

Student Affairs Learning Improvement Application

Please complete the application below to apply for the learning improvement initiative with Student Affairs Support Services ([SASS](#)) within the Center for Assessment and Research Studies ([CARS](#)). This initiative is a partnership between SASS and the Division of Student Affairs to focus on the improvement of student learning and development.

At Madison, we value improvement of learning and development, which can be accomplished by well-thought-out programming and assessment. In turn, a complete and coherent application is a first step to making such initiatives successful. **Applications are due May 15th.**

There are two options for when programs may begin the project: Summer or Fall. In the application, you will be asked to indicate whether you plan to begin the project in the Summer or Fall. Please select a starting date that best aligns with your office schedule. **Selected programs will be notified by May 31st.**

Please select one starting date: Summer
 Fall Semester

Although several application questions will ask you to describe previous assessment results and previous improvement efforts, programs will not be selected based on the number of years they have conducted assessment or demonstrated improvement. **Rather, programs will be selected based on readiness and commitment to a long-term improvement process.** Up to 2 programs will be selected per year based on their readiness and commitment.

Should any questions arise while completing this application, you may contact SASS (SASS@jmu.edu). Once completed, submit your application to the co-chairs (Sarah Sunde, sundesa@jmu.edu; Kathleen Campbell, campbekl@jmu.edu) of the [Student Affairs Assessment Advisory Council](#) for review.

I.

Program Overview

In this section, please provide general information about your program. Responses are meant to be **short**, as you will have the opportunity to provide more detail in the sections below.

- a. Name of applicant's office:

Office of Dean of Students

- b. Name of program of interest:

Rebound: Rising Stronger from Setbacks

- c. Purpose of the program (1 paragraph max):

The purpose of the Rebound Program is to help students positively respond to setbacks and failures they may face during their college career. The program aims to not only create a community that cares about how students rebound from setbacks and failures, but also embraces those moments as being vital to the educational process. Thus, using theory and research, Rebound programming was built to increase student's perseverance in response to life's setbacks, thereby increasing retention to the university.

- d. Number of students who complete the program:

All incoming first-year students and transfer students (~4500 students)

- e. Number of staff members who facilitate the program:

10-15 professionals via partnerships with JMU's Office of Orientation, the Counseling Center and Academic Student Services.

- f. Point person/primary overseer of the program:

Samantha Gonzalez, Rebound Program Coordinator

II.

Current Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

The goal of this section is to ensure your office is well acquainted with the assessment process. We find that offices that have carefully thought about programming and assessment are in a better position to make improvements. In the space below, please provide a **brief** summary of the program of interest. In your summary, please include 1) your student learning and development outcomes; 2) a **general/broad** description of the programming in which students are provided the opportunity to learn or develop; and 3) the procedures used to assess whether the desired outcomes are actually being met. Careful consideration of these questions is crucial to the success of a learning improvement project. Please address 1, 2, and 3 within 1 to 2 pages maximum:

General Goals

1. Increase *retention* at the university.
2. Increase students' likelihood of *returning to JMU* after withdrawing.
3. Increase students' *ability* to conquer setbacks and challenges.
4. Increase student's *value and understanding of perseverance*.
5. Establish a *culture* at JMU that values and acknowledges setbacks, failures, and obstacles as essential aspects of learning.

Student Learning and Development Outcomes

As a result of completing *Rebound: Rising Stronger from Setbacks*, students will do the following:

1. Demonstrate a significant increase in growth mindset (via the Growth Mindset Scale).
2. Demonstrate a significant increase in grit (via the GRIT scale).
3. Explain the 4 key characteristics of a "gritty" person.
4. Demonstrate a significant increase in college-related confidence (via the College Self-Efficacy Scale).
5. Demonstrate a significant increase in resilience (via the Resiliency Scale).
6. Describe at least 2 self-care programs at JMU (e.g., Counseling Center Services, Learning Centers)
7. Demonstrate a significant increase in positive self-talk and decrease in negative self-talk.

General Description of Programming

Rebound: Rising Stronger from Setbacks is a program to help students become more resilient while at JMU. College experiences typically consist of obstacles, challenges, and setbacks. Using research and theory, the Rebound program was intentionally built to influence mindsets, attitudes, and skills associated with responding to challenges and setbacks.

Much of the Rebound programming is implemented during summer orientation, with components of this programming (e.g., videos of rebound stories) also available to students throughout their entire college career. Below is a summary of the programming components and when they occur.

ORIENTATION

The JMU One Book

The One Book is an online resource incoming students access to prepare for on-campus orientation and the beginning of their college careers. The One Book will include the following from Rebound:

- Videos of current and past students talking about their "rebound" story. Incoming students will be asked to answer questions about the videos and how those students overcame the situation.
- Students will watch the TedTalk by Angela Duckworth, "GRIT: The Power of Passion and Perseverance." Following the video, students will be introduced to the 4 characteristics of a gritty person. Students will explain (via a short essay) if and how they emulate each characteristic.
- A reading and/or video on growth mindset, followed by reflection questions.

Summer Springboard

Summer Springboard is an all-day orientation event that incoming students are required to attend at some point in the summer in the months of June and July.

- During the day, students will attend a 1-hour workshop, facilitated by trained undergraduate students, that provides information, videos, activities, and small and large group discussions related to achieving a growth mindset and increasing one's self-efficacy.

1787 Orientation

1787 Orientation is a week-long program that is held just before the fall semester begins. All incoming freshmen participate in this program and are placed in groups based on what dorm they live in. There are different activities, workshops, and events going on throughout each day.

- A help-seeking workshop facilitated jointly by the Counseling Center and Academic Student Success Services that exposes first-year students to various JMU resources they can consult for social and academic help. Students will learn how and why to ask for help.
- Students will be given a list of all the relevant campus resources and then will visit 2 to 3 of these resources to practice asking for help during the three-day orientation.
- A self-talk workshop conducted by the Counseling Center to increase students' ability to engage in positive self-talk and decrease negative self-talk.
- Growth Mindset Workshop: This workshop is more extensive than the previous Growth Mindset programming that students experienced from the One Book and Summer Springboard.
- The Final Event: On the final day of 1787 orientation, all students attend the last event. During this time, students will watch a select number of Rebound videos that highlight success and failure. These videos star faculty, alumni, and current students. An encouraging talk by the Vice President of Student Affairs then follows.

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMMING AVAILABLE ANYTIME

- Rebound online community: Facebook page, Rebound website, Rebound video stories
- Opportunity to be involved in a small group or mentor program
- Self-guided journal

Current Assessment

Given the proposed programming has not been implemented, we have not collected data as of yet.

III. Focus of Partnership with SASS

You may want to improve learning/development related to all outcomes. However, for this partnership, you will need to **select 1 or 2** learning/development outcomes on which to focus. These outcomes should be sufficiently important to warrant the ample resources that will be devoted to improving all related programming and assessment activities.

The most crucial information you will provide in this section concerns the **program theory** that guides your program. In other words, how was your programming *intentionally designed* to achieve the student learning and development outcomes you've decided to focus on for this partnership? Programs that have not given this considerable thought will find it difficult to engage in a learning improvement initiative.

- a. Student learning/development outcome(s) **selected** for the improvement initiative (1 or 2):

1. As a result, of completing *Rebound*, students will demonstrate a significant increase in Growth Mindset via the Growth Mindset scale.
4. As a result of completing *Rebound*, students will demonstrate a significant increase in college-related confidence via the College Self-Efficacy Scale.

- b. Description of **why** these outcomes were selected for the learning improvement initiative. Why are these outcomes important to your department? (1-2 paragraphs):

The JMU Counseling Center has experienced a 191% increase in clients since 2017. One of the main goals of Rebound is to equip students to better handle challenges (i.e., resiliency). Evidence suggests a resilience framework can assist students in effectively coping with the hardships of college, thus improving retention—the long-term goal of Rebound programming (Hartley, 2013). Two personal characteristics that influence resilience are growth mindset and self-efficacy (Martin & Marsh, 2006; Nussbaum & Dweck, 2004; Vuong, Brown, Brown-Wetly & Tracz, 2010).

Growth mindset is the belief that one's most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work (Dweck, 2006). Growth mindset is related to the ability to persevere in face of challenges and failures. Moreover, interventions to increase growth mindset have been shown to be effective (Nussbaum & Dweck, 2004).

Self-efficacy is defined as, "belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task," (Bandura, 1994). Research suggests an increase in self-efficacy leads to increased ability to persevere and bounce back from challenges (Martin & Marsh, 2006; Vuong, Brown-Wetly & Tracz, 2010). Furthermore, self-efficacy interventions have been shown to be effective in increasing self-efficacy (Bautista, 2017; Betz & Schifano, 2000; McNatt & Judge; McConville & Lane, 2006). In fact, already-created Rebound programming in the form of videos and Facebook should (theoretically) influence self-efficacy.

Finally, growth mindset and self-efficacy are measurable constructs with existing high-quality, short, self-report instruments. Thus, we selected these outcomes as our focus for this application.

c. Description of why these outcomes are important to JMU (1 paragraph):

According to an American College of Health Association survey (2018), 55% of students reported feeling hopeless, 42.95% felt so depressed that it was difficult to function, and 64.3% felt overwhelming anxiety. Amidst this climate, JMU is committed to providing support for students in accordance with its strategic plan, which emphasizes our "student focus." More specifically, the university aims to "provide experiences that challenge and support students." By implementing a research-based program like Rebound and making it accessible to all university students, we can help students feel they are supported and not alone in their college journey.

d. Description of the specific programming (curriculum, pedagogy, intervention, etc.) used to provide students with an opportunity to meet the **selected outcome(s) only**. An objective-to-curriculum map should be included as part of this description (may be attached as an appendix):

To achieve the long-term goal of increased retention at JMU, Rebound targets two primary outcomes: increasing students' ability to persevere (i.e., grit) and to bounce back (i.e., resilience) when faced with challenges and setbacks that arise during college. Using research by Carol Dweck, Angela Duckworth and others, Rebound aims to increase resilience and grit by targeting positive growth mindset (Outcome 1) and college self-efficacy (Outcome 4). Below are activities and interventions for these outcomes (See Appendix A for outcome-to-curriculum map).

1. One Book

- Rebound Videos (Self-Efficacy Intervention)
 - Videos of current and past students talking about their rebound story. These videos are designed to increase confidence to succeed in college via observing others who have.
 - Videos will be followed by incoming students answering questions about the videos.
- Growth Mindset Introduction (Growth Mindset Intervention)
 - Short readings and videos explaining growth mindset, followed by questions for students to answer and reflect on what they viewed.
- Grit Introduction (Grit Intervention)
 - Grit TedTalk to expose students to this attribute, as grit will be discussed often during orientation and beyond
 - Writing about characteristics of "gritty" person and how those apply to self.

2. Summer Springboard

- Growth Mindset Workshop Part 1 (Growth Mindset Intervention)
 - All first-year students will attend an information and interactive workshop to learn more about growth mindset. This workshop will be a continuation of the One Book programming. Students will watch videos, created by trained facilitators, explaining growth mindset. Videos are followed by time for reflection and discussion. The facilitators-lead discussion will consist of story-like prompts that are examples of college students experiencing setbacks, failures, and obstacles. Discussion will center on how achieving a goal is associated with effort and how one learns from mistakes and feedback on those mistakes. Students will address prompts and determine possible solutions based on a growth mindset attitude and approach.
- Setbacks Discussion (Self-Efficacy Intervention)
 - In small groups, first-year students share a setback or failure they experienced and overcame prior to coming to JMU. The facilitators will be the first ones to share their own stories, followed by students. These previous success stories and the effort they required lay the foundation for understanding that success is not automatic but is achievable.

3. 1787 Orientation Week

- Growth Mindset Workshop Part II (Growth Mindset Intervention)
 - A final program targeted at growth mindset will be implemented during 1787 Orientation. By this point, students will have participated in the One Book and Summer Springboard Programming. Thus, this GM workshop will build upon the previous activities, by having students “teach” each other the concept of growth mindset (Halpern & Hackel, 2003) and write out a plan to engage in strategies that align with growth mindset during the first semester.
- The Final Event (Self-Efficacy Intervention)
 - The Dean of Students Office worked with faculty and students to create “Rebound Stories.” These videos, available on the Rebound website, highlight challenging setbacks and failures faced by JMU faculty, alumni and current students. Two of these videos will be shown during the last day (“The Final Event”) of 1787 Orientation. One video will be a student or alumni story and the other will be the VP of Student Affairs. Following the final video, the VP of Student Affairs will speak to all students about experiencing challenges and failures and emphasize that if others can overcome setbacks, so can they.

- e. Describe *how* this programming is expected to result in the desired student learning/development outcome(s). In other words, please explain the logic behind why certain program features were chosen to achieve the selected outcomes. This is often referred to as program theory or logic. If you are unfamiliar with these terms, please watch [this short introductory video](#) before constructing your response (1 page max). If you need support using program logic to develop curriculum/programming, please visit JMU’s Center for Faculty Innovation (CFI):

As you can see in the logic model (refer to Appendix B), each link between the intermediate and distal outcomes, and each link between the program components and intermediate outcomes is supported by research. Thus, the Rebound program should “work” (i.e., increase resiliency in students) because it is evidence-based.

Overview of Program Theory for Rebound

Program development for Rebound began by working backwards from the long-term outcome of increased retention at the university. Given the reasons students articulated for leaving JMU, student resiliency became a concern. Next, we identified the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that influence resiliency (these became our program SLOs). Finally, interventions to influence the newly articulated SLOs were developed. Together, these components comprise the program theory underlying Rebound, which is illustrated in Appendix B.

Resilience and Grit as Long-Term Outcomes

Resilience is defined as a “dynamic capability which can allow people to thrive on challenges given appropriate social and personal contexts” (Howe et al. 2012). In popular press literature, *Psychology Today* states resilience is a quality “that allows some people to be knocked down by life and come back at least as strong as before.”

Research conducted by Davey, Eaker and Walters (2003) and Ungar (2004) suggests that resiliency of students is related to student success. Regarding retention, Thornton and Sanchez (2010) noted that resiliency among Native American students promoted successful educational outcomes, such as decreasing dropout rates.

Grit is defined by psychologist Angela Duckworth as, “the perseverance and passion for long-term goals.” Duckworth’s research suggests grit is related to retention. For example, grittier West Point cadets were less likely to drop out after physical training (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews & Kelly, 2007). Her research done at a sales company showed grit predicted which employees stayed or quit. Moreover, Chicago Public School students’ grit levels predicted who persisted through high school and graduated (Eskreis-Winkler, Shulman, Beal & Duckworth, 2014).

Growth Mindset and Self-Efficacy as Intermediate Outcomes

After establishing grit and resilience as outcomes, we needed to identify what influences grit and resilience. Research suggests growth mindset and self-efficacy are related to both grit and resilience. Psychologist Carol Dweck states growth mindset is when, “people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work.” People develop beliefs about themselves, called self-theories. Entity theorists believe their intelligence or skills are fixed. However, incremental theorists believe their intelligence or skills are malleable with sustained effort—in other words, they have a growth mindset. Research by Duckworth (2015) and Nussbaum and Dweck (2004) indicate that growth mindset influences grit and resilience levels.

Self-efficacy is defined as, “belief in one’s ability to success in specific situations or accomplish a task,” (Bandura, 1994). In a study of college sophomores’ perceived self-efficacy levels, Vuong, Brown-Wetly and Tracz (2010) found self-efficacy influenced grit. Likewise, in a study of Australian high school students, Martin and Marsh (2006) found self-efficacy predicted resilience.

Programming to Impact Growth Mindset and Self-Efficacy

Psychology professors Diane Halpern and Milton Hackel (2003) have compiled basic principles to enhance long-term retention and transfer of learning. We have applied their findings to our growth mindset programming.

Halpern and Hackel (2003) discuss the importance of *varying and distributing the learning conditions over time* as key factors of students’ ability to retrieve information. The authors state that, “information that is frequently retrieved becomes more retrievable,” (2003). The One Book programming will be the student’s first (basic) introduction to growth mindset. Research by

Dweck and Nussbaum (2004) found that students primed with an incremental theory reading later perceived failure and challenge as an opportunity for growth. Following this research, the introduction and reading on growth mindset that is presented in the One Book is designed to prime students with the ability to conquer challenges and apply effort when they arise. The growth mindset programming that takes place during Summer Springboard and 1787 Orientation Week will include more extensive interventions in an effort to facilitate long-term retention of knowledge about growth mindset.

Halpern and Hackel (2003) also indicate that learning is enhanced when *students gather what they have learned in one format and then “re-represent” or translate it in a different format*. To apply this principle to our growth mindset programming, we have developed activities that engage students in creating plans and strategies based on a growth mindset attitude, as well as allowing the students to become the “experts” (on growth mindset) and teach their peers.

Albert Bandura’s Self-Efficacy Theory and research (Bandura, 1997) provides evidence that students who believe their efforts and abilities will produce a desired result participate more willingly and without reluctance, persist longer, and have fewer unfavorable emotional reactions when encountered with difficulties compared to students who doubt their efforts and abilities (Zimmerman, 2000). Bandura’s four ways to build self-efficacy include *vicarious experiences* (self-modeling), *performance accomplishments* (past experiences), *verbal/social persuasion* (verbal encouragement), and *physiological and emotional states* (see Appendix C). To apply this theory, we have developed activities intended to build self-efficacy through *performance accomplishments*, *vicarious experience* and *verbal/social persuasion*. First, as part of Summer Springboard, there will be dedicated time for students to share stories about overcoming their own personal challenges and failures (i.e., performance accomplishments). Students will realize people just like them have experienced tough times and have persevered, thus increasing their self-efficacy that they can persevere as well (i.e., vicarious experiences). Additionally, the activity implemented at the end of 1787 Orientation will provide an opportunity for students to observe and hear stories of people very similar to themselves bouncing back after experiencing setbacks (i.e., vicarious experiences). Through these stories, students will begin to understand that even with failure and challenges, success is always possible. Finally, all self-efficacy interventions will involve verbal encouragement (i.e., social persuasion).

- f. Summarize the results of previous assessment related to the selected outcomes (1 page max):

Not applicable.

IV.

Action Plan

In this section, you will be asked to consider why the student learning/development outcomes you selected are not being met and propose possible strategies for addressing these obstacles.

- a. For each selected outcome, provide an explanation/hypothesis about why current programming is not supporting student learning/development to the degree you desire (1 page max):

Because Rebound is a new program that has not yet been implemented, we are unable to directly provide an explanation or hypothesis about why current programming is not supporting student learning and development.

- b. Prior to this new partnership with SASS, have you tried to **improve** student learning/development related to these outcomes? If so, please describe the improvement initiatives. Have those initiatives been successful? (1 page max):

Not applicable.

- c. Based on your answers to the questions above, what changes to a) your programming and b) your assessment processes do you believe are necessary to demonstrate improvements in student learning/development?

Not applicable.

- d. Provide a detailed timeline that articulates your plan to improve student learning/development to the degree you desire. This timeline should include 1) whether you plan to begin this work in Summer or Fall, 2) plans to initially assess the program, 3) plans to make programmatic changes, and 4) plans to re-assess the program:

We plan to pilot our program starting Summer 2021. The First-Year Survey, which will include measures of grit, self-efficacy, growth mindset, and resiliency, will be completed electronically by students prior to 2021 Orientation. The website will be fully completed by Summer 2021 and available to the public.

Summer 2020:

- Review/select measures for growth mindset, grit, resilience and self-efficacy
- Makes changes, if necessary, to the First-Year Survey based on review of existing measures
- Build interventions
- Design a workshop to train facilitators of Summer Springboard and 1787 on growth mindset programming
- Design a workshop to train facilitators of Summer Springboard on self-efficacy programming

Fall 2020:

- Start collaboration with Orientation Team to include the new programming in the One Book as well as the Summer Springboard and 1787 Orientation schedules
- Recruit facilitators for the Summer Springboard growth mindset program
- Recruit facilitators for the Summer Springboard self-efficacy program

Spring 2021:

- Train growth mindset facilitators
- Train growth self-efficacy facilitators
- Finalize Rebound website

Summer 2021:

- Send out First-Year Survey (students will complete before coming to Springboard; this will begin our data collection process)
- First-Year and transfer students go through new programming

As of now, our idea is to have students complete the first post-test of mindset, grit, resilience, and self-efficacy at the end of the day at Summer Springboard. We will then gather the second post-test after 1787 Orientation (likely during Assessment Day). We would also like to assess those same students months later, once they complete the first few months of college, in order to assess retention of information and skills. Following the analysis of the data, we will make programmatic changes and re-assess.

V.

Commitment to Partnership

One of the most important resources needed to evidence student learning improvement is time. As such, **each program will commit 10 hours per week to the initiative.** This amount of time is necessary to think critically about the program, collect evidence regarding student learning and development, and engage in evidence-based, intentional program redesign. By committing this time up front, programs will be able to distribute other responsibilities accordingly.

a. **Weekly Time Commitment** (10 hours/week)

Please select a Lead Coordinator who will serve as the primary contact and chief overseer of the initiative. This person may choose to commit all ten hours each week, or assemble a team to share the workload. *Note: Graduate assistants may lend support where needed, but most decisions/discussions will require extensive familiarity with the program over several years, an understanding of the program theory/logic behind the program, knowledge of departmental resources, and a level of authority beyond what most graduate students possess. As such, graduate assistants may not serve as lead coordinators and should contribute less than 1/3 of the total hours spent on the initiative each week.*

b. **Support from Direct Supervisor** (1 hour/week)

Regular contributions from upper-level administrators are crucial to the long-term success of a learning improvement initiative and, in turn, the future of the program. Direct Supervisor, please sign below to indicate **a commitment of 1 hour per week** to the learning improvement project detailed in this application. This time may be spent in whatever manner is most helpful to the program.

Lead Coordinator:

(Name) (Signature) (Date)

Other Team Members (names only; no signatures required):

Direct Supervisor (1 hour commitment each week):

(Name) (Signature) (Date)

Director:

(Name) (Signature) (Date)

**Appendix A:
Rebound Curriculum and Objective Mapping**

Selected Outcomes:

As a result of completing *Rebound: Rising Stronger from Setbacks*, students will:

1. Demonstrate a significant increase in Growth Mindset (via the Growth Mindset Scale).

4. Demonstrate a significant increase in college-related confidence (via the College Self-Efficacy Scale).

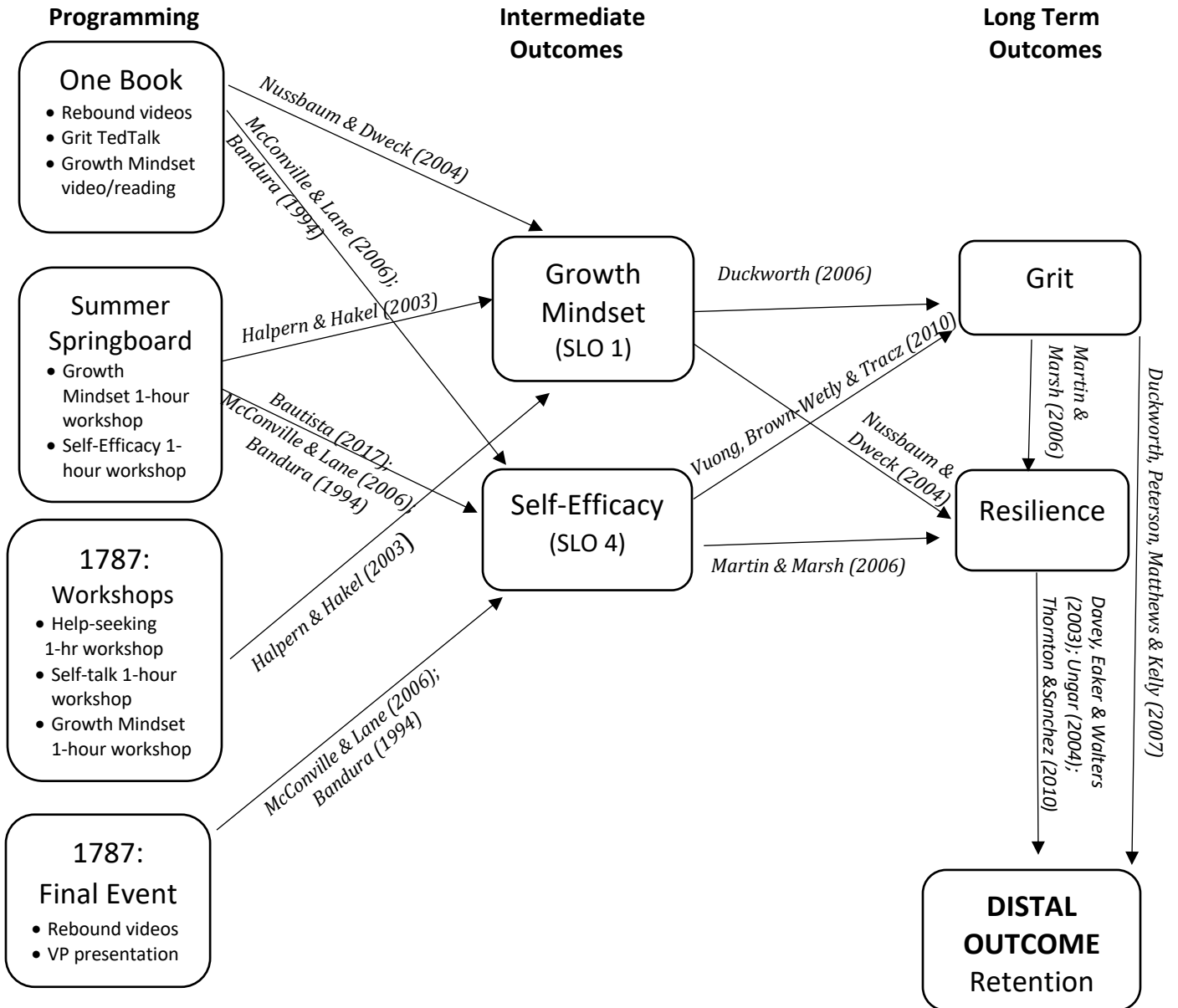
Programming	Objective 1	Objective 4
One Book	X	X
Summer Springboard Workshops	X	X
1787 Workshops	X	
1787: The Final Event		X

Appendix B: Rebound Program Theory via Logic Model

Selected Outcomes:

As a result of completing *Rebound: Rising Stronger from Setbacks*, students will:

1. Demonstrate a significant increase in Growth Mindset (via the Growth Mindset Scale).
4. Demonstrate a significant increase in college-related confidence (via the College Self-Efficacy Scale).



Appendix C

Self-Efficacy Theory, Bandura (1997)

EFFICACY EXPECTATIONS

