Disruptive student behavior in a college classroom:
The case of the sole mutineer

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Synopsis
A student in a Health Care Management course goes on a tirade by verbally criticizing the course and the way the course is taught. The student asserts that a third of the students in the class agree with these criticisms. The student fails to comply with any of the instructor’s requests to stop talking or to leave the classroom, and at one point the professor threatens to phone Campus Police. The student refused to stop talking which prevented students from taking the exam under reasonable test conditions. One student in the class called out requesting the disruptive student to stop talking and to allow the others to take the exam. His request had no impact so he upped his game by increasing the intensity of his request, eventually yelling across the room at the disruptive student to “shut the hell up.” To the apparent amazement of the professor and the other students, the disruptive student stopped talking. Nonetheless, the faculty member and students wondered whether the ordeal was over and if things might get physical.

Learning Outcomes
In completing this case, students should be able to:

1. Describe and understand what is acceptable and unacceptable student behavior in a typical classroom in a professional college
2. Analyze and discuss alternative ways to deal with a disruptive student in the classroom
3. Identify and analyze factors that may influence the severity of disciplinary action
4. Analyze and evaluate a disciplinary situation to determine what disciplinary action should be taken

Application
This is a descriptive case that may be used in an undergraduate Human Resources Management or Health Care Human Resource Management course. If used in a Human Resource Management or a Health Care Management Human Resource Management course it should be used after coverage of performance appraisal (behavioral and performance expectations) and employee rights and discipline. The case may also be used during student or faculty orientation/training. The instructor or trainer may use their own university’s applicable policies and procedures to replace Appendix D of the case.

Key Words
Standards of behavior, due process, just cause, policy administration, procedural and distributive justice.

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