March 2017

Second-chance schooling

Britta Roppe
Iowa State University, brittar@iastate.edu

Alixandria Collins
Iowa State University

Follow this and additional works at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/ethos

Part of the Higher Education Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/ethos/vol2017/iss2/6

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Iowa State University Magazines and News at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ethos by an authorized editor of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.
Second-Chance Schooling

WHAT IT'S LIKE TO RE-ENROLL AFTER FAILING OUT

BY BRITTA ROPPE  DESIGN ALIXANDRIA COLLINS
Failing out of college is one of each student’s greatest fears, second only to drinking Hawkeye vodka or having an axe-wielding roommate. What would you do if that nightmare became a reality?

As a junior in child, adult & family services, Claire Opperman sensed that she would be kicked out of Iowa State during finals week of fall 2015.

Her grades began to deteriorate during her sophomore year. She met with an adviser to discuss the issue multiple times and filled out an academic success action plan twice, to no avail; once on academic warning, then again on academic probation.

Iowa State has many services dedicated to helping struggling students. They have tutors, study sessions, an academic success center and a warning system if a student’s semester grades drop too low.

The least severe action is an academic warning. Students placed on academic warning have a semester GPA that is below a 2.0. While on academic warning, you will meet with your advisor and create an action plan to earn better grades.

If you still have a semester GPA of 2.0 or lower at the end of the semester, you will then be placed on academic probation. While on academic probation, you will meet again with your advisor to fill out an action plan and discuss why you are having issues.

Even after she went through these steps, Opperman struggled to raise her grades and to fight the underlying cause of their descent, her depression.

“My senior year of high school, I was diagnosed with depression and I never really did anything with it,” Opperman says. “It was just always there.” Opperman sought help from a therapist after realizing the effect depression had on her education, but sadly, it was too late to save her from being dismissed from college.

“When I first got kicked out, I had no idea what I wanted to do,” Opperman says, “I thought maybe this was a sign that college isn’t for me.”

Opperman decided to fill her days by working 70 to 80 hours a week between two jobs. She knew she wanted to continue to work with children. She found one job working at a daycare and the other with Youth and Shelter services. She worked in their emergency shelter taking care of kids who couldn’t be at home due to safety issues or who needed some kind of treatment.

“I always knew I wanted to do things with kids, but it came down to being basically super poor my whole life and always having two jobs or getting a degree,” Opperman says. She soon decided to go back to college and earn a degree. She reapplied in April of 2016 to attend Iowa State again in the fall. To satisfy a reinstatement requirement, she enrolled in online classes through a community college. She also reached out to her advisor, who helped her fill out her application.

“My adviser was so helpful,” Opperman says, “You have to show them [the reinstatement committee] that it was an honest mistake and that you were just in a bad place.” The application requires the prospective student to answer essay questions about why they were kicked out and what they did afterward. “They want to see that you actually wanted to come back and were taking classes and working instead of just sitting on your mom’s couch playing video games,” she says.

She was reinstated as a student at Iowa State University. Soon, however, Opperman noticed that she began to fall back into her old, bad habits by taking five-hour naps and procrastinating doing her homework. To break these habits, she regularly went to a therapist and took antidepressant medication. It wasn’t long before she started to show signs of recovery and established effective study habits.

“When I had homework due on Friday, instead of doing it at 11:30 when it was due at 11:59, I would do it when I had a free moment earlier in the week,” Opperman says. “I noticed how less stressful it was to do it ahead of time.”

Addressing students who may be close to academic dismissal, Opperman says, “Try to decide if college is right for you, and if it’s not, that’s fine. There are so many other things you can do, like junior colleges and two-year programs. It’s not the end of the world. Take time to focus on yourself and make yourself healthier.”

---

**Student Resources:**

**Essay writing help:**
Need help proofreading an important essay or project? Check out the Writing and Media Center located at 208 Carver Hall. Trained communication consultants will assist you at any stage of your writing process. www.wmc.dso.iastate.edu

**Schedule a student counseling appointment:**
The Student Counselling Service is dedicated to promoting the positive development and mental health of Iowa State students. They provide many different services from career exploration to crisis intervention. 515-294-5056 www.counseling.iastate.edu

**Student assistance, outreach and academic help:**
The Student Assistance and Outreach services’ goal is to help students through any unforeseen circumstances. You can schedule an appointment through the the Dean of Students office (1010 Student Services Building) or call them at 515-294-1020. The Academic Success Center’s website also contains a list of course-specific help rooms and study skill suggestions. www.studentassistance.dso.iastate.edu