

# How to Get Started: The Bounce Back Retention Program Infrastructure

**T**his section reviews our experience developing the **Bounce Back Retention Program** in order to help you implement **Bounce Back** on your campus. History illustrates the complexity of program development while demonstrating that persistence does result in success!

Implementation of Bounce Back requires cooperation and coordination with many departments on campus. While each university has its own unique structure and organizational style, we believe there are basic similarities across campuses that will allow for efficient replication. In openly sharing our process of development, we also hope that you will be encouraged to think creatively and adapt Bounce Back for the needs of your particular campus.

Before providing the specifics of the contacts we made, it is important to note that we consistently received very positive and enthusiastic responses from all administrative levels. We believe there are several reasons for this. First, most college institutions are committed to increasing the retention rates of students. A great deal of financial and personnel resources are devoted to admissions, and it serves universities to retain admitted students. Besides this financially sound stance, we were impacted by the heartfelt and compassionate support from everyone we approached. People proved to be truly dedicated to helping students succeed, shared personal experiences, and were eager to talk about individual students they thought could benefit from Bounce Back. There was very little “selling” we had to do.

Our consultations included the following personnel at SDSU:

## **1. Director of Counseling & Psychological Services**

We needed to work with the immediate Director who then acted as a liaison to divisional administrators. We discussed implementation and staffing needs. Because

we had concluded that therapists from counseling services would be the ideal facilitators, we needed a means to staff Bounce Back classes without depleting the resources of our own Center. As a result, we became very proactive in exploring funding sources for operational expenses.

## **2. Funding Sources**

Funding was a necessary hurdle which needed to be crossed in order to sustain our program. We were successful in securing modest amounts of funding through various resources on our campus. We applied for and secured funding from the SDSU Aztec Parents Association. We also applied for funding through Faculty Affairs, which awards grants for research and scholarly activity. As our program has proven successful, the Division of Student Affairs generously supports Bounce Back. Now that Bounce Back is offered for course credit, we receive funding through our teaching efforts. Of course, we continue to look for ways to secure a consistent source of funding. We share this information with you to encourage you to seek out creative ways to fund Bounce Back on your campus.

## **3. Assistant Deans**

At SDSU, every college is led by an assistant dean who is aware of the academic standing of their students. Historically, students who were performing poorly received notification from their assistant dean. We approached the assistant deans to learn more about services provided to students on academic probation and to assess their receptivity to Bounce Back. Through these meetings we learned that comprehensive services had never been offered to students on academic probation. Many of the assistant deans also served on the University's Retention Council, a group charged with studying the problem of retention and improvement of graduation rates. They assessed Bounce Back to be of merit and agreed to encourage students on academic probation to enroll.

These efforts were our first collaboration with the Division of Academic Affairs. As is true of most colleges, Counseling Services is housed in the Division of Student Affairs. While there has been interest in forging a bridge between these two divisions, very few programming opportunities readily presented themselves on this campus. Some of the excitement of Bounce Back arose from its ability to do just that. That

is, the professional expertise of student services personnel could be directly used to improve academic functioning. A cooperative link between the two divisions was established.

#### **4. Student Affairs Administrators**

These administrators, including the Vice President of Student Affairs, the Assistant Vice President (Student Affairs Administration), the Assistant Vice President of Student Services and Budget Administration, and the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, are especially committed to the academic success of all students. They were receptive to innovative programming and worked diligently to promote Bounce Back to our Provost and President. Through data collection, the efficacy of Bounce Back became apparent and the highest levels of administration worked quickly to help secure course credit for students who enrolled in our program.

#### **5. Office of the Registrar**

SDSU's Department of Enrollment Services keeps current and comprehensive records of students' academic status. We turned to this office for accurate statistics on the academic standing of students. As Bounce Back evolved, we worked with this office to inform students on probation about the availability of our program. Students were notified about Bounce Back through, the official online communication instrument of the university.

#### **6. Academic Advising**

SDSU's Academic Advising Center allows students to meet with an academic advisor/counselor to assist with registration as well as providing students with information regarding coursework, GPA standing, and academic progress. We encourage students during the first Bounce Back class to schedule an appointment with an academic advisor to review their current progress while also discussing steps to get off academic probation. The Academic Advising Office plays a critical role in referring many at-risk students to register for Bounce Back and is part of a collaborative team which includes Assistant Deans and our Counseling & Psychological Services Department to ensure students are provided the necessitated campus resources for academic persistence and success, to avoid disqualification.

## **7. Student Testing, Assessment, and Research**

Students who register for Bounce Back take pre- and post-tests on various topics including time-management skills, emotional regulation abilities, and automatic thoughts (a brief mood survey).

Consider the factors that your institution would like to track and consider administering this as a pre/post-test. The initial Student Survey is included as an example in week one.

When participants enter the program and complete the self-assessments, they are given feedback on their baseline scores. Later in the semester, a second administration of these measures provides a comparison of change and improvement in these areas.

The intent is to compare the college experiences of students on academic probation to the experiences of students at the same campus who are not. We anticipate that this information will shed additional light on the unique challenges facing students on academic probation.

Consultation with the Institutional Review Board is recommended. However, for program purposes or evaluation, IRB consent is typically not required.

## **8. Athletics**

Due to rigorous schedules and conflicting demands, a number of student athletes find themselves on academic probation. It can be helpful to consult with the Athletic Department to determine class times, since student athletes' schedules are often very fixed.

In summary, it is evident that contact with many offices and hierarchical structures was needed in order to secure support for Bounce Back. Additionally, these offices helped us reach our target population of students. Because we were initiating a new program, our road map was not always apparent. As is true with most new endeavors, one contact led to another. Because we are a large institution, there were many layers of bureaucracy to navigate. Depending on the size of your institution, your hurdles may not be as numerous. We anticipate that knowing the potential resources needed to implement Bounce Back at your campus will expedite the implementation process for you.