A Situation Well Handled

Courtney Watson has attended our Readiness Training class series and has shared an incident in which a Teaching Assistant (TA), Nathan Phipps handled the situation well. Courtney followed up with a ‘head and heart’ review to make sure that everyone was recovering well from a scary situation. Thank you both for your skillful handling of this event!

Here is the summary of the debrief I had with the TA that responded to the medical emergency in early April, Nathan Phipps, and the actions discussed with the department.

About 3 weeks before the incident, a student let Nathan know that about an hour after an in-lab dissection, they suffered a seizure. Their doctor suggested it may be from formaldehyde exposure.

After learning this, Nathan offered options for online accommodation to mitigate the risk of reoccurrence. The student declined to move online.

During the next dissection on the date of the incident, the student began feeling “off” and faint. They stepped outside for some air at Nathan’s suggestion. Nathan continued teaching but stepped out occasionally to check on the student.

During these check-ins, the student went from leaning against the wall, to sitting on a bench with their head in their hands. Nathan offered to contact 911, but the student refused.

On the final check-in, Nathan found the student on the floor and unresponsive. Due to prior first responder training, he called 911 and listened to the instructions given by the operator to hold the students head and keep their airway open.
While handling this, Nathan instructed students to station themselves at each entry door, to retrieve an AED (which was not used) and get his supervisor. By the time the paramedics arrived the student was beginning to regain consciousness.

Nathan also let me know the student was in class when he debriefed the following week and was able to help assure the class that everything was okay. While the students did not initially seem interested in the update, they have since made it clear that they were worried and that they were very relieved that their classmate was OK.

Overall, I think Nathan did an amazing job responding to this emergency. Our next steps as a department will be arranging safety training for all TA’s on an annual basis and posting informational cards in all labs and classrooms below the evacuation plan that specify the location of the safety plan and lists emergency numbers. We have also worked with CNS to get an AED installed in the Yates building!

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[Nathan has agreed to have his debrief published in the Ready Colorado State Newsletter]

Thank you, Nathan, for your care and concern for your students and for your skill in responding to this event! You did everything we all learn in basic lifesaving and gave your students a task which assisted responders and kept the students busy. Following up with a situation debrief, even if not the highlight of some students’ day, was a great way to ensure them that the situation was resolved and that their peer was fully recovered. Well done!

And a big thank you to Courtney for her assistance in covering all the bases in this event as well as for sending us this encouraging report for the Ready CSU E-Newsletter! Bob