

Your team is called together with human resources, law enforcement, counseling, and the dean of students to review a threat case concerning a professor, Dr. William Hazelton, who teaches chemistry. He has been at the university for two years and has received a rollercoaster ride of reviews from students ranging from being the “best professor they ever had” to “why does the university hire such a misogynistic bigot.” The most recent problems involve Dr. Hazelton showing up to class smelling of alcohol and slurring his words, making inappropriate comments about female students and the way they dress, and handing out negative grades without any rationale or comment. The dress comments were along the lines of, “If you think someone is going to take you seriously in a laboratory setting with your cleavage hanging out, you have another thing coming.” Two female students in the class brought forward a complaint to Title IX.

His department head shares that Dr. Hazelton hasn’t been looking good lately and has complained to others of feeling tired and not being able to sleep. Others have commented on a recent weight loss of about 20lbs. He missed his midterm progress reports, has been slow to respond to his institutional research requests, missed the last two departmental faculty meetings, and has been quick to lose his temper and storm off. There were some rumors among his colleagues about some family problems. Bill has been separated from his wife since he moved across the country for the job at the University.

His behavior over the last two weeks gained the attention to the team when he went on a rant after several students failed a recent exam. He is reported to have said, “It’s like you all think you have your entire lives ahead of you without any consequence. Keep this up and you I’ll make sure you will be dead lying in a gutter soon. You can count on that.” Numerous students reported this threat through the online team reporting portal.



Questions to Consider

1. How would you handle this type of case on your campus? What team (or teams) would be needed? Make a list of stakeholders to consider in this case.
2. What are the top three concerns in this case? Assuming one of them is determining if the threat made is transient or substantive, what other information would you need to fully assess the threat potential in this case?
3. Assume the threat is transient and unlikely to be carried out and Dr. Hazelton remains on campus. What threat mitigation steps should be put in place?
4. Assume the threat is actionable and lethal and Dr. Hazelton is separated from campus. What threat mitigation steps should be put in place?
5. What team member would you seek out for possible additional information?

Details available upon questioning

- William's estranged son died in a drug overdose. His wife blames him for not taking more direct action and moving for the university job.
- William's baseline was always a little "rough around the edges" but his recent behavior over the last few months has been noticeably worse.
- His drinking has increased from 4-5 beers and a whiskey after work daily to finishing a six pack and 1-2 other beers along with 2-3 shots until he passes out in bed. He does most of his drinking at home but does have a local bar he frequents that is in walking distance of his home.
- Police indicate there was a recent DIP that occurred three weeks ago as he left the bar and William has been concerned about how this might impact his job. He has grown increasingly concerned about this and has even begun to have some thoughts about just ending his life.
- There was a Title IX investigation in response to the frequent comments about the female students in his class and the way they dress. There was an informal resolution, and he was talked to about the importance of professional standards regarding dress being applied equally to male and female students.
- William has been somewhat social with his peers but has no deep friendships on campus. He was always a bit antisocial, and this has become more pronounced in recent months.
- William experiences increased depression and has more actively considered suicide lately. After the death of his son, he found himself sitting alone drinking at night loading and unloading a revolver in his gun collection and spinning the cylinder.