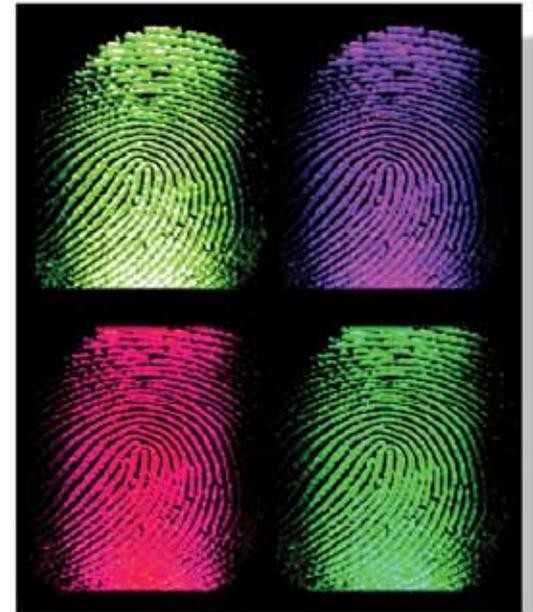


CAMPUS DETECTIVE: HOMICIDE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Doris Bitler
Jamie Cooper
Donna Fox
Walter Rankin



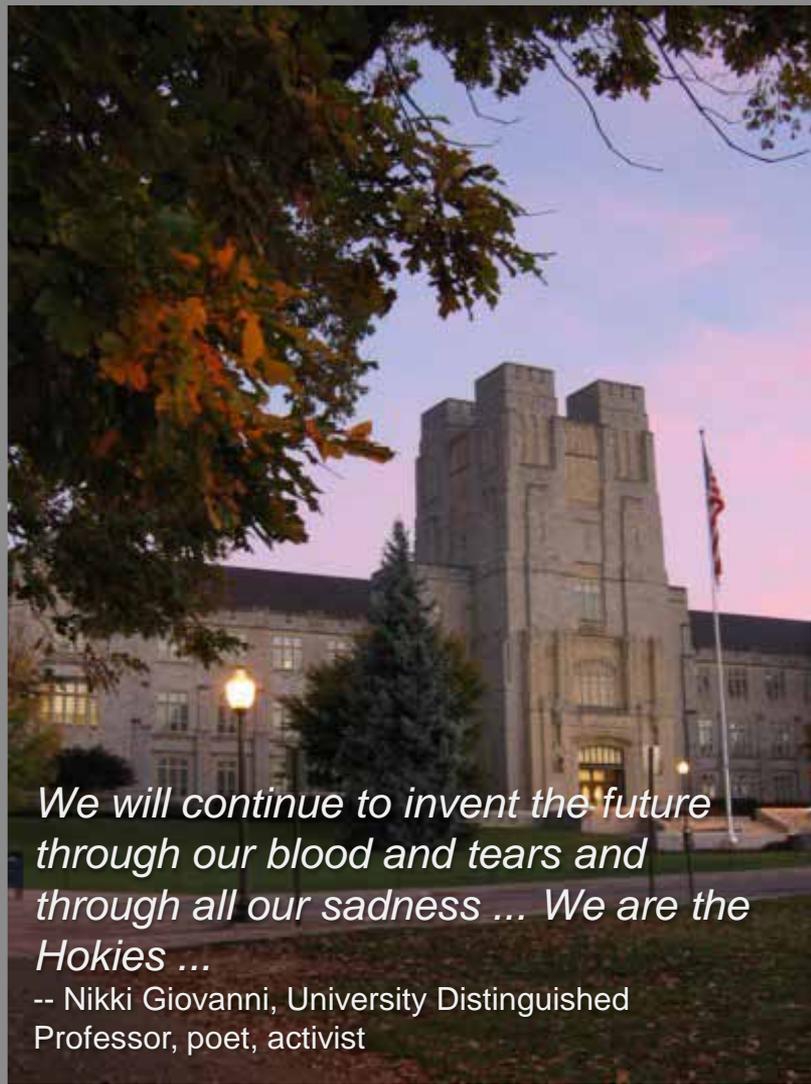
2012



2007
April 16

We Remember

Ross Abdallah Alameddine
James Christopher Bishop
Brian Roy Bluhm
Ryan Christopher Clark
Austin Michelle Cloyd
Jocelyne Couture-Nowak
Kevin P. Granata
Matthew Gregory Gwaltney
Caitlin Millar Hammaren
Jeremy Michael Herbstritt
Rachael Elizabeth Hill
Emily Jane Hilscher
Jarrett Lee Lane
Matthew Joseph La Porte
Henry J. Lee
Liviu Librescu
G.V. Loganathan
Partahi Mamora Halomoan
Lumbantoruan
Lauren Ashley McCain
Daniel Patrick O'Neil
J. Ortiz-Ortiz
Minal Hiralal Panchal
Daniel Alejandro Perez
Erin Nicole Peterson
Michael Steven Pohle, Jr.
Julia Kathleen Pryde
Mary Karen Read
Reema Joseph Samaha
Waleed Mohamed Shaalan
Leslie Geraldine Sherman
Maxine Shelly Turner
Nicole White



*We will continue to invent the future
through our blood and tears and
through all our sadness ... We are the
Hokies ...*

-- Nikki Giovanni, University Distinguished
Professor, poet, activist



2008
February 8

Louisiana Technical College

We Remember

Karsheika Graves
Taneshia Butler



Latina Williams, the shooter,
was a fellow student who
shot herself.



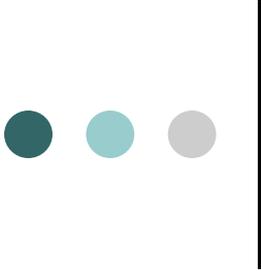
2008
February 14
Northern Illinois University



We Remember

Gayle Dubowski
Catalina Garcia
Julianna Gehant
Ryenne Mace
Daniel Parmenter

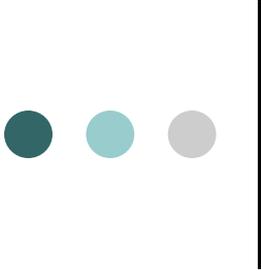
18 others were injured by the
shooter, Steven
Kazmierczak, who also
shot himself.



Mental Illness on Campus

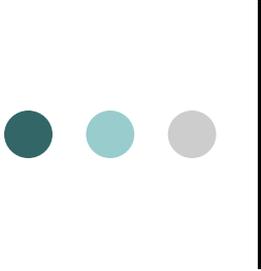
By all accounts, in the last decade the number of students arriving on campuses with a history of mental illness has increased. . . . And perhaps the key driver of this trend: today more effective treatments for mental illness, using both medication and counseling, makes it possible for many troubled students who'd once have forgone college to now seek admission.

(from Daniel McGinn and Samantha Henig's "Spotting Trouble" in the August 21, 2007 edition of *Newsweek*)



Mental Illness on Campus

- ⌚ 75% of people with schizophrenia develop the illness between the ages of 15-25 (activemindsoncampus.org).
- ⌚ The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) estimates that 22% of Americans 18 and older suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder during any given year (<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/>).
- ⌚ A survey by the American College Health Association found that 45% of all students say they have sometimes felt too depressed to function (<http://www.acha.org/>).
- ⌚ A *Psychology Today* article (Marano's "Crisis on Campus") states that 89% of counseling centers hospitalized at least one student in 2001. 85% of counseling centers reported an increase in "students with severe psychological problems" since 1996, and 60% had dealt with "obsessive pursuit cases."
- ⌚ A survey of counseling centers by Robert Gallagher of the University of Pittsburg found that schools averaged 8 hospitalizations for mental illness and 82% of reported suicides had no contact with school counseling before taking their lives.
- ⌚ According to *US News and World Report*, only 59% of campus counseling centers have a psychiatrist available.

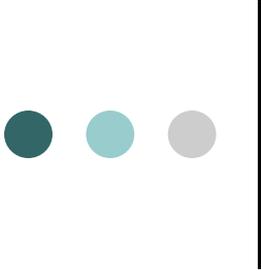


Our Perspective

We are not clinical psychologists, lawyers, or experts in criminal justice or law enforcement.

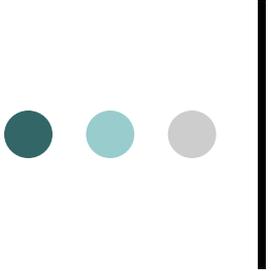
Our offices specifically handle requests from undergraduate and graduate students for exceptions to academic policies: returns from suspension/dismissal; grade changes; late schedule adjustments; overloads; waivers of major and college-level requirements; retroactive graduation requests; study elsewhere. In short, students often see us as the one obstacle standing between them and their academic goals.

Together, we review about 4,000 requests a year for exceptions, and we approve about 84% (that's not a typo). Regardless, that gives us about 640 frustrated students a year to handle.



A Very Small Study of the Impact of Mental Illness in Our Office

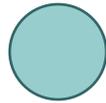
- ⌚ We review withdrawals for non-academic reasons. Over the past four years, we have received about 8% more requests for withdrawals based upon psychological reasons than for physical ones.
- ⌚ We are in the middle of a two-year study in which we track students who were (1) approved for full withdrawals and (2) advised not to take classes again immediately based upon their circumstances (i.e., recovery time, adjustment to situation or new medication). We send these students 3-5 emails per semester – before major deadlines and after midterm grades are posted – listing adjustment deadlines and campus resources.
- ⌚ Of students advised in spring 2007, 61% earned below a 2.00, and 54% failed all of their courses. All of the students who failed everything suffered from a mental illness. Of students advised in fall 2007, 50% earned below a 2.00, but no one failed all of their classes.



Our Agenda Today



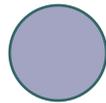
Some Prominent Cases



George Mason Case Studies



Threat Assessment and Student Behaviors



Some Precautions and Discussion

An Incident Involving Judicial Affairs



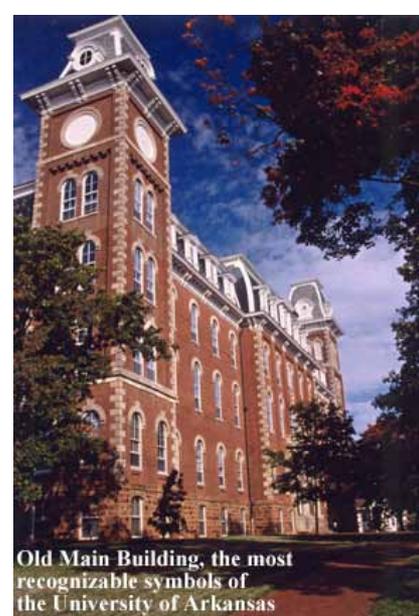
January 24, 2000

- Marques D. Smith, a philosophy major at Louisiana State University, reportedly confronted John R. Baker, the dean of students in the driveway of the dean's home
- Dean Baker was stabbed in the neck and arm with a large knife
- Mr. Smith was apprehended by a neighbor and charged with attempted second-degree murder
- Motive: The suspect had received a letter from Dean Baker in which he was told to contact him to discuss "[a] possible incident of dishonesty related to grade-changing."

An Incident Involving an Academic Program

August 28, 2000

- James E. Kelly, a 37-year-old graduate student in a comparative literature program at the University of Arkansas, shot his advisor, Professor John R. Locke, in his office. He then shot himself. This was the first murder in the university's history.
- Prof. Locke had agreed to advise Mr. Kelly after the student flunked out of the Ph. D. program in English four years earlier. He also appealed the student's expulsion by the faculty from that program, winning the student readmission.
- In one email to a professor, Mr. Kelly wrote, "I have to carry on a one-man war against the institution's hostile and savage attitudes. I have everybody pissed off at my ass now, which I take as the highest compliment this institution can give me.
- On August 18th, six out of eight Comp Lit professors voted to expel him permanently. Prof. Locke abstained.
- Motive: Unclear, and no note was left behind. For whatever reason, he blamed his adviser for his situation.



An Incident Involving Academic Affairs



January 17, 2002

- Peter Odighizuwa reportedly shot to death L. Anthony Sutin, the academic dean for the Appalachian School of Law, and Thomas Blackwell, professor of contract law. He also reportedly opened fire upon students, killing Angela Dales and injuring three others.
- Appalachia Law School is private and had an enrollment of about 170 students at the time of the shootings.
- Mr. Odighizuwa was apprehended by fellow students and taken into custody. He was held on three counts of capital murder.
- Motive: The suspect had been dismissed for the second time from the law school, and this time it was considered permanent and without right of further appeal. One of the students who helped apprehend him said that he kept saying, “I have nowhere to go. I have nowhere to go.”

An Incident within the Classroom



October 28, 2002

- Robert S. Flores, a nursing student at the University of Arizona, reportedly entered the campus with a backpack holding more than 150 rounds of ammunition for four loaded pistols.
- He stopped at the office of Robin Rogers, an assistant professor, whose class he had failed in the previous semester. He had to repeat the class, which in turn delayed him by one semester. She was shot once and died instantly.
- He then walked into the class where he was supposed to be taking a mid-term. He looked at Cheryl McGaffic, one of the course professors, and asked, “Cheryl, are you prepared to use your spiritual resources now?” He shot her three times. He then turned to Barbara Monroe, the co-professor, and shot her three times. Both died instantly.
- He ordered the remaining students out of the classroom.

Flores Classroom Case Continued



- Mr. Flores shot himself dead in the classroom.
- Motive: Prior to this rampage, the suspect typed a 22-page letter entitled “Communication From the Dead” and mailed it to the Arizona Daily Star. In it, he said, “I am tired, tired and weary. Another filling has fallen out and I cannot afford to replace it.” He stated that he felt that he was treated poorly as a male in a female-dominated field, and he was angry that he might fail another class.

One Last Incident

August 1978



- Theodore Strelski bludgeoned to death Karel De Leeuw, a mathematics professor at Stanford University. His weapon was a ball-pen hammer. According to *Time Magazine*, he used a sledge hammer, but reports are conflicting.
- Motive: He was a doctoral student for 19 years and claimed that Professor De Leeuw mistreated him and withheld fellowships from him.
- He was released from prison after serving just seven years. He refused parole three times, as the conditions of parole required him to stay away from Stanford and to maintain psychiatric treatment.
- At the time of his release, he expressed no remorse. Rather, he stated, “I say Stanford treats students criminally. If I express remorse, I cut the ground from under that argument. I would not only be a murderer, but a dirty, lying dog. I am a murderer. I am not a dirty, lying dog.”

Real-Life Cases from George Mason University

We have chosen three unique cases from our own campus to show:

- The varying levels of danger one might face;
- The length of time that can be involved in these kinds of cases;
- The great complexity and unpredictability of these kinds of cases ;

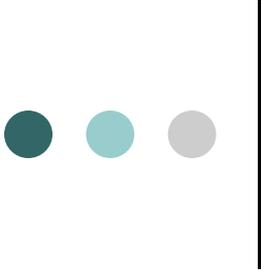
We have not included any names of students, professors, or staff in order to ensure anonymity.



The Case of the Persistent Appealer



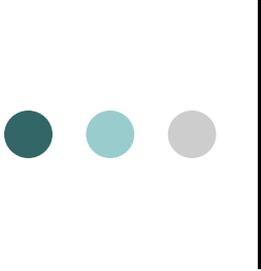
- An International Studies major was chased into the campus woods by a female campus police officer in 1988. He assaulted her and threatened to shoot her with her own gun before he was apprehended.
- He was Imprisoned and then sent to a psychiatric hospital where he still resides. A trespass order has been placed on him indefinitely to prevent his return to George Masson.
- Since 1996, he has appealed to return every year without fail. In each appeal, he insists that the police officer lied and that he is innocent. One appeal was written on the inside wrapper from a cigarette pack on which he explained: “Psychic Attack – when I had a psychic attack children were telling me to hit people: Doctors, Nurses, Psychiatric Aids, especially Negro.”
- In his most recent appeal, he stated: “George Mason should owe me an apology and allow me to study on campus once again.”



The Case of the Cinema Stalker



- A 62 year-old Anthropology major with over 250 earned credit hours (from George Mason and elsewhere combined) became obsessed with his film studies professor.
 - For one assignment, the professor asked her students to review a film of their choice. He chose Apocalypse Now and wrote a 96-page film journal on it. His notes said, “My dreams in the short four hours a night that I rest at home in my government subsidized section eight apartment are now punctuated by the sound and images of Apocalypse Now!”
- 

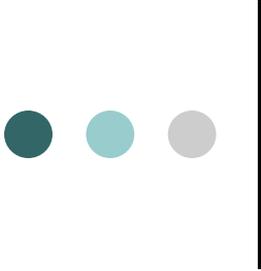


The Case of the Cinema Stalker

(Continued)



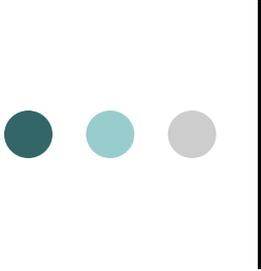
- This journal also included his own hand-drawn “newspaper” in which he wrote about himself in the third person as a murdered victim who was bludgeoned from behind by an unknown assailant.
 - He wrote the professor's love poems and began writing a play with her as a lead character. He persisted even after being told that these writings were inappropriate, and a trespass order was taken out against him at the end of the semester. He explained that she brought out his creativity, and he needed her as an instructor even if she felt she must fail him.
 - His written response at that time was, “A sneak attack was at exactly 0900 hours December 3rd. All's fair in love and war.”
 - He was expelled and sued the university. The lawsuit was dismissed.
- 



The Case of the Vengeful Hacker



- In 1992, an Engineering student who had regularly appeared on the Dean's List was arrested and convicted of burglary and attempting to sell thousands of dollars worth of stolen computer equipment while in Austin, TX.
 - While in prison, he was overheard speaking to his accomplice from that crime. In that conversation, he stated that he wanted to obtain the social security number of one of his arresting officers so that he could ruin him through computer hacking. An affiliated George Mason campus officer had reported earlier that someone had destroyed his credit rating.
- 



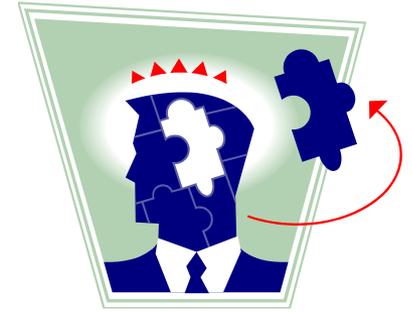
The Case of the Vengeful Hacker

(Continued)



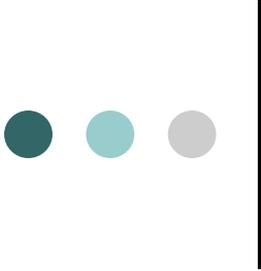
- Upon his release from prison ten years later, the court mandated that he could not “purchase, possess or receive a personal computer which uses a modem”; nor could he “utilize the Internet or other computer networks.”
 - He returned to Fairfax, VA and re-applied to George Mason as a Computer Engineering major. He was accepted into the program initially until the conditions of his release were revealed to the university.
 - Based upon this specific case, George Mason changed its admissions form to include the question, “Have you ever been convicted of a felony?”
- 

Developing a Student Profile?



In the past 10 years, much scientific effort has gone into trying to figure out a way to "profile" school shooters and other students who pose a threat so that they can be stopped before they act. A 2000 study of school shooters by the Secret Service found that there is no one profile: The shooters came from many different racial and ethnic backgrounds; were rich and poor, excellent students and D-minus types, socially isolated and popular.

(from Nancy Shute's "What Went Wrong" in the April 22, 2007 edition of *US News and World Report*)



Threat Assessment



While a specific profile should not be used, a report on secondary school shootings (“The School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective” at www.fbi.gov/publications/school/school2.pdf) conducted by the FBI does state, “Once a threat is made, having a fair, rational, and standardized method of evaluating and responding to threats is critically important” (p. 1).

“Signs of serious mental illness and/or substance abuse disorders can significantly elevate the risk for violence and should be evaluated by a mental health professional” (p. 15).

“Consistency in threat response can deter future threats if students perceive that any threat will be reported, investigated, and dealt with firmly” (p. 25).

The FBI recommends that schools designate – and train – a threat assessment coordinator and use multidisciplinary teams (from Counseling, Housing, Campus Security, the Dean’s Office) to help evaluate threats.



Threat Assessment: Personality Traits and Behavior



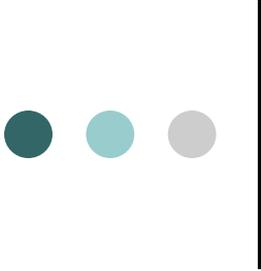
While discouraging any kind of active profiling, the FBI also identifies some traits and behaviors “that may be associated with violence” (p. 16):

“Leakage” occurs when a student reveals clues that s/he may be considering a violent act. These clues can appear in stories, diaries, blogs, essays, emails, drawings, videos, and so on.

“Injustice Collectors” nurse resentment over perceived slights. No matter how much time passes, these students may never forget or forgive those they consider responsible for perceived injustices.

Other traits identified include:

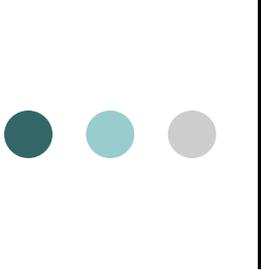
- Low Tolerance for Frustration
- Lack of Resiliency
- Signs of Depression
- Lack of Empathy
- Exaggerated Sense of Entitlement
- Attitude of Superiority
- Pathological Need for Attention
- Externalizes Blame
- Anger Management Problems
- Lack of Trust
- Rigid and Opinionated
- Change of Behavior



Recognizing Potential Threats: An Academic Perspective

In our experience, our most aggressive challenges have arisen from students in these kinds of situations:

- Have a lot to lose (job, degree, financial aid and loans, residence, lifelong dreams) and see no options;
 - Seek an unusual level of affirmation and attention, whether positive or negative – seem to submit outlandish requests anticipating a “battle”;
 - Take implementation of policies and academic standards very personally, believing that something was done to them (such as being given an F in a class);
 - Do not handle the unexpected well – or anything that is perceived as a threat to their larger plan.
 - Focus on the smaller details over the big picture, blaming one specific class, professor, incident, decision, or grade for the cumulative academic situation
- 



Determining a Possible Threat

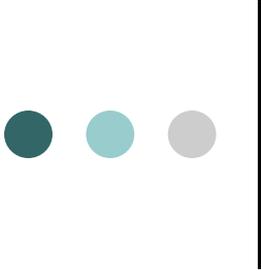


In any given week, we encounter a number of hostile responses to our decisions. Some recent responses include the following:

I will retak the exam and the artilce.
. Otherwise I will talk to my lawyer
and complain you to the dean and
the mason presdient. . . Do you hear
me. . . And you were not good
teacher. . . I am coming to your
office and see you. . . Like I said I
don't care. . . You hear me. . .

I'm stopping by the Dean's Office
tomorrow morning, and I'm going to
rip his head off!

I've had a knife
stuck in my
neck, someone
try to gouge my
eyes out, been
kicked,
punched, spat
upon, been put
in the hospital,
put people in
the hospital – I
won't go back
to that again. I
don't deserve it.



The Academic Perspective When Reviewing Student Requests for Exceptions

Academic Integrity of
the School, Class, or
Program



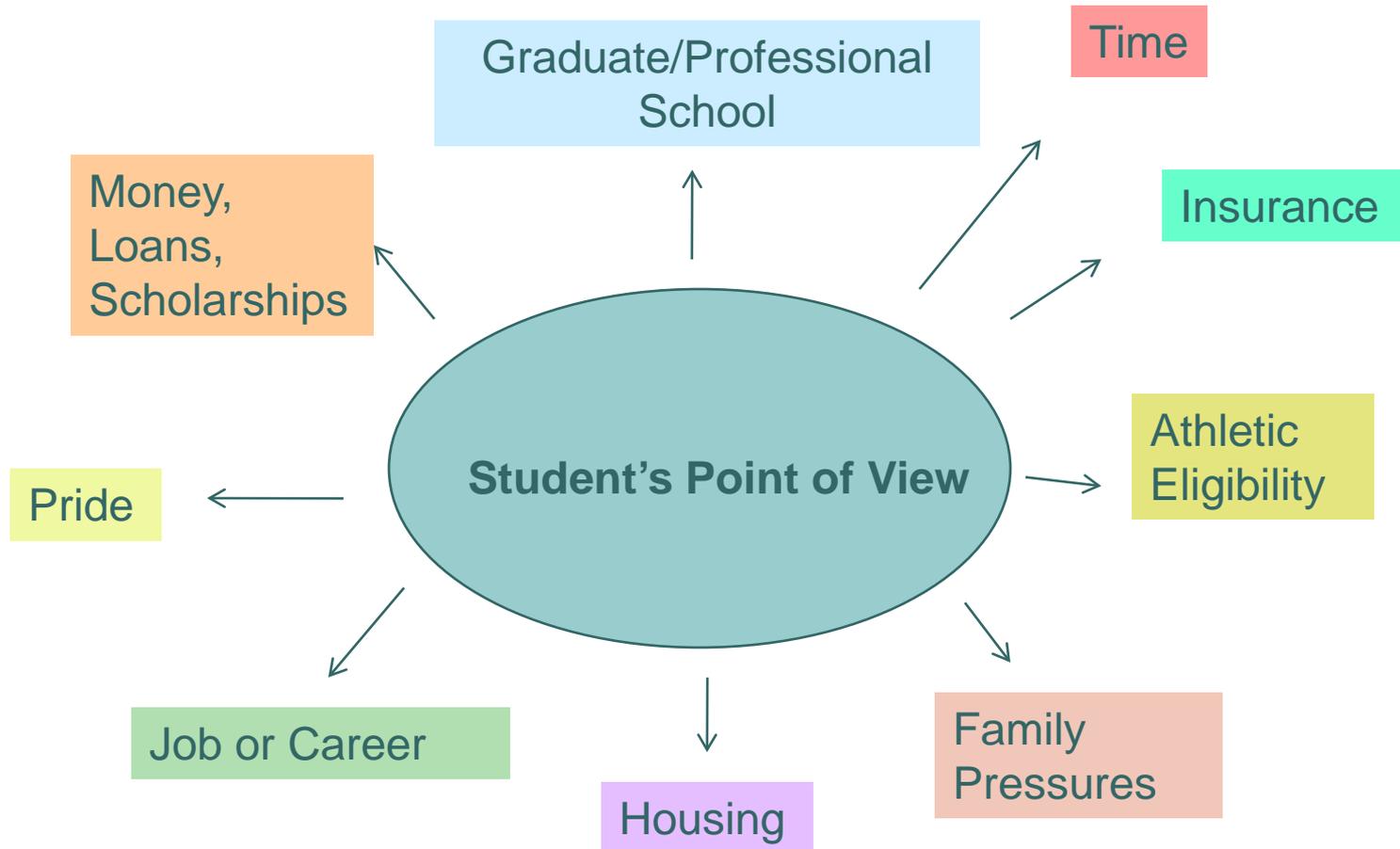
**Institution's Point of
View**



Consistency and
Fairness



What is at Risk When Advising Students and Reviewing Degree Audits?
(The Student Perspective)



Related, Possibly Exacerbating Factors

Mental Illnesses
(Schizophrenia, Bipolar
Disorder, Depression)

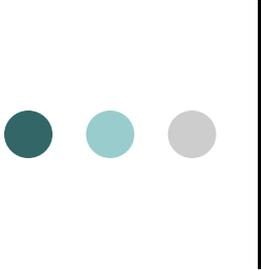
“Instant,” anonymous
communication (Email,
Websites, Phone Trees,
and Voicemail)



**Outside
Pressures**
(Family, Job,
Relationships)

Alcohol and
Drug Abuse

???



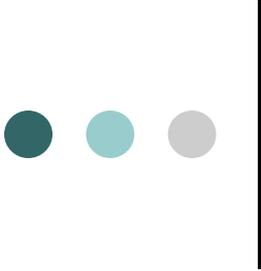
Anticipating the Risk Factor

This is the real, and at times nearly impossible challenge, for college faculty, advisors, staff, and administrators.

The greater the perceived risk/loss factor by the student, the greater the potential for volatile behavior becomes. Of course, we may not interpret the risk/loss in the same way as the student who is influenced by outside factors.

We hope that we can better prepare for – and possibly prevent some of – these kinds of situations by focusing on some specific safeguards and precautionary steps.

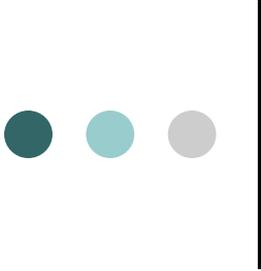




Professional Precautions



- Make certain policies are written down, clearly worded, and applied consistently. A vague policy can lead to multiple interpretations, confusion, debate, and frustration.
 - Maintain a professional distance and avoid becoming personally invested in specific students. A “friend” who lets them down could be perceived differently from a professional.
 - Do not exceed the parameters of your professional role and training – that is, do not diagnose students or counsel them if you are not trained to do so and if this is not a part of your role.
 - Communicate with appropriate offices (threat assessment coordinators) and report all perceived threats. The student may have had difficult situations/encounters with other offices. If everyone communicates directly with a coordinating office, then a more comprehensive assessment can be made.
- 

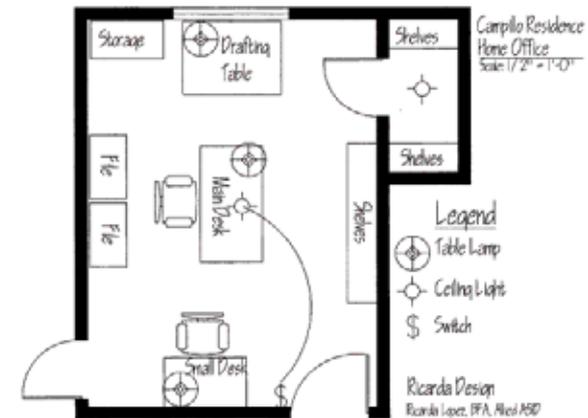


Professional Precautions



- Make group decisions whenever possible and respond on behalf of a council or committee.
 - Offer alternatives when delivering “bad” news.
 - Explain the worst-case scenario to the student – such as the effect of a failed class on GPA or even being dismissed – to help prevent surprises and the unexpected.
 - Document all interactions (date, time, summary) – even brief encounters that seem insignificant to you can have a different meaning for someone else.
 - Put decisions in writing, preferably in a letter instead of email. Letters give students the chance to think about the content of the response, and they eliminate the option of an immediate, emotional reply from the student.
- 

Physical (Space) Precautions



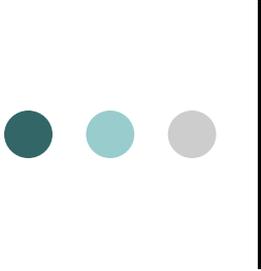
- Assess the physical layout of your work area, office, and classrooms. Several shootings have taken place in the classroom when the shooter entered from a second door behind the professor and students.
- Think about your possible exits, door locks, and windows.
- Make use of peepholes, convex mirrors, and (if allowable) surveillance cameras.
- Keep an open-door policy, literally. Never shut yourself off completely from your surroundings.
- Review the placement of your desk and chair for maximum visibility. Does your desk face away from your door, for example?
- Park in different places if your car and routine are known.



Personal Precautions



- Shred any documents with your name, title, phone number, personal email, or residential address.
- Obtain an unlisted phone number and keep it private.
- Obtain a post office box and remove your residential address from school records wherever possible.
- Request a credit report at least once a year.
- Do not work alone in your office/building (mornings, evenings, weekends, or holidays).
- Do not walk alone to your car.
- Keep your cell phone in an easily accessible place.
- Trust your instincts – it is always best to err on the side of caution



Further Discussion

- Have you had similar situations arise on your campus?
- Have you noticed an increase (or decrease) in these kinds of situations?
- Does your institution provide any type of training regarding how to handle hostile, possibly violent situations?
- Has your campus developed any threat assessment techniques that you would like to share?

Please feel free to contact us at dbitler@gmu.edu, jcooperb@gmu.edu, dfox1@gmu.edu, and wrankin1@gmu.edu with further questions or comments.

