Guidelines for the Awareness and Prevention of Acts of Cultural Insensitivity and Bullying at USD
by
President’s Council on Diversity and Inclusiveness

One of the responsibilities and expectations of University of South Dakota students is that they will participate in the creation of a positive climate at USD that welcomes, comforts and is inclusive of all students in the residence halls, classrooms, student organizations and other parts of the university. Two critical issues that lead to a negative climate for and experience of diverse students are cultural acts of insensitivity and “bullying.” Making fun of or degrading individuals and the groups to which they belong is considered an act of cultural insensitivity. Bullying is defined as unwanted, aggressive behavior that is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying is repeated, deliberate and disrespectful behavior that has the intent of hurting someone else. Teasing, making fun of, laughing at or harassing someone over time is bullying. Bullying hurts, creates a negative climate and can disrupt another student’s ability to function, sleep, concentrate and to be academically successful. Below are some guidelines for the awareness of and prevention of acts of cultural insensitivity and bullying at USD.

1. Teasing and laughing at someone on the basis of weight/height, race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and other personal and group characteristics is a form of bullying. It violates the university standards and values of diversity and inclusiveness. Moreover, this type of bullying can lead to disciplinary action by the university.

2. Incidents of defacing personal property (room doors, decorations, walls, etc.) by writing or drawing racial, sexist or heterosexist and other insensitive expressions aimed at individuals can easily turn into a “hate” crime that carries serious legal penalties for the perpetrators. At the very least, students who perpetrate such actions could be reported to the Student Rights and Responsibilities Office of Student Services and face serious consequences including suspension.

3. Often students engage in the acts of cultural insensitivity and bullying in what they consider “having fun” or “being funny”. There is nothing funny about these incidents and have the effect of hurting the people to whom they are directed.

4. Just as “bullies” hurt people, so do the students who stand-by and do nothing to help the targets of bullying. The same is true of acts of cultural insensitivity. If you discover that someone is being harassed or bullied, speak up against the behavior and report the incident to university staff. Also, be aware if a student is being abused psychologically, emotionally or physically by anyone (e.g., boyfriend, partner, roommate, friend, etc.) and report it to the proper authorities.

5. Using university property (i.e. the USD Internet server) to bully other students (cyber bullying) or express feelings of hatred via Facebook, Twitter, email or other forms of social media is not allowed per university policy that governs the use of USD resources and facilities.
Examples of Acts of Cultural Insensitivity and Bullying

1. “Someone drawing a “Teepee” and writing a heterosexist slur on the room door of a Native American student”.

2. “A female student endures weeks of teasing, joking and laughing related to her weight by several students on the floor.”

3. “Bullying of a gay student by using slurs and directing other homophobic behavior and actions at them.”

4. “Imitating an accent, language or cultural behavior in a degrading manner directed at a foreign student.”

5. “A student faces a daily barrage of negative emails from another student.”

6. “A Mexican American student is the recipient of constant teasing, joking and expressions of stereotypes about Mexicans.

7. “Promoting stereotypes and hatred using social media including Facebook, Twitter, email and other forms of electronic communications.”

Acts of cultural insensitivity, bullying and other actions that translate into a pattern of negative behavior or comments can evolve into harassment. USD policy prohibits “harassment on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, gender, transgender, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability or harassment on any grounds, . . .” Reported incidents of harassment will be investigated in accordance with the university’s policy (Board of Regents Policy 1:17).

For complaints made by students against students, please report incidents to:
Dr. Kimberley Grieve
Dean of Students
MUC #218
605-677-5331

For any complaints involving a member of the faculty or staff, please report incidents to:
Roberta (Bobbe) Hakl
Director, Equal Opportunity
Slagle 205
605-677-5651

In accordance with South Dakota Board of Regents policy 1:18, complaints reported to any administrator or faculty member shall be referred to either Kimberley Grieve or Roberta Hakl.