

Academic Bullying Case Study #3 - Student bullies student

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Student bullies student

- **Side One (Alex):** Alex is a new addition to an established lab. All of the other lab members have been in the lab for at least one year and have formed strong bonds. Because Alex is introverted, Alex struggles to make friends with lab mates and feels depressed and excluded. One of the other lab members (Bailey) is very strong-willed and opinionated and starts to pick on Alex. Bailey jokes about Alex's research topic, stating that it is "pedestrian" and "elementary." Alex pushes through the jabs and starts getting really interesting results from the research. Surprised, Bailey becomes jealous and tells the other lab members and students within the department how helping design Alex's experiment led to the exciting results. Alex's hard work and dedication are diminished by Bailey's negativity and jealousy. When Alex tries to defend the research, Bailey publically scoffs at Alex and tells Alex that the work was not interesting or novel until the advice was given. Bailey creates a toxic work environment for Alex and discredits Alex's success.
 - **What are your thoughts about Alex's experience?**
 - **If you were Alex, how would you feel? What outcomes would you want to see happen?**
 - **Why do you think Bailey acted in this way?**
 - **If you witnessed Bailey's behavior towards Alex, what actions would you take, if any?**
 - **What actions do you think could be taken to address Alex's concerns?**
 - **Whom do you think the student could talk to in order to get perspective on Bailey's actions?**
 - **What do you think would be some possible outcomes if Alex talked to other students in the lab about their experiences with Bailey?**
- **Side Two (Bailey):** Bailey is a senior lab member and is popular within the department, serves on many departmental committees, and is president of the graduate student association. Bailey is extroverted and opinionated, which some view as intimidating. When Alex joins the lab, Bailey tries to befriend Alex, but Alex seems aloof and uninterested in maintaining or starting conversations. Bailey thinks Alex is conceited and tells Alex that all of the work in the lab is equally important. When Alex asks Bailey for advice that ultimately helps Alex come to a research breakthrough, Bailey feels credit is deserved for the contribution. When it is not given, Bailey tells others about it to see what their thoughts are.
 - **What are your thoughts about this situation after hearing Bailey's side?**
 - **If you were Bailey, how would you feel if Alex approached you with these concerns?**
 - **Have your opinions on how the situation should be handled changed since hearing side 2? If so, how?**
 - **What do you think could be done in the short term to resolve the immediate tension and what would have to change long term in order to create a working relationships between Alex and Bailey?**
- **Case Study 3: Final Thoughts**
 - **How does this case resonate with your experiences at Virginia Tech?**
 - **What level of support would allow you to move forward in a positive direction?**