

Memorandum

To: Members of the Saint Mary's College Community

From: Mary McCall, Interim Director of Institutional Research

Date: April 28, 2009

Subject: Undergraduate First-Year Student Attrition Report, Fall-Spring, 2008

As a means of monitoring first-year student enrollment trends, the following report on new first-year (non-transfer) students is offered here. As reported in the fall, attrition data are also reviewed and reported on a year-to-year basis (from fall term to fall term). However, we also choose to study characteristics of first-year, non-transfer students who enrolled for the fall term and did not re-enroll for the spring term. Of 675 new first-year students (NFYS) who enrolled for the fall 2008 semester, 56 did not re-enroll for the spring. Of those, 12 left campus prior to completing the fall term; the other 44 completed the fall semester. In using the entire entering class (675) to calculate the fall-to-spring attrition rate, we find a rate of 8.3%, a decrease of .7% from last year's rate (9%). If we include only those students who completed the semester and not those who left before completing the term, the rate of attrition is 6.5%, a decrease of .5% compared to last year (7.0%).

OVERALL CHARACTERISTICS

The chart below contrasts background characteristics of non-returning students to those who returned for the spring semester. In addition to the above characteristics, the following is descriptive of those 56 non-returning students:

	Non-returning NFYS Characteristics (N=56)	Overall NFYS Class Characteristics (N=675)
% Female	55%	65%
% Male	45%	35%
Avg High School GPA	3.18	3.33*
Avg Combined SAT	1041	1081
% from public high schools	54%	52%
% from out-of-state	16%	16%
% of "first-generation" students	41%	35%

*A statistically significant difference, $p < .05$.

These data reveal that more men did not return, compared to their proportion of the incoming class. Those who did not return had an average high school GPA significantly lower than those who did return, and a somewhat lower combined SAT score. There were also more first-generation students who did not return, compared to their proportion of the whole class. Other characteristics of non-returners include:

- 1 was admitted as a Presidential Scholar at entrance, 2 were admitted through the High Potential program, 4 were in the A.S. in Nursing program, and 3 were Lasallian Leaders
- 5 were found in violation of the disciplinary code, all related to alcohol or drug violations
- 18 were on academic probation at the end of the Fall 2006 term
- none were found in violation of the Academic Honor Code

ETHNICITY

The table below shows a greater proportion of Latina/o students (compared to their class as a whole) chose not to return for the Spring 09 term.

Student Ethnicity	% of Non-returners	% of overall NFYS class
African-American	1.8%	6.4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	12.5%	12.0%
Latina/o	32.1%	23.4%
Native American	1.8%	1.6%
White	46.5%	48.9%

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Breakdown of course completion (1-unit courses only) and grade point averages for the 44 who completed the Fall 06 term:

Course Completion

- 29 completed 4 courses
- 12 completed 3 courses
- 3 completed 2 courses

Fall GPA

- 8 had a GPA of 0-1.0
- 12 had a GPA of 1.01 - 2.00
- 14 had a GPA of 2.01 - 3.00
- 9 had a GPA of 3.01- 4.00

SUBGROUP ANALYSIS OF LOWEST PERFORMERS

Further analysis of those students with the lowest GPAs, below 1.5, revealed no predictable pattern of either background characteristics, or academic performance profile while at St. Mary's. For example, of the 16 students in this group, 7 were male and 9 were female. Their high school GPAs ranged from 2.56 to 3.69 and their SAT scores ranged from 820-1300. Seven of these students are first-generation students. Seven are from out of the larger Bay Area,

one from out of state. Six attended Catholic high schools, while 10 attended public schools. Seven of this group are White, 6 are Latino/a, 1 Asian-Pacific Islander, 1 Native American, and 1 "other." In terms of academic performance at SMC, some failed all of their courses, while several had 1 or more courses from which they had withdrawn during the term. A few of the students had mixed performance, with Bs in two courses and Fs in two others.

EXIT SURVEY INFORMATION

Responses to an exit survey, completed by 22 of the non-returning students, showed that the most common "major reason" cited for not returning was the high tuition (9 responses), inadequate financial aid (5) or grades/academic probation status (5), and wanting to move (5). Unhappiness with their social life was also cited by 4 students as a major reason. The frequency of responses related to the size of the school, the cost of living, and feeling alone decreased among this group of respondents compared to earlier groups. In examining responses to this survey for the last few semesters (n=83), the most common reasons chosen for not returning were tuition (n=31), wanting to move to a different place (n=29), the social life at SMC (n=20), and the size (n=17).

Further analysis of student attrition and retention for the incoming Fall 08 class will be conducted after the completion of the Spring 09 term.

Please feel free to contact me with any question or comments regarding the data – x4754 or mmccall@stmarys-ca.edu