

Memorandum

TO: Members of the Saint Mary's College Community

FROM: Mary McCall, Interim Director of Institutional Research

DATE: April 13, 2009

SUBJECT: UG Student Academic Probation Report for Fall, 2008

In a continued effort to disseminate and utilize campus data to inform our practice, information regarding UG students on academic probation follows.

The probation process is such that initial grades are filed at the end of the fall semester and students are informed that they are either: a) removed from probation from the previous term; b) on academic probation for the current fall term (a cumulative or major grade point average below 2.0); c) subject to disqualification (if their current GPA is below 1.5); d) on special academic probation (more than one semester on academic probation, but with conditions for continued enrollment); or f) disqualified (not allowed to continue under the current circumstances). Students may then file appeals to the Academic Review Board, which then considers each appeal and renders a final decision. This report presents the data from the final list of students on probation, after appeals have been considered.

Overall, 10.3% of the SMC UG population (260/2514) was on probationary standing (term, major or cumulative GPA below 2.0) as of the end of the Fall 2008 Term. This compares with the 10-year average of 6.2%. . For first-time, full-time freshmen, the percentage on probation has ranged from a low of 7.4 % (46/618) in Fall 2000 to a high of 15.4% (94/610) for Fall 2006. For Fall 2008, 14.81% (100/675) of New First Year Students (NFYS) are currently on probationary standing (see Chart 1 and Table 1), which is a slight increase from last fall's rate of 13.1%.

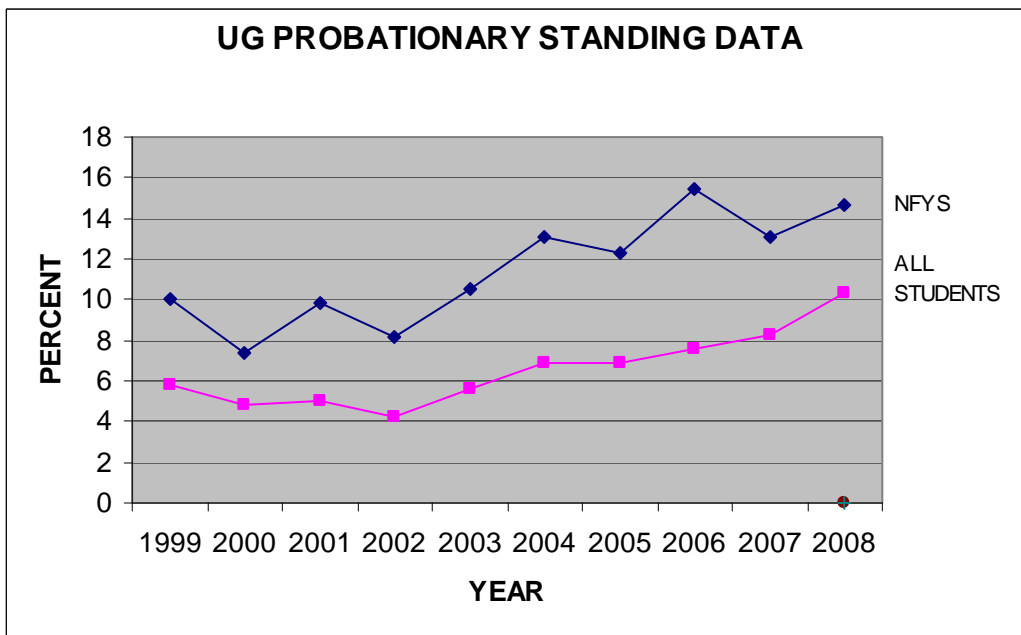


Chart 1. TUG Students on Probationary Standing, Fall 99 to Fall 08

**Table 1 TRADITIONAL UNDERGRADUATE PROBATIONARY STANDING DATA
SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE OF CALIFORNIA
END OF FALL TERM
1999 – 2008**

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Total New TUG Freshmen	620	618	580	645	562	611	675	610	603	675
New TUG Freshmen on Probationary Standing	62	46	57	53	59	80	83	94	79	100
% of Freshmen on Probationary Standing	10.0%	7.4%	9.8%	8.2%	10.5%	13.1%	12.3%	15.4%	13.1%	14.8%
Total Fall TUG Enrollment	2330	2492	2497	2572	2494	2440	2525	2489	2504	2514
Undergraduates on Probationary Standing	136	120	126	108	139	169	173	190	207	260
% of Undergraduates On Probationary Standing	5.8%	4.8%	5.0%	4.2%	5.6%	6.9%	6.9%	7.6%	8.3%	10.3%

First Term Performance

Table 2 provides data on the breakdown of term GPAs for students on probationary standing. Overall, the Fall 2008 data represent an increase in the number of students at the lowest GPA levels (0.00 to 1.50).

Term GPA	# of NFYS Fall 2007 N = 79	# of NFYS Fall 2008 N=100
0.00	2	8
0.01-0.99	11	9
1.0-1.25	7	14
1.26-1.50	10	16
1.51-1.75	22	13
1.76-1.99	27	25
# Subject to Disqualification	26	36*

*This number reflects a total of 56 students, minus 7 of whom were disqualified from SMC, 12 who withdrew and 1 who took a leave.

Table 2. NFYS grade point ranges.

Background Characteristics

Overall, the NFYS class had an average High School GPA of 3.33 and an average SAT score of 1081. With respect to those students on academic probation, both male and female NFYS had lower average incoming high school GPAs and total SAT scores compared to the overall NFYS. (Table 3)

Table 3. Fall 2008 New TUG Freshman on Probationary Standing, by Gender and High School GPA and mean SAT scores.*

Gender	% of NFYS on Probation	% of Total NFYS	Mean Fall 2008 SMC GPA of NFYS on Probation	Mean High School GPA of NFYS on Probation	Mean SAT Scores of NFYS on Probation
Female	46.2%	65.2%	1.35*	2.89	1009**
Male	53.8%	34.8%	1.30	2.81	968

* International and “non-reporting” students excluded

**not a statistically significant difference between females and males

More specifically, the data reveals that:

- Male students make up a substantially higher percentage of students on probation (53.8%) as compared to their NFYS population (34.8%).
- Incoming characteristics (average high school GPA and average total SAT scores) are relatively higher for female NFYS on probation compared to males, though this was not statistically significant.
- The term GPA of NFYS on probation was lower for both males and females (0.19 and 0.12, respectively) than the same GPAs for the freshmen on probation in Fall, 2007.
- There appears to be no common “profile” for students who may end up on academic probation, particularly with respect to incoming student characteristics such as high school GPA and SAT scores. *NFYS on academic probation had average high school GPAs which ranged from 3.97 to 2.42 for Females and 3.73 to 2.19 for Males. Total SAT Scores ranged from 800 to 1110 for Females and 700 to 1370 for Males.*

Ethnic Groups and Probationary Standing

The Institutional Research Office examined differences among groups of students to see if variations in rates of probation standing exist. Table 4 below presents the percentages of ethnic groups of students and their respective rates of academic probation.

Student Reported Ethnicity	Total Number of NFYS	% of NFYS Population	Total Number of NFYS on Probation	% of NFYS on probation	% of Total Ethnic Group on Probation

African American	43	6.4	9	9.1	20.9
Native American	11	1.6	1	<.01	<1
Asian-American/Pacific Islander	81	12	14	14.1	17.3
Latino	158	23.4	30	30.3	19.0
White	330	48.9	37	37.4	11.2
Other	52	7.7	8	8.1	15.4
Total	675	100%	99	100%	14.8

**** “Other” category includes International and “non-reporting” students.

Table 4 Fall 2008 NFYS on Probationary Standing, Comparative Data, by Ethnic Group****

- Though African-American students represent 6.4% of the NFYS class, they represent 9.1% of students on probation. Proportionately, though, fewer of the total number of African-American students were on probation this year (21%) compared to last year’s freshmen class (24%).
- White students make up over 1/3 of those on probation but are almost ½ of the freshman population. Compared to last year, when 56% of White students were on probation, this is somewhat of an improvement for this group.
- AAPI students are 12% of the incoming class but 14% are on probation. This is a major increase from last year’s class, where only 5% of the students were on probation at the end of fall term.
- Latino students are 23% of the freshmen class but 30% of those on probation. This is a higher rate than last year, as well, increasing from 27% of first-year students on probation in fall, 2007, compared to 30% this fall.

These data indicate that students of color continue to be overrepresented in the ranks of those on academic probation and point to the need for further analysis of factors that may be contributing to this situation. Both academic factors such as readiness and study skills should be investigated, as well as exacerbating non-academic factors such as financial stress, working hours, family issues and campus climate characteristics. Previous research has shown that these other factors also have a large impact on academic performance of students of color.

STUDENTS OTHER THAN NFYS ON PROBATION

Breaking out the students, other than New First Year Students, on probation, revealed the data below. There were 16 seniors on probation, 51 juniors, 62 sophomores, and 31 freshmen (not first-time freshmen, so they may have completed less than 9 credits their previous year or are a transfer at the freshmen level). In this group of students, fourteen percent (23/160) had below a 2.0 grade point in their cumulative grade point average, while 41% (66/160) were below 2.0 for their term GPA. Fifty-one percent (82/160) were on probation due to their grade point average in their major. Table 5 below outlines the percent of students in different majors who were on probation.

	SOPHS	JRS	SRS
BIOLOGY (n=45)	2%	4%	4%
BIOCHEM (n)	<1%	<1%	0
EES (n=2)	0	50%	0
HLTHSCI (n=54)	6%	6%	2%
PSYCH (n=162)	7%	3%	2%

3+2 (n=12)	17%	0	0
SEBA			
	SOPHS	JRS	SRS
ACCTG (n=77)	3%	6%	0
BUSAD (n=316)	3%	4%	1%
SOLA			
	SOPHS	JRS	SRS
COMM (n=163)	5%	<1%	<1%
ENG (n=84)	<1%	1%	0
KINES (n=90)	7%	4%	3%
POLITICS (n=66)	5%	0	0
SPANISH (n=31)	6%	0	0
SOC (n=59)	0	5%	0
L&CS (n=99)	0	1%	0
HISTORY (n=41)	0	0	2%
UNDECIDED (n=886)	2%		

Table 5. Percent of students on probation by major.

Mid-term Grades

Investigating the status of midterm grades among the students who ended up on academic probation revealed the following: of the midterm grades that were recorded (and many were not recorded), 8 students had 1 course with a midterm grade of D or F; 16 had 2 such midterm grades; 9 had 3 Ds or Fs and 3 students had 4 grades of D or F at midterm time. This indicates that it is critical for faculty to take seriously the need to provide accurate and timely midterm grades and for both advisors and faculty to intervene at that point, rather than waiting until the end of the term.

An examination of the combination of courses that students on probation have taken revealed no clear pattern of the types of courses that students take and may struggle with. For example, many freshmen who are prospective science majors take Chemistry 008 and Calculus (Math 013) together and some have suggested that this combination is more likely to lead to lower grades and potentially academic probation status at the end of the term. However, an analysis of the percentage of students who took *both* courses in fall semester and did not do well in one or both of them was no different than the percentage of students who did not do well in *one or the other* of those courses, when only taking one of them. It may be that, *for some particular students*, this combination of courses overtaxes them in the first term of college, but there is no clear pattern that in and of themselves, that combination of courses leads to academic probation.

Disciplinary Violations

Upon examination of the disciplinary records of those students on academic probation, only 10 of the 100 first-time freshmen students were in violation, and most of those were alcohol violations, which is slightly lower than the overall rates of alcohol violations among the general freshman cohort. (16%). Therefore, there does not seem to be any clear relationship between discipline issues and academic probation. Out of

the remaining 160 students on academic probation, 14 of them also had disciplinary violations at some point during their time at Saint Mary's.

Further analysis will be conducted in order to determine what other factors contribute to the likelihood of First-Year students ending up on academic probation.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call (x4754) or email (mmccall@stmarys-ca.edu).