavior that inhibits learning in ways that elicit cooperation from the offending party or parties:

**Disputant Behaviors Observed to Elicit Resistance:**

1. Negative labeling, insulting, or calling the other party offensive names.  
   *Example: "You are a liar."*
2. Minimizing or ignoring the other's feelings.  
   *Example: "Frankly, I don't care if you are upset!"*
3. Lying about, denying, or misrepresenting information known to the other party.
4. Blaming the other for the problem with "you" statements.  
   *Example: "You make me mad when you forget to lock the door when you leave the office!"
5. Communicating condescension.  
   *Example: "You mean to tell me that you are just now figuring that out?"
6. Questioning the other party's honesty, integrity, intelligence, or competence.  
   *Example: "How do you expect me to trust you this time?"
7. Making offensive or hostile non-verbal expressions or gestures.  
   *Example: Rolling the eyes, loud sighs, laughing, "giving the finger," sticking one's tongue out at the other, or groaning when the other party speaks.
8. Making interpretations of what the other party says based on stereotypes or prejudicial beliefs.
   Example: "All you people ever think about is how you can avoid working!"
9. Insisting that the other party "admit to being wrong."
   Example: "This is not about my perceptions of what happened. I saw you take my floppy disk and you damn well better admit it!"
10. Using sarcasm in addressing the other party.
    Example: "Well, how nice of you to grace us with your presence. I'm shocked!"
11. Making moral judgments about the other party.
    Example: "The Lord will punish you for these sins!"
12. Making threats to the other party.
    Example: "You'd better stick to your word, or I'm going to talk with the boss about your behavior!"
13. Making demands of the other party.
    Example: "I demand that you write me a letter of apology."
14. Refusing to shake hands with the other party when he/she offers.
    Example: At the beginning of the mediation session.
15. Interrupting the other party when he/she is speaking.
16. Shouting at the other party.

**Disputant Behaviors Observed to Elicit Cooperation:**

1. Using “I” statements, rather than “you” statements.
   Example: “I want to respond to your questions, but I need some time to calm down first.”
2. Conveying that the disputant has been listening attentively.
   Example: “It sounds as if your biggest concerns are for your long-term job security and recognition for your accomplishments. Is that right?”
3. Making “appropriate” eye-contact. Note: This one is extremely culturally dependent. The key issue is for Disputant A to make eye contact with Disputant B in a way that is comfortable for Disputant B.
4. Expressing a desire to see both parties get as much of what they want as possible from mediation.
   Example: “I’d like to see both of us walk out of here happy.”
5. Acknowledging responsibility for part of the problem whenever possible.
   Example: “You know, I hadn’t seen it before, but I think I did make some mistakes in the way I approached you.”
6. Acknowledging the other party’s perceptions whenever possible.
   Example: “I haven’t considered this matter from that perspective before, but I think I can see how it looked that way to you.”
7. Identifying areas of agreement with the other party whenever possible – especially if he/she does not recognize that such areas of agreement exist.
   Example: “You know, Conrad, I agree with you that we ought to make time management more of a priority for our office in the future.”
8. Allowing the other party to “let off steam.” *Note:* This requires extreme self-control, but if the other party has not expressed him/herself previously, this can be extremely valuable.

   *Example:* “Could you help me understand why having these specific days off is so important to you?”

10. Indicating that the other party “has a good point” when he/she makes a point you believe has merit.
    *Example:* “You’re absolutely right about x.”
    (http://www.colorado.edu/Ombuds/elicit.html)

After taking into consideration the personal postures most effective in conflict resolution, faculty members should begin documenting precise details of any given conflict. Though faculty should most certainly create their own documentation system, I find the three-phase Holton Model for Conflict Management useful because of its applicability to many modes of classroom conflict, from the minor to the systemic. Additionally, the Holton Model for Conflict Management provides an easy and standard template for defining and recording disputes, one that can be shared with administrators, should the need arise.

**Phase One: Problem Identification**

- **Who is involved?** Identify all the players in a conflict. Who is not involved? Do the players rotate? Identify the relationship of those involved in the conflict. Identify biases that may trigger your reaction to disputants. Attempt to manage the conflict with the smallest group possible.
• **What are the emotional and objective facts of the conflict?** Do not judge behaviors. Instead of noting, “Sally flouted all convention of civilized behavior when she x”; write, “Sally entered the room fifteen minutes after the beginning of class, created noise when she moved a desk some fifteen ten across the room, and…” Record emotions separately.

• **When did the conflict occur?** Address behavior immediately and make a note of it. The longer a conflict lasts, the harder it is for all parties to identify origins of the conflict.

• **Where did the conflict occur?** Identify the physical space and consider variables: lighting, size of classroom, number of students enrolled, location of room relative to parking lots, and so forth. Might a physical explanation exist for students arriving late, for example?

• **Note resolution attempts.** What have you done with disruptive students? Have other professors worked with the same student? How did they react to him/her?

• **Note consequences of the conflict.** Should you have let a problem go? Should you have waited until another time to confront a student? Should you respond to certain behaviors publicly and immediately? If so, what form should that response assume?
Phase Two: Solution Identification

- **Develop a positive attitude.** The next two phases of the Holton Model for Conflict Management require all parties in a dispute to work together on solving the problem.

- **Establish ground rules.** Ground rules should cover structure (when, where, how often and how long parties will meet), communication (speaking for oneself only, using “I” statements, confidentiality), and parties (who will be involved).

- **Identify interests of the parties.** What do the people in the conflict want? To avoid a situation where disputants become two immoveable objects, focus less on positions and more on interests. *(See Getting to Yes)*

- **Develop alternatives.** Brainstorm possible resolutions to the conflict. Sometimes a third party can help with this process and join in the brainstorming session. How have others managed similar issues?

- **Identify criteria by which to judge best solution.** One criterion may be that all parties feel good about a solution. Others include ethical and legal concerns. The student code must be observed here.

- **Weigh solutions against criteria.** Select the “best” solution.
Phase Three: Solution Implementation

- **Develop a plan of action.** Be detailed and specific so parties do not interpret solution implementation differently. Address the following in your plan in terms that are indisputable and clear:

  - Who is going to be involved in the implementation of the solutions?
  - What exactly is to be done?
  - When are parties going to act?
  - Who is responsible for mediating any differences between parties?

Write up and have all parties sign this plan.

(Text of the Holton Plan for Conflict Management in this section comes from Susan A. Holton’s article titled “After the Eruption: Managing Conflict in the Classroom.”)
IV. Suggestions for CLC

The Teaching and Learning Center expressed its support for faculty members when it committed its resources to this grant project. First and foremost, this project attempts to help faculty members deal more effectively what can become the most dispiriting part of a career: disruptive, even hostile, students. Uncovering root causes of disruptive behavior may not yield the desired result of solutions to such behavior. Practically speaking, investigations into root causes of maladaptive student behavior in college classrooms may take precious time away from doing what faculty do best: teaching. Part of a teaching practice, however, involves deliberate responses to classroom management issues. That the TLC supported this grant, and that deans across the College have indicated an increase in the frequency and severity of discipline problems, suggests the time is right for a concerted effort to help employees develop conflict resolution strategies.

While faculty members should decide the best course of action for dealing with conflict in their classrooms, they should also know that the admission of conflict management problems within their classes is not a mark of failure. Administrators should never excuse poor student behavior, even if the cause is a documented authority issue, anger management disorder, or the like. Nor should administrators treat faculty who seek help for problems in their classrooms as inferior teachers. The inferior teachers may be those who have few to no standards and who never pay enough attention to a class to distinguish
destructive from constructive behaviors.

At the conclusion of this project, I make the following recommendations to the CLC community:

1. Counseling faculty could work together to produce a “Faculty and Staff Resource Guide for Assisting the Emotionally Troubled Student.” Although the majority of student behavior problems do not originate in mental illnesses, oftentimes stress can lead students to act out in odd ways. This guide could educate faculty and staff about mental illnesses and, perhaps more in the spirit of this grant, help faculty develop strategies for helping students who experience stress or duress during their course of study.

2. CLC might develop an Ombuds Office, staffed with rotating full-time faculty and staff who have reassigned time for their service in the Office. The first ombudspersons would ideally complete mediation training at a local university. They could then establish training for successive ombudspersons. The Ombuds Office would offer mediation services for faculty and students, conflict management courses for faculty and staff, and advice for students who feel their rights have been abrogated. Deans or Associate Deans would no longer be the third party to whom faculty or students would turn when conflicts arise, thus freeing them to focus on faculty development and other administrative duties. The
ombudspersons would ideally treat conflict resolution in an educational manner. That is, students (and employees) could learn from a neutral third party some powerful ways of managing conflict in their work lives.

3. Since the student conduct code frames faculty and administrative responses to classroom conflict, CLC should revise its code. Faculty Senate might form a task force or subcommittee to work on this project. The Vice President for Student Development and the Student Senate should work in concert with Faculty Senate/Academic Standards.

4. Academic Standards should investigate the efficacy of the new Behavior Complaint Form on the CLC Intranet. Are faculty using this form? To what effect?