

These are the notes taken by Ekaterina Kadnikova (UMKC-Chemistry) at the NTFS-DIP discussion about academic incivility.

Participants:

Catherine Peterson (UMC - Nutritional Sciences), Gregory Triplett (UMC - Electrical and Computer Engineering), Per Stromhaug (UMC-Biological Sciences), Bob Backus (UMC - Vet Medicine and Surgery), Jennifer Aubrey (UMC-Communication), Jina Yoo (UMSL - Communication), Ekaterina Kadnikova (UMKC-Chemistry).

Notes:

\* The civility in the academic classroom starts with the professor, who can instill the "esprit de corps" of professionalism. An example was given, when professor always dressed well and wore a tie, and the only time he did not was after coming to a lecture straight from the airport, and the students were surprised at the more casual attire. Conclusion: they DO pay attention.

\* Classroom decorum. How much talking in the class do you allow? How to deal with students who just can't help but talk. Suggestion: use peer pressure to make them stop, refuse to continue the class until the students are settled down or separated.

\* What to do with students who seem disruptive, but may not be doing it on purpose. An example was given when a student was sneezing, sniffing, hacking, and blowing his/her nose constantly during the exam, obviously distracting the fellow classmates and ruining their concentration. A range of possible solutions was discussed, including postponing the student's test, moving the student to another room, if possible etc. Most participants expressed concerns with being able to handle it politely without offending the student.

\* How far do the class rules of civility extend? An example was given, where the students participate in a Web CT-based forum, in which they are supposed to help each other with the class questions, but instead they mostly discuss the test, they grades, the fairness of test questions/grades, and are starting to discuss the instructor. During the discussion, most participants agreed that the instructor should make his presence at the forum known (even know it's implied, but the students seem to either ignore or forget it), and try to steer the discussion towards accomplishing the education goals.

\* What do you do when the student does not attend class, but asks for an explanation of the concepts, covered in the lecture/pre-lab that he/she missed, possibly holding his lab mates back because of this. The proposed solution was to use the peer pressure, by calmly going over the concepts with the whole group (or lab team), to which the student belongs, and emphasizing at the end that had the student been in class or caught up on the material somehow before then, he would not have held up his classmates.

\* How do you prevent students from coming late or leaving early (thus disturbing and interrupting the entire class)? Some strategies discussed involve giving quizzes in the beginning or at the end of the class (or alternating beginning/end quizzes randomly); closing (even locking?) the door once the class has started, coming early yourself (again, coming back to setting the standards yourself), telling the students during the first lecture that all announcements will be made in the beginning of the class and will not be repeated at the end.

\* A sample class contract found in the handout was discussed. This sample may be too long, a few phrases in the syllabus may be preferable.

General ideas that we shared with the workshop:

1. The professor should model the behavior she/he expects from the students.
2. Use peer pressure for disruptive students, encourage collegiality and professionalism.
3. Address the disruptive behavior as soon as it occurs.
4. Consider stating your academic civility expectations, both "DOs" and "DON'Ts", in the syllabus.

Regards,  
Ekaterina Kadnikova

CC: participants