

19. Bullying and Incivility

Bullying is prohibited under the Code of Conduct and as such can be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including suspension or expulsion. As defined in the Code, bullying is repeated and/or severe aggressive behavior likely to intimidate or intentionally hurt or diminish another person physically or mentally (that is not speech or conduct otherwise protected by the First Amendment). Bullying involves unwanted behavior among persons and can be interwoven with a real or perceived power imbalance. Bullying fosters or instigates an adverse and counterproductive environment, so as to interfere with or undermine learning, instruction, living environment, participation in a College-sponsored activity, and/or College operations.

Occasional differences of opinion or disagreements and conflicts concerning living arrangements, group assignments or workplace relationships usually do not constitute bullying. It is not bullying behavior for a supervisor to note a student employee's poor job performance and potential consequences within the framework of that department and College policies and procedures, or for a professor or academic program director to advise a student of unsatisfactory academic work and the potential for course failure or dismissal from the program if uncorrected.

The Office of Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education lists three types of bullying.

1. Verbal bullying is saying or writing mean things.

Verbal bullying includes: Teasing, Name-calling, Inappropriate sexual comments, Taunting, or Threatening to cause harm

2. Social bullying, sometimes referred to as relational bullying, involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships.

Social bullying includes: Leaving someone out on purpose, Telling other students not to be friends with someone, Spreading rumors about someone, Embarrassing someone in public, Leaving degrading or pictorial material about a person where others can see, Making threats, either explicit or implicit to the security of a person's job, position, or membership

3. Physical bullying involves hurting a person's body or possessions.

Physical bullying includes: Hitting/kicking/pinching, Spitting, Tripping/pushing, Taking or breaking someone's things, Placing objectionable objects among a person's belongings, Making mean or rude hand gestures, or Invading personal space after being asked to move away

All types of bullying described above can be anonymous. The perpetrator(s) can purposely withhold or disguise their identity. Bullying can also be conducted through use of the internet or other electronic means. This form of bullying is often called cyberbullying.

An individual who believes a student has engaged in bullying behavior should report the behavior to the Office of the Dean of Students, 843.953.5522. Students who believe that a staff or faculty member has engaged in bullying behavior towards them may follow the procedures listed under the Student Grievance/Complaint Procedures.

If the bullying of students is based on gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, race, color, religion, national origin, veterans' status, genetic information, or disability, or other legally-protected classifications it can also be reported to the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs at 843.953-5758. The Office of the Institutional Ombudsperson can provide guidance for determining whether behavior meets the definition of bullying, ombuds@cofc.edu or 843.953.2235