

## **Responding to Students who are Aggressive or Potentially Violent**

Aggression varies from threats to verbal abuse to physical abuse and violence. It is very difficult to predict aggression and violence.

### **Some indicators of potential violence may include:**

- expressed paranoia/mistrust
- a highly unstable school or vocational history
- a history of juvenile violence or substance abuse
- prior history of violence or abuse, including history of arrests
- fascination with weapons
- history of cruelty to animals as a child or adolescent
- impulse control problems
- fire-starting behaviors

### **IF A STUDENT THREATENS YOU BY EMAIL, MAIL OR PHONE:**

Threatening mail, phone calls and emails received on- or off-campus from a student should be referred to the Office of Public Safety, 607-274-3333.

### ***WHAT YOU CAN DO***

- Assess your level of safety. If you believe you are in danger, call 911 from an on-campus phone. If you are using a cell phone, call the Office of Public Safety, 607-274-3333.
- If you feel it is appropriate to stay with the student, remain in an open area with a visible and accessible means of escape.
- Enlist the help of a colleague or co-worker.
- Explain to the student the behaviors that are unacceptable ("I am glad to talk with you if you are willing to speak with me without yelling").
- Stay calm and set limits ("So, let's talk about what is upsetting you, but I want to be very clear that we have to both do this without getting angry. Otherwise, we shouldn't continue this today").
- Use a time-out strategy (that is, ask the student to reschedule a meeting with you once the student has calmed down) if the student refuses to cooperate and remains aggressive or agitated ("I think it is best that we stop for today, but I do not want to drop this so let's set a time to come back together and then we can both have the chance to settle down").
- Consult with your Dean's office or with your supervisor.
- Call the Counseling Center to consult with a counselor, 607-274-3136.

### ***AVOID***

- Staying in a situation in which you feel unsafe.
- Meeting alone with the student.
- Engaging in a screaming match or behaving in other ways that escalate anxiety and aggression.
- Ignoring signs that the student's anger is escalating.
- Touching the student or crowding their sense of personal space.
- Ignoring a gut reaction that you are in danger.