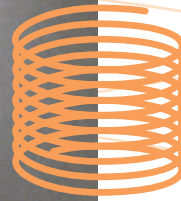


▶ STUDENT WORKBOOK



BOUNCE BACK

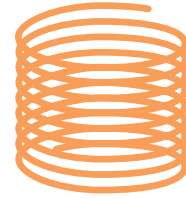
Retention
Program

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Bounce Back Retention Program

► STUDENT WORKBOOK

*Special acknowledgment is given
to the Aztec Parents Association
for their generous support
of the Bounce Back program.*



**SAN DIEGO STATE
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Designed and Illustrated by Kristin Konz McMahon



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part one



▶ **INTRODUCTION**



WELCOME Bounce Back Student!

We think you've made a great decision by enrolling in Bounce Back. Congratulations on actively choosing to improve your academic situation. You may still be reeling from the news that you are on academic probation. It can be a lot to digest.

We want to make one thing clear from the get-go. We know you are smart. You wouldn't have gotten into college if that wasn't the case. And, we also know that good students can end up on probation. Bounce Back is here to help you better understand how it happened and to guide you toward academic success.

Bounce Back Philosophy

When we began to conceptualize Bounce Back, we emphatically knew that we didn't want to offer a program that would be judgmental, disrespectful, or threatening. Rather, we assumed that all students who had the skill level and intellectual capacity to be admitted to a four-year institution of higher education also had the capacity to succeed and graduate. Therefore, we wanted to develop a program that would be encouraging and motivating.

Bounce Back works! It works because of the partnership we create with you. We believe that with the information and encouragement we can provide, and with your commitment and motivation, academic challenges **can** be overcome.

While our approach is multi-faceted, we have been primarily influenced by the field of positive psychology. The fundamental principle of positive psychology is beautifully and elegantly simple: if you focus on strengths, you get stronger! In Bounce Back, we are going to help you recognize your capability, strengthen your self-confidence, and teach you study skills that we know can lead to academic success and increased personal happiness.

We have put a lot of effort into researching why so many excellent students do not graduate. We've drawn from our own experiences with failure and have met countless successful individuals who have overcome academic difficulty. As therapists, we know about the obstacles that students face as they try to succeed. We know the effort, stamina, and endurance that it takes to persist. We have also had the privilege of witnessing the pride and self-satisfaction that comes with that hard-earned diploma.

We believe in you! If you want to graduate, we are committed to helping you meet that goal.



So, Who Gets on Academic Probation?

While there is not a stereotypical student who gets placed on academic probation, we have discovered that there are some broad and overlapping situations that contribute to academic difficulties. As you consider why you are on probation, take a look at some of these categories to see if you recognize yourself in one, or more, classifications.

▶ **THE FIRST-YEAR STUDENT**

These students are usually eighteen and away from home for the first time. In high school, they were often surrounded by friends they had known for years, and their grades were good. Many first-year students are READY for college, eager for extra freedom and excited about a new environment. Conversely, others are fearful of that leap into the unknown. Regardless of attitude, first-year students tend to underestimate just how hard college will be academically, socially, and emotionally. Academically, many first-year students feel lost in large lecture halls. In high school, many did not have to study very much, but now it is a whole different ballgame. Socially, first-year students have to adjust to making new friends. After years of long-standing relationships, many students need to create a new social network for the first time. Emotionally, many first-year students feel invisible and may not feel comfortable making connections with roommates, classmates, or professors. They feel lost and isolated, and many yearn for the familiarity of home.

First-year students often cannot believe that they are on academic probation.

▶ **THE UNDECLARED STUDENT**

Did you know that students with undeclared majors are more likely to get on academic probation than students who have a declared major? Many of these students are not able to explain why they are in college. They may be enrolled because that is what their parents expected of them. It may have been assumed that college was the obvious next step after high school. Many times these students are not able to identify long-range educational, career, or life goals. Let's face it; it is much more difficult to study and sacrifice fun without a definite goal in place. Many of these students are good at magical thinking, "Everything will be fine – I'm okay," even though there is not a plan in place to change anything.



▶ **THE FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENT**

These students are the first in their family, and sometimes the first in their community, to attend college. Some families have very high expectations for their college student, which can result in intense pressure. Furthermore, college expenses might place a great deal of financial pressure on families, which leaves students feeling guilty, especially if they are experiencing academic difficulties. Belongingness issues are big. These students may feel alienated from their neighborhood friends who are either not going to college or attending colleges near home. Likewise, they may not be able to relate to students who come from families where going to college is the norm. Parents who do not know about the demands of college may believe that responsibilities are limited to the twelve or fifteen hours that students spend in class per week. As a result, families frequently impose requests on these students, asking that they continue to respond to family needs or emergencies that require time and attention. These students are often in conflict themselves about their responsibilities. Is it to themselves or to their families?

Other first-generation college students come without family support or peer approval. Since their parents may not be familiar with college, these students may come without any adult guidance, and no one to help them know what to expect. Some families may not endorse enrollment in college and actively discourage attendance, which may create a value conflict between the two generations. Not knowing if they fit in, many students have difficulty speaking up in class, asking for help, or becoming involved in campus life. Feeling overwhelmed and conflicted, sometimes it is just easier to give up and stop studying or attending class.



▶ **THE ENGLISH-AS-A-SECOND-LANGUAGE STUDENT**

For students whose primary language is not English, college can be especially challenging. Spoken language is easier to master than written language, yet the emphasis in most American college classrooms is on written performance. These students, therefore, have to work exceptionally hard to demonstrate their competency in class. Likewise, students who lack proficiency in English frequently encounter negative stereotypes or may feel that they are viewed as less intelligent by their professors or peers. A vicious cycle then sets in with students bypassing opportunities to participate in classroom discussions or ask questions, which leads to the perpetuation of stereotyping and/or errors in self-perception.

The college experience can be especially challenging for international students. International students are expected to understand complex and technical material in English while simultaneously adjusting to American culture. Additionally, many international students have been awarded prestigious government scholarships because of their exceptional academic standing in their native country. Most of the time these awards come with strict requirements for satisfactory academic performance. Therefore, in addition to the personal impact, there are often political ramifications as well. The resulting pressure to do well is enormous with the level of shame over academic difficulties frequently overwhelming.

▶ THE WORKING STUDENT

Many students on academic probation are enrolled as full-time students and also work full time. We know students who are working up to three jobs! Studies often take a back seat, not out of a lack of motivation but due to a lack of time. Some students are working out of financial necessity. Many get behind in their coursework because they don't have enough money to buy books. Many do not have computers at home and are, therefore, dependent upon the availability of resources on campus, which may not be available when students are able to utilize them. These students struggle to balance and prioritize conflicting demands. When a student is dependent upon a paycheck to remain in school, it is difficult to ask for adjustments in work schedules or time off for the uneven demands of school. Even more stress producing is the reality that academic probation might jeopardize current funding and weaken opportunities for future financial aid and grants. These students tend to work extremely hard, but there just doesn't seem to be enough time to do it all.

▶ THE TRANSFER STUDENT

Transfer students have also been found to be at greater risk for academic difficulties than the student population at large. Many students who transfer from a two-year school are admitted with a history of excellent school performance. They are experienced in college and enter their new school feeling confident and optimistic. Yet, many find themselves unprepared for the rigors of a four-year school. Compounding their problem is the fact that orientation programs that assist with transition and adjustment issues for first-year students are either unavailable or abbreviated for this group. When these students begin to experience academic difficulties, they are frequently surprised and rarely seek out resources or ask for support. They express feelings of embarrassment when placed on academic probation and tend to feel demoralized and discouraged.

▶ **THE STUDENT IN CRISIS**

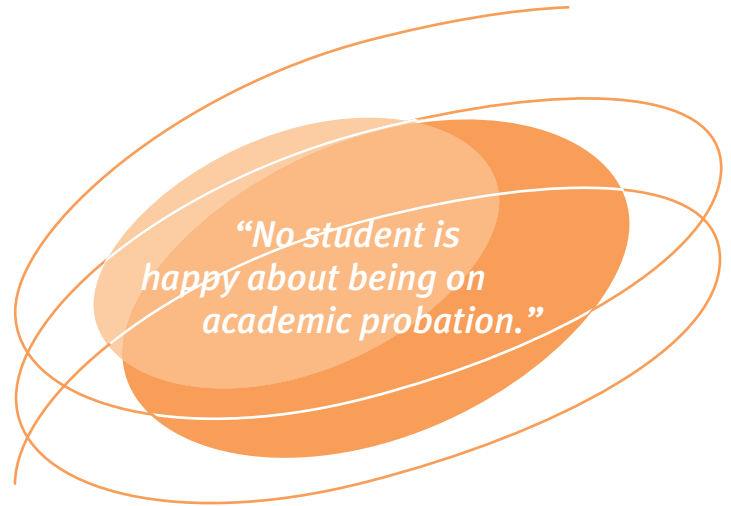
Students in this classification find their academic performance negatively affected by life circumstances. They, or their families, may be dealing with financial, health, mental health, and/or legal problems. Although highly committed to school and their studies, they are managing a crisis and, therefore, are unable to fully focus or concentrate. A crisis can't be scheduled around exams and papers. A crisis can make academics feel completely insignificant.

▶ **THE STUDENT WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

Students in this category may have physical, emotional, or learning disabilities. Students with special needs often put substantial effort and time into their academics. Therefore, it is especially frustrating when the result is academic probation. Poor academic performance becomes very threatening to students whose future goals for independence are at stake.

It is also important to consider that many students, especially those with undiagnosed learning disabilities, may not realize that they have a special need until they attend college and fail to do well. They have been able to succeed in previous educational settings due to their intelligence. But, when the demands of college require specialized study skills and extensive reading, these students may be unable to keep up.

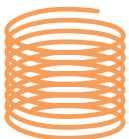
Academic performance is also compromised for students with mental health issues. It is impossible to study effectively if anxiety, depression, or trauma are continual problems. Classroom assignments and reading material can unexpectedly trigger mental health issues. For example, classes with assignments that probe personal or family history can trigger unpleasant memories. Likewise, courses which require classroom discussion or oral presentations can generate extreme discomfort for students who have performance or social anxieties. These issues may be extremely difficult to bring to the attention of classmates or professors. Therefore, these students often choose to fail rather than reveal their private struggles.



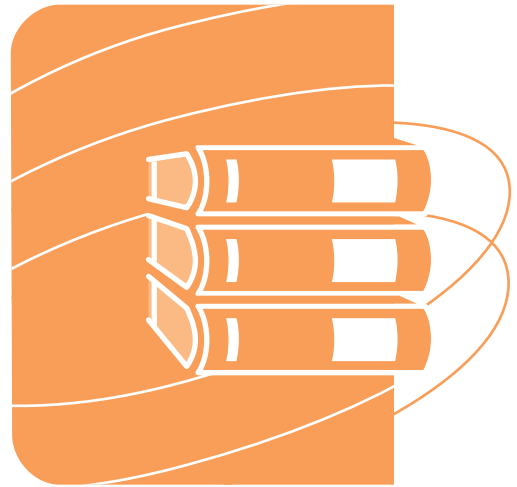
▶ THE PARTYING STUDENT

At college, there is always someone up for going out, and the options are endless. It isn't rocket science; it is more fun to party than to study. As a result, academics can suffer. Academic probation may be the first indicator that things have gone a little too far. Partying students on academic probation have lost the balance between work and play.

Many of these students are freshmen, on their own for the first time, and unsure about future goals or plans. They may feel ambivalent about college. They want to be enrolled since it's better than working fast food. They may like the financial support they receive from student loans or family, but they just aren't that into school. Students may feel pressured to live out their idea of "college life," and they may want to live up to the expectations of their friends. For students in this category, academic probation may be a result of too little studying and too many missed classes.



Obviously, there are many different factors that contribute to difficulties with academic performance. **But despite these differences, there is at least one commonality. No student is happy about being on academic probation.**



Bounce Back Curriculum

Based on the numerous and complex issues that contribute to problems with academic performance, we knew that we could not create “a one size fits all” curriculum. Therefore, we developed a program that would have something for everyone. The Bounce Back curriculum includes sections that will help you improve your study habits. There are also sections that encourage self-reflection so you can more fully appreciate your strengths and develop greater awareness of your goals. Likewise, some sections will help you develop the skills needed to cope with the inevitable emotional upheavals in life.

Undoubtedly, there will be sections that we cover in Bounce Back that will not feel relevant to you. If so, you have a wonderful opportunity to be of help to other classmates. Some modules will feel uncomfortable or unappealing. If so, we encourage you to try and stay involved. That way you have the opportunity to experience a side of yourself that you may not yet know.

We want to really encourage you to make full use of all that Bounce Back has to offer. Each week, we will explain the goals for the topic being covered, and we'll highlight how that class can strengthen your resiliency. We will keep classes small so you can receive individual attention. Your point of view and knowledge is important. If you tend to be quiet in class, here is your opportunity to practice being verbal.

All of us involved with Bounce Back are committed to knowing you as the unique individual that you are. However, we're not great mindreaders! Please tell us what you are thinking and feeling. If it is too hard to do so in class, catch us after class or e-mail us. We will help brainstorm solutions and help you become more engaged in your own educational success as well as your life outside of school.

Even though colleges and universities are viewed as large, impersonal, bureaucratic institutions, Bounce Back exists because administrators on your campus believe in your capacity to succeed and want you to graduate. By supporting Bounce Back, your administration has made a substantial financial and staffing investment in you.

In turn, we hope you will take full advantage of this opportunity.

*All the best,
Marsha and Amy*

Making the Most of Your Bounce Back Experience

We've worked hard to create a program that works. Think of us as car designers. We've worked on a reliable vehicle that will drive you to where you need to go. However, no one goes anywhere without getting behind the wheel. You are the driver. Your success depends upon how you handle the road ahead.

So consider this check list as you embark on your Bounce Back journey...

- 1 Attend every class.
- 2 Arrive on time.
- 3 Do your assignments.
- 4 Keep an open mind to the material and other students' points of view.
- 5 Participate in all activities and discussions (even if it isn't comfortable).
- 6 Challenge yourself to try something new.
- 7 Take risks, especially in letting others know how you think and feel.
- 8 Talk openly about your needs with your Bounce Back facilitator and peer coach.
- 9 Initiate conversation with your classmates and professors outside of Bounce Back.
- 10 Make use of all the available campus resources (for example, academic advising, psychological services, tutoring, financial aid, etc.).

IN OTHER WORDS, BE A RESPONSIBLE DRIVER

Bounce Back Student Letter

A letter of encouragement from a fellow Bounce Back student who survived probation at San Diego State University, Fall 2007

Dear New Bounce Backer,

I know that being on academic probation sucks. For me it brought up feelings of frustration, embarrassment, guilt, inferiority, stress, and fear. Now that I have completed the Bounce Back Program, I can look back and think about what helped me get through such a tough semester. So, here are three things I wished I had known that I hope will help you:

- 1 You must step out of your comfort zone (ask questions you may be scared to ask, meet new friends that share your passions, use the resources at your school).*
- 2 You've got to go to class and use professors' office hours. Get organized and don't procrastinate...make a schedule and stick with it!*
- 3 It is never as bad as it seems so don't look for excuses, look for solutions. Take advantage of your second chance.*

In the end, the most important lesson for me was realizing I can fix this. I realized that being on probation doesn't make me a "bad student," and I can succeed.

It will be a tough semester, but you can make it! Good luck and study hard.

*Sincerely,
M.A.*