



The First-year Student

Before meeting with the student:

- 1) Review student profile on CARES:
 - a) Where are they from?
 - b) What is their background? Are they potentially at high academic risk (Risk factors: HABH/No AP classes in high school/First Gen/gender/out of state)
- 2) Review transfer credits - Advanced Placement credits/Dual Enrollment
- 3) Review stated major interests

During first pre-school meeting with the student in August:

- 1) Ask how they found out about Westmont (Why Westmont?)
- 2) Why are they interested in their stated major? What is their goal occupation if they could do anything?
- 3) What are their perceived academic strengths/weaknesses?
- 4) Fears/Excitements/Expectations for their first semester/year?
- 5) Acknowledge that starting the college experience is much more than academics; new roommate, away from home navigating new responsibilities, etc.
- 6) Have they already met their roommate? What residence hall? Any fears around the social component?
- 7) I usually advise only 13 units for their first semester; is this fairly universal among departments?

During first semester advising in October

- 1) How are you adjusting to Westmont? Social/academic/emotional/physical (sleep!?!) adjusting
- 2) What is your favorite class/least favorite class?
- 3) What are your major struggles/biggest successes?
- 4) Are there any off-campus programs that you are interested in? Which one and why? Which semester?
- 5) What classes are you most looking forward to in the spring?
- 6) Review/Plan schedule for the next semester.

Special Considerations

- 1) Send to COVE? - Complete the 16 Personality assessment or Strong Interest Inventory
 - a) Help them better learn who they are and in what area their interests and ability intersect



Students Entering Westmont with a Low Academic Profile (LAP)

In 2018, Enrico Manlapig's Decision Lab helped the college determine several leading indicators that increase a student's risk of withdrawing from Westmont and not persisting to graduation. One of these leading indicators was a "low academic profile (LAP)" as defined by an incoming GPA below 3.0 (high school GPA for first-year students and college GPA for transfer students) and/or an SAT score less than 1000. Data from previous semesters have shown that as many as 1/2 of the LAP will end up on academic probation before the end of their first year. This is a group that really needs our support!

How do you know if one of your advisees has the LAP indicator? Look in their student profile in CARES OR consult the list of first-year advisees you received from the Registrar's office.

Suggested interventions for LAP advisees:

- Be proactive with these students; an "intrusive" advising style might benefit these students in their first year.
- After your initial advising appointment, reach out and ask if they want to meet for coffee or lunch.
- Consider their first semester of classes very carefully; try to build a schedule to their strengths as much as possible (e.g. if they did not grow up in the Church or study the Bible regularly, they could consider not enrolling in the required religious studies common context classes in their first semester).
- Does the student need to complete the English Competency requirement? If so, ENG-002 is a highly recommended class within the students first two semesters.
- Strongly suggest utilizing resources early in the semester before the first exams happen (tutoring, peer coaches, faculty office hours) and be explicit about how each resource is accessed.
- Emphasize a growth mindset and normalize seeking help.
- If the student is a new student (first year or transfer) consider coordinating more with their Student Success Coach.
- These students may not have developed all the academic "habits" that promote college success. Consider asking them explicitly about how they are doing with:
 - Time management
 - Note-taking
 - Study skills
 - Exam preparation
 - Class attendance and participation
- Ask them if they feel like there are any obstacles or barriers to their success here at Westmont; strategize with them how these barriers or obstacles may be lessened or removed
- Don't hesitate to put in a Care Report if you feel that the student would benefit from others reaching out to them



The Student on Academic Probation

Students that have a cumulative GPA below 2.0 are placed on academic probation. Students and their academic advisors are informed of the student's academic standing once the final grades are processed each semester. They should set time aside before the next semester starts or soon after to discuss the student's goals. The Registrar's office will also help address students' questions and give them counsel.

Things to consider before meeting with a student on probation:

- What type of classes could the student repeat to help increase their GPA?
 - Students can repeat classes without a petition if the original grade is a D+ or below
 - Things to consider: Is the class being offered next semester? How does the student feel about repeating the class?
- How many units is the student enrolled in for the next semester? Does the number of units need to be adjusted? How does this affect the student's academic plan?
- Do you know whether the students' challenges are more academic or non-academic in nature? Are there external circumstances that could explain or be contributing factors to their poor academic performance?
- Do you think they have developed all of the basic but necessary skills to succeed in college (note-taking, study skills, time management, reading comprehension, etc.)? If not, then encourage the student to use "Peer Coaching" if they aren't doing so already.
- You might have to have an honest conversation about whether the student will be able to succeed in the major they have currently chosen. If you do not have much of a relationship with this student then you might have to build trust and knowledge about the student before going there. This student needs a mentor. Consider whether you could play this role.
- The Successful Scholar Seminar is required of students on academic probation. There are 2 options: a 1-unit option that meets weekly and is taught by Sonya Welch and a 0-unit option that involves regular meetings with the Student Success Coaches & Peer Coaches. Contact the Registrar's office for more information.

Questions to consider asking the advisee during the advising meeting:

- What were some of the challenges last semester?
- What would you like to accomplish this semester?
- What is your GPA goal?
- What resources on campus could help you succeed this semester?
- What are the timelines in the semester to evaluate progress?
- How can I support you this semester?

How can they get off academic probation? If a student can raise their cumulative GPA above 2.0 after the next semester's grades are posted then they will be taken off academic probation. They will now be considered in "good standing".

What happens if they cannot raise their GPA to 2.0 or above in one-semester? They will be suspended. In order to return to Westmont they will need to file an appeal with the Registrar's Office. If their appeal is granted then they will be reinstated but will remain on academic probation.



The Narrowly-focused, Tunnel-vision Student

If a student has chosen Westmont College, s/he has implicitly (yet often unknowingly) endorsed the liberal arts. And many are thankful for the opportunity to sample the disciplines in the first year of study to narrow their focus toward selecting a major. But even before a major is selected, oftentimes a student will speak of General Education courses as something to check off a list, or worse, a nuisance to “get out of the way.” Other students, particularly those with a pre-health emphasis, may acquire a type of tunnel vision where postgraduate admission criteria cause the majority of academic effort to be spent attaining the highest possible GPA, and GE courses become a utilitarian means toward that end. And permeating the broader academic atmosphere in recent years is the idea of “return on investment,” where education is seen as a commodity designed primarily to propel the graduate directly into a rewarding, lucrative career.

How can such students be encouraged to become more open to embracing liberal arts opportunities? Here are four suggestions as you advise new students:

- *Engage in conversation that is not just career-oriented.* Understandably, we typically try to identify our advisees' academic interests to help guide them toward a major and/or career path. Asking questions about hobbies and experiences might allow you, as advisors, to explain how the liberal arts curriculum is designed to explore those interests. For example, a STEM student might mention that s/he used to enjoy creative writing in high school. That's a great prompt to explain the breadth of GE disciplines where writing is developed.
- *Encourage an exploration of Westmont's academic culture.* Students focus on their coursework, sometimes at the expense of engaging the wealth of co-curricular opportunities. Encourage them to attend campus lectures for the sake of learning something new, join an academic club that focuses on something they find peripherally interesting, or even take a course in an area different from their anticipated major to benefit from a professor's expertise. For most, these are rare opportunities when such a breadth of knowledge is concentrated in one location. This perspective might enlighten them towards the benefits of our General Education.
- *Beware of the four-year plan.* Many majors offer one as part of a suggested comprehensive course of study, and while it can be calibrating and helpful, it can also be stifling. Remind them that these plans are only suggestions, not departmental decrees.
- *Be alert to anything seemingly out of their control.* It can be especially daunting, if not impossible, for a student to explore the liberal arts when a parent is coaching from afar, serving as a *de facto* academic advisor who cares little for the liberal arts. Conversations to unpack these scenarios need to balance respect for parental influence with the student's new independence as an adult. These conversations can be especially challenging given particular cultural norms regarding the dynamics of parent/child relationships.



The Undecided Student

General guidelines:

1. Ask **open-ended questions** to get to know the student holistically during your advising relationship. *See separate resource sheet on open-ended questions.*
2. **Do not make decisions for students.** An advisor's role is not to determine a student's major, course enrollments, etc. but rather to help each student understand these options (among other choices).

For first-year advisees and others:

- **Affirm creating a foundation of knowledge across disciplines.** May refer to our [General Education mission statement](#) and/or [Philosophy of General Education](#).
- **Affirm the value of exploring possible majors and minors (etc.)** while fulfilling our General Education requirements. Remind students that "every class counts" (even as elective credit) and also that they can take some courses for fun.
- Ask the student about their **past experiences**: in advanced high-school classes, extracurriculars, etc. as well as families of origin.
- **Sample questions** (from Dr. David Elder, [XPath/undecided program](#) advisor at Morningside University):
 - *Why are you in college?*
 - *Outside of your sport, your part-time job, and your schooling, what do you do for fun? What is it that you like about that [activity]? Explore together how that [activity] may connect to an academic discipline/course.*
 - *What were your favorite and least favorite classes in high school? Challenge students to repeat such classes; those experiences may be surprising (new instructors, assignments, peers, etc.)*
 - *Which majors are you torn between? Consider a feasible double major or major/minor. OR . . . If you could create your perfect major, what would that major be? Consider a self-designed major.*
 - *What would you major in if your parents were not influencing your decision? What's still possible?*

For sophomore advisees and others:

- Ask the student about their **current experiences** in introductory and GE courses, etc. What do they enjoy? What don't they?
- Encourage the student to visit **faculty office hours** to talk to professors in disciplines in which they may major or minor. Before those visits, may also help advisees access **relevant resources** for various departments, including catalog copy (course descriptions, etc.) and course syllabi (archived online).
- Ask the student about their **future aspirations**. Consider ways to explore vocational interests (see below). Consider also potential barriers and means of support.

Vocational discernment:

- Encourage advisees to use [Handshake](#) to **make an appointment with COVE staff** for the Strong Interest Inventory, career counseling, etc.
- Encourage **summer internships, job-shadowing, and volunteering opportunities** to explore academic interests and vocational paths. Remind students that they may job-shadow Westmont professors, staff, and alumni as well as family members and others in these professional networks.



The Student-Athlete

We have approximately 300+ student-athletes (SA) every year; this means that $\frac{1}{4}$ students at Westmont are SA. SA have some specific concerns as they think about constructing their academic plan and also trying to be as successful as possible on the playing field. In season, SA will have 2-3 hours (or more, if injured, especially) of practice or preparation for a game (ie. studying opponent tendencies) per day, while also having to travel for different contests. Currently, our SA tend to have 1-2 longer trips, where they will be gone for 2-3 days (trips to either Sacramento area or Arizona, eventually a trip to Hawaii when we move to NCAA DII). Not only are they traveling, but they miss class for these contests. If our teams do make the postseason, this means more missed class, sometimes near the end of a semester. Because of this, we can think of a couple of ways to help advise our SA to be as successful as possible. Here are some considerations and suggested best practices.

- Athletes are students first, and then athletes. If, during advising, they say they cannot miss practice/games, please feel free to reach out to the coach to help them get their priorities back in order.
- Sports are a good thing! Baseball team GPA is higher in-season (Better time management? Exercise helps them learn better?)
- SA can and should miss practice for class if there is no other option (although it is best to find a schedule that can maximize class and practice time). Class/Lab/etc. takes priority! It is up to the SA to work it out with the coach.
- SA should be in at least 13 credits every semester. In order to stay eligible, SA need to pass 9 credits. If they are taking 12 credits and fail one class, they will not be eligible the following semester, and they cannot reach the minimum 24 credits for the year. These classes need to be towards their degree (elective or GE).
- Have the SA bring their game schedule for the next semester to advising. The SA should know on which days they are most likely to have competitions. For example, baseball has the most games on Friday/Saturday. It may be best if baseball players can have a T/H heavy schedule in-season (if possible) in order to maximize class time.
- It may be possible for the SA to petition for early registration to alleviate missed class times (not often awarded - only 1-2 SA per year). Please note, this is most often only an option for seniors that need a particular class to graduate on time.
- Off-campus programs - plan for senior year after done with sport or during summer or Mayterm. SA will not want to miss season/off-season practices as it may hurt playing time and athletic development. But, SA can talk with their coach to figure out how to make it work. Westmont in Santa Barbara may be a great option for the SA.



The First-generation Student

A first-generation student is the first in their family to attend college. Sometimes “first-gen” identity overlaps with other minoritized identities, but of course not all first-gen students are minoritized students. At Westmont, we identify students whose parents or guardians did not graduate from a four-year university in the United States as “first gen,” using information the students provide as part of their college application. Twenty percent of Westmont students are first-gen.

First-gen students have worked hard to get to college, in the classroom and beyond. They are creative, resilient, and adaptable. But because they are the first in their family to experience higher ed, they benefit from additional support. Advisors can be a great resource for first-gen students as they adjust to college life. Here are a few concerns you might consider when advising first-gen students:

- First-gen students may need to have common terms or practices clearly defined. Consider addressing what your responsibilities are as an academic advisor; how a syllabus can be used to succeed in a class; what office hours are and how students can use them; and what campus resources are available to help students develop and thrive.
- Be invitational as you encourage first-gen students to access academic resources like the Writing Center, subject-specific tutors, or Student Success Coaches. First-gen students may think that using these resources means they are failing, or that these resources are only for students in need. Encourage first-gen students to use these resources to support their education.
- Create space for conversations about what a liberal arts education is. First gen students are often focused on using their education to attain career goals so they can contribute to their families (who may be sacrificing to give the student this opportunity). Encourage them to also see value in taking classes outside their major for interest, to explore areas that don’t seem immediately applicable or profession-oriented, as they build life skills that will support their professional goals.
- Encourage first gen students to view college from a whole person perspective. Discuss potential social, cultural, emotional, spiritual, etc., growth opportunities, as well as financial and “network” resources they might tap into.
- Be aware that many first-gen students are working one or more jobs to help pay for their education, or even to contribute to their families at home. Discuss strategies for managing academics and work and life.
- Share your own experience as a college student. What challenged you in your first year? What did you have to learn or adapt to in order to succeed as a student? If you are a first gen student yourself, share your story.
- While first-gen students may need particular support as they adjust, remember that they are valuable members of our community! Beware using deficit language in relation to these students. Instead, be intentional about noting the value they add to our community.

Campus resources for first-gen students include:

- First-generation student website (<https://www.westmont.edu/student-life/first-gen>)
- First Connections at first year orientation (by invitation)
- First Gen Club (<https://www.westmont.edu/first-gen>)
- Staff involved in the First-gen Forward Initiative: Sonya Welch (swelch@westmont.edu), Eileen McQuade (mcquade@westmont.edu), and Christen Foell (cfoell@westmont.edu)



Non-Christian Students and Students Questioning Their Faith

In 2016, 10% of incoming students did not identify themselves with a Christian denomination in their application to Westmont. In 2021, that number rose to 15%. While some of these students may simply have preferred not to answer the question, we all know Westmont students who are not Christian – and we may also have experienced students who question their faith commitment during their four years at Westmont.

In advising these students, it's helpful to remember that a student who does not profess Christian faith might attend Westmont for a variety of reasons. Perhaps a grandparent has offered to contribute to tuition if they attend Westmont, or perhaps they have a scholarship for sports, or perhaps they did not know what they were getting into. Students who arrive at Westmont as committed Christians only to begin questioning their faith may do so because, for the first time, they're reading the Bible and discovering all that their Sunday school teachers didn't tell them. They may be learning about scientific or sociological or economic perspectives that they were taught to see as incompatible with Christian faith. They may also be challenged by traditional Christian perspectives that are compatible with their own views.

As an academic advisor, you can:

- Affirm students' place in the community. As the community life statement says, "our social and intellectual growth needs freedom for exploration" – including the freedom to explore questions of faith;
- Talk about spiritual life and religious faith with your advisees. Check in with them and ask what their experience of Westmont as a Christian community has been;
- Help a non-Christian student navigate campus life and culture. Ask about their experience of chapel, the integration of faith and learning, and general campus life;
- Address the benefits of chapel and the Common Contexts GE classes for understanding Western culture, history, the development of ideas, approaches to ethical questions, a spiritual break in normal daily experience, etc.;
- Affirm students' questions about faith; discuss the healthy place of questions and doubt in the Christian life, particularly as a common stage of spiritual development for college students;
- Connect students' spiritual uncertainty with the general growth they are experiencing as they separate from their childhood home, and become their own person away from their family;
- Reframe "deconstructing faith" with more helpful, constructive metaphors: putting a puzzle together in a different way, experiencing growing pains as faith develops through life, a spiritual journey (the 'way' of discipleship);
- Share your own experiences, as relevant;
- Encourage students to remain in community; brainstorm together ways they can authentically connect and people who could be resources to them (Scott Lisea, student life staff, RS professors, local pastors or alpha courses [<https://alphausa.org/try/>], other students who have been on the same journey).



The Student Approaching Graduation

Spring of Junior Year

Complete Application for Degree (AFD).

Also discuss what other kinds of experiences (academic, leadership, social, etc.) would be beneficial for students. What “memories” do they want to create during their senior year?

For students with a 3.5+ cumulative and major GPA, you may collaborate on [Major Honors](#) proposals before the April 1st or Sept. 15th deadlines.

(August, before classes begin)

Review the registrar-returned AFD for each student and make sure that any issues in the plan to graduate are resolved.

Fall of Senior Year

Discuss “first step” jobs after Westmont graduation. Many seniors don't know what they want to do when they graduate. Reassure them. Discuss which “first jobs” might be a good first step.

Refer students to COVE (<https://westmont.edu/cove>) for support in researching jobs, creating resumes, and cover letters. Fall is a great time to check to see if seniors have a LinkedIn account and a current resume. COVE can teach students how to learn about jobs via their [Linkedin research](#) session; Highlight this session as a useful appointment to make. COVE also helps with [resumes](#). [Values sort](#) and [Motivated skills sort](#) are other very helpful assessments.

COVE has sessions for students during all their years at Westmont; each term, highlight these opportunities to your advisees. (send advisees the COVE flier/webpage).

Connecting with Seniors on LinkedIn (Departmental Alumni Groups)

Each department might create/maintain a LinkedIn group for its alumni. Have seniors connect with department faculty and alumni group on LinkedIn. This expectation may be incentivized in Capstone courses.

Some departments have found this a great way to help alumni connect with their cohort and provide an avenue for get-togethers, job postings, and connecting alumni with current students (for Homecoming, panel events, etc.). Alumni may also be contacted to assist with departmental website development (e.g., “young alumni” profiles), six-year-report assessments, and more.



The Student In Crisis

Academic advisors may be one of the first people to notice a student who is experiencing various difficulties (e.g., dealing with death / loss, a mental health struggle, a family emergency, etc.), and you may be someone in whom the student confides. This is a wonderful opportunity to show God's love to your advisee, demonstrate that you care about their holistic well-being, and connect them with available on-campus resources and support. Remember, your role is not to be their therapist. However, providing a listening ear, empathy, trauma-informed care (if applicable), and an appropriate referral could make a major difference in your advisee's life.

Sample Questions and Phrases to Facilitate These Challenging (and Meaningful) Conversations

- How may I help you? How may I help to support you right now?
- How may I pray for you?
- I've noticed that _____ (e.g., you've missed classes this week; you seem really tired / distracted, etc.), and I'm wondering if you would like to talk about how you're doing?
- It sounds like you're going through a difficult time right now. I care about you, and I'm sorry you're hurting.
- It's understandable that you're having a hard time. Would you like me to connect you with someone who can talk to you further about this?

Important: If you are concerned about the student's immediate safety, call 911 and then call Campus Public Safety (805-565-6222). For less-than-emergency levels of distress, contact the Westmont Counseling Center (805-565-6003), the On-Call Resident Director (805-565-6273), and/or complete an online Care Report (<https://westmont.pharos360.com/apps/launchpad.php>)

Additional Resources:

- Refer to Westmont's Student Life Department, which has a really helpful document titled "Distressed and Disruptive Students: A Guide for Faculty and Staff"
- Attend the annual on-campus training session on Trauma-Informed Care (or contact Edee Schulze for additional information)

Remember to engage in your own self-care! Self-care can be defined as the practice of taking *proactive* steps to improve and protect your own mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health and well-being. You will be a better advisor for students in crisis if you prioritize your own legitimate needs for rest, holistic well-being, and rejuvenation.



DISTRESSED AND DISRUPTIVE STUDENTS A GUIDE FOR FACULTY AND STAFF

This guide outlines behavior indicators of distressed and disruptive students, and response strategies for faculty and staff.

IDENTIFYING A STUDENT IN DISTRESS

As a faculty or staff member at Westmont, you may be the first to notice a student who is experiencing difficulty. In these situations, your relationship and experience with the student can bridge the individual to available resources and care. Our environment facilitates relationships where care and concern can be communicated; however, faculty and staff are not to provide mental health counseling or attempt to diagnose students in distress. Most frequently, the best care for struggling students is to notice signs of distress, communicate care, and connect students to the appropriate resources.

Common Signs and Symptoms of Distress:

- Stated need for help (directly or indirectly). Listen for both the content of what a student is saying as well as the underlying feelings and intentions of his or her message. Notice tone of voice and gestures. Students may also communicate problems via e-mail or through written class assignments.

Academic Indicators:

- Infrequent class attendance with minimal or no work completed.
- Excessive procrastination and/or very poorly prepared work, especially if inconsistent with previous coursework.
- Repeated requests for special consideration (e.g., deadline extensions).
- Behavior which regularly interferes with effective class management. (See Disruptive Students section in this guide.)
- Essays or creative works that indicate extremes of hopelessness, social isolation, rage or despair.

Personal/Interpersonal Indicators:

- Dependency (e.g., the student who hangs around or makes excessive unproductive appointments during office hours).
- Tearfulness – unexplained and frequent.
- Frequent or high levels of irritable, unruly, abrasive, or aggressive behavior.
- Unable to make decisions despite your repeated efforts to clarify or encourage.
- Overly anxious, nervous or tense.
- Recent traumatic changes in personal relationships (e.g., death of a family member or close friend, divorce and other changes in significant relationships).

Physical Indicators:

- Listlessness, lack of energy, or frequently falling asleep in class.
- Marked changes in personal hygiene.
- Impaired speech and/or disjointed thoughts.
- Excessive weight gain or loss.
- Coming to class bleary-eyed, hung over, or smelling of alcohol or other substances.

QUICK REFERENCE: RESPONSE PROTOCOL

Situation Student's conduct is clearly and imminently reckless, disorderly, dangerous, or threatening (including suicidal self-harm behavior).	Contact Call 911 Then Public Safety (805.565.6222)
Situation Student shows signs of distress but I am unsure how serious it is. I'm feeling uneasy and/or really concerned about the student's safety.	Contact Counseling Center between 9-5, M-F (805.565.6003), or On-Call Resident Director (805.565.6273) if no response or if calling after hours.
Situation I'm not concerned for the student's immediate safety, but he or she is having significant academic and/or personal issues. Student needs support.	Contact Complete Online Care Report http://www.westmont.edu/_offices/care/ReportForm.html

Safety/Risk Indicators:

NOTE: Any indicators from this section should be acted on immediately.

- Current expressed suicidal thinking or planning
- Any written note or verbal statement that has a sense of finality or a suicidal tone to it.
- Statements to the effect that the student is "going away for a long time".
- Severe depression, or mood swings.
- History of suicidal thoughts or attempts, coupled with ongoing depressed mood.
- Giving away prized possessions.
- Self-injurious or self-destructive behaviors.
- Essays or papers that focus on despair, suicide or death.

Students in a Serious Mental Health Crisis

If a student is in a serious mental health crisis, you may hear or see the following:

- Suicidal statements or suicidal behaviors/attempts.
- Extreme anxiety resulting in panic reactions.
- Inability to communicate (e.g., garbled or slurred speech, disjointed thoughts).
- Loss of contact with reality (e.g., seeing or hearing things that aren't there); bizarre behavior that is obviously inappropriate for the situation (e.g., talking to someone that is not present).
- Highly disruptive behavior (e.g., hostile, suspicious, and/or agitated behavior).

WHAT TO DO WHEN A STUDENT IS IN DISTRESS

When you believe that a student, or anyone else in the college community, is talking about harming themselves or others, **you have a responsibility to act:**

- Regardless of who the person is, if you perceive an imminent danger to self or to others, call 911 immediately.
- In cases where imminent danger is not clearly present but the need seems urgent (e.g., suicidal thinking but no present danger), you may call the Counseling Center (805.565.6003) during business hours. For afterhours concerns or if there is no answer at the Counseling Center, contact the On-Call Resident Director (805.565.6273). Leaving a simple voice mail or e-mail message is insufficient. It is important to have a consult with another professional immediately.
- For situations where a mental health emergency is not present and the student is not in danger, complete a Care Report. <http://www.westmont.edu/offices/care/ReportForm.html>. A Student Life staff member will review these reports within one business day.

IDENTIFYING DISRUPTIVE STUDENT BEHAVIOR

On occasion, you may find a student whose behavior is causing distress to you or others. These concerns vary greatly, but can be broadly categorized as excessively demanding or aggressive/potentially violent. These situations or behaviors may include:

- Becoming confrontational or argumentative.
- Inability to accept limits.
- Verbally threatening faculty, staff, or other students.
- Sending alarming notes, e-mails, or messages to faculty, staff, or other students.
- Becoming verbally abusive.
- Overt physical disruptions (throwing papers or books; turning over chairs, etc.).
- Overt acts of violence directed at faculty, staff or student (hitting, pushing, etc.).
- Delusions/hallucinations and general suspiciousness

WHAT TO DO WHEN A STUDENT IS DISRUPTIVE IN CLASS

The severity and frequency of a student's misconduct influence the action that might be appropriate to a specific instance of disruptive behavior. Below are suggestions, **listed in the order of increasing severity.**

- Provide clear expectations for standards for classroom behavior in the syllabus.
- At the onset of inappropriate behavior, consider a general statement to the entire class.
- If behavior continues, speak directly with the student but do not meet alone with a student you believe to be a threat to your personal safety. (You can notify Public Safety to be on alert or nearby.)
- Complete a Care Report. <http://www.westmont.edu/offices/care/ReportForm.html>. Make a written record of any meeting to discuss disruptive behavior. If the meeting concerned a serious incident, send a letter or email to the student summarizing the conversation.

- Involve others as appropriate: Talk to your department chair, or contact the Counseling Center for consultation.
- If necessary, remove the student from the class session. If a student refuses to leave a class when directed, call Public Safety for assistance. Report any removal from class to your department chair and notify the Student Life Office as quickly as possible. The Dean of Students will review the student's behavior and follow-up with the student as appropriate.

Responding to a Threatening or Potentially Violent Student

In the unlikely event that you encounter a threatening or potentially violent student, keep in mind the following principles. It is important to report threatening or violent behaviors with your department chair, supervisor, Public Safety, and the Student Life Office immediately.

- **Be aware.** Look for changes in behavior before physical aggression occurs. You may observe the student increasing the volume of his/her voice, pointing fingers, or leaning forward in a potential attacking position.
- **How to respond verbally**
 - Remain calm and in control — do not mirror the student's behavior or tone of voice. Take slow deep breaths to maintain your composure.
 - Use the student's name.
 - Listen and respond empathically — do not interrupt or deny the student's feelings. Remain nonjudgmental, build trust and communicate understanding to de-escalate the situation.
 - Convey a willingness to assist. Offer acceptance, respect, and understanding of the student's concern.
 - Set limits. Offer options, but also outline limits and discuss potential consequences to irresponsibility.
- **How to respond non-verbally**
 - Keep at least one leg length away (about 36 inches) to avoid the person's personal space, to prevent escalation, and to increase your own personal safety.
 - Maintain an open stance — keep your hands open in plain view. Do not cross arms or point fingers.
 - Maintain appropriate eye contact and facial expressions.
- **Meeting with a threatening or potentially threatening student**
 - Do not meet alone.
 - Alert a colleague of the meeting and have that colleague ready to assist. Have a Public Safety Officer on "standby."
 - Keep door of your meeting place open.
 - Keep yourself between the student and the door for a quick exit, if needed.
 - Terminate meeting immediately if your intuition senses something is wrong.
 - Follow the verbal and nonverbal guidelines above.
- **If attacked**
 - Immediately increase personal space.
 - Call 911 or yell for help.
 - Use the least force necessary to protect yourself and keep the student from harm.