

## Topic in Brief

### Continuing the Conversation: The Profile of New UC Berkeley Undergraduates on Academic Probation

July, 2013

This briefing note updates and builds on a previous probation rate paper, focusing on the demographic and academic correlates of academic probation. New analyses of Pre-UC Berkeley factors are also shared.

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overall, UC Berkeley students perform well academically and have low probation rates. Averaging a first-year grade point average of 3.3 and graduating at record-high rates of over 90%, this success is seen for both freshmen and transfer entrants. However, despite these overall positive trends a subset of students are placed on academic probation early on in their academic studies at UC Berkeley. While the numbers represent only a fraction of new students (~5%), among those entering in Fall 2011, 200 freshmen and 160 transfers were placed on probation as a result of either their first- or second- term cumulative UC Berkeley grade point average (GPA).

This brief, a continuation of a previous report and campus dialogue, highlights the demographic and academic correlates associated with new UC Berkeley students being placed on academic probation, followed by the relationship between early academic probation and graduation rates. Common across both freshmen and transfer entrants, we find males being more likely than females to be placed on academic probation and students in the Colleges of Chemistry and Engineering are more likely than students in other Colleges to be placed on 1<sup>st</sup> year probation.

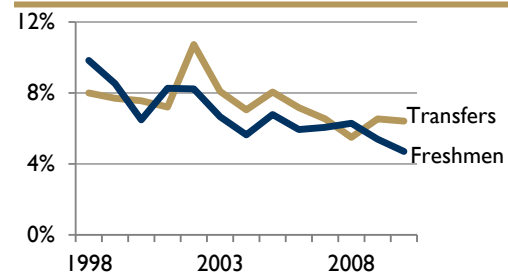
For transfer students, we find that they have an overall probation rate that is higher AVC-CFO

than freshmen, and that international transfer students have a significantly higher probation rate than their domestic transfer counterparts—with students from South Korea having a notably high probation rate. For freshmen in particular, results show that prior GPA (i.e., high school GPA) is a major factor associated with 1<sup>st</sup> year probation. We also find a relationship between first generation college and probation for freshmen, but not transfers.

#### HISTORICAL PROBATION DATA

The chart below depicts the decline in probation rates among new students entering UC Berkeley in a given Fall term.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Year Probation Rates: New Freshmen and Transfers, 1998-2011 Fall Cohorts



Source: Cal Answers (Undergraduate Cohorts)

For the Fall 1998 group of new freshmen, we see that about 10% were flagged for 1<sup>st</sup>-year academic probation, meaning that they were placed on probation as a result of either their 1<sup>st</sup>- or 2<sup>nd</sup>- term cumulative UC Berkeley GPA. New transfers entering

in that same term in 1998 had a comparable probation rate of about 8%. Despite the noticeable peaks and valleys, probation rates are trending downward, particularly for freshmen.

**1<sup>st</sup> Year Probation Rates at UC Berkeley Have Steadily Declined**

**BY ACADEMIC TERM**

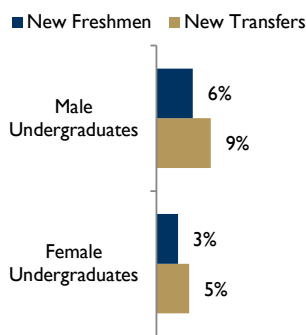
The first-year probation rates for new Fall 2011 entrants to Berkeley was 4% for freshmen and 7% for transfers. Among freshmen on probation:

- 67% were on probation both terms
- 3% for the Fall only
- 31% for spring only

The by-term breakdown was similar for transfers – 64% both terms, 5% Fall only, 31% Spring only.

**DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

At 6% for freshmen and 9% for transfers, male undergraduates at Berkeley have higher 1<sup>st</sup> year probation rates than female undergraduates, whose rates are 3% (freshmen) and 5% (transfers), respectively (Fall 2011 new cohort).



Source: Cal Answers (Undergraduate Cohorts)

Noticeable demographic differences also include statistically significant higher 1<sup>st</sup> year probation rates for underrepresented minority (UREM) freshmen relative to their White and Asian freshman peers. Also, we see significantly higher rates for Asian transfer students relative to Asian freshmen, and for transfer CA residents relative to freshmen CA residents.

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Below we see in detail how additional demographic-specific 1<sup>st</sup> year probation rates compare to overall rates.

**1<sup>st</sup> Year Probation Rates by Group, Fall 2011 Cohort**

	New Freshmen	New Transfers
African American	10%	10%
Chicano/Latino	6%	4%
Asian	4%	7%
White	3%	4%
CA Resident	4%	6%
Out-of-state (domestic)	6%	5%
International	3%	12%

Source: Cal Answers (Undergraduate Cohorts; Students Registered). Note: the above rate for each respective group excludes student athletes whose 1<sup>st</sup> year rate was 11%

When considering how freshmen compare to one another across residency, we find little difference; the 1<sup>st</sup> year freshmen probation rate is 4% for CA residents, 6% for out-of-state domestic students and 3% for international students.

**Males, International Transfer Students and Underrepresented Minority (UREM) Freshmen Have Higher Probation Rates than Peers**

International transfers, however, have a significantly higher probation rate (12%) than their domestic counterparts. With students from China and South Korea accounting for about 70% of international transfer students, we looked at probation rates by country of origin and found significant differences. Fall 2011 entering transfer students from South Korea had a 1<sup>st</sup> year probation rate of 18%, compared to a rate of 8% for transfer students from China (includes Hong Kong & Macau). Among international freshmen, South Korean students also have higher probation rates than Chinese students (4% versus 2%).

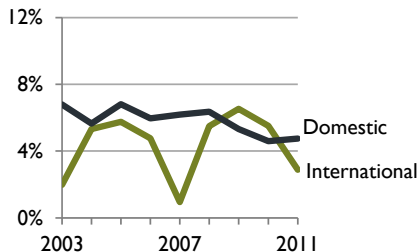
To get a better sense of the historical trends in probation by residency,

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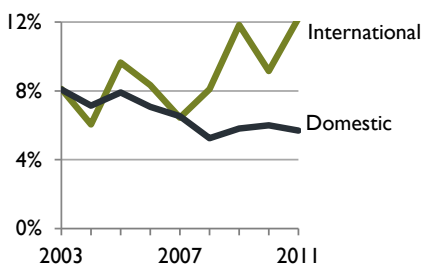
irrespective of country of origin, the two charts below show rates for international and domestic students (CA Residents and out-of-state domestic combined):

**1<sup>st</sup> Year Probation Rates by Residency & Entry Status, 2003-2011 Fall Cohorts**

**New Freshmen**



**New Transfers**



Source: Cal Answers (Undergraduate Cohorts)

Domestic freshmen and domestic transfers have had a steady decline in their 1<sup>st</sup> year probation rate from 2003 to 2011. For the same time frame, however, probation rates for international transfer students show an irregular pattern that is suggestive of an upward trend, to the 12% rate that we see today. This compares to a similarly irregular pattern seen in the chart for international freshmen. Importantly, the pattern for international students in the top chart can be interpreted as no significant change when accounting also for the changes in the international freshmen population during those years (increasing from about 100 students in the fall 2003 cohort to about 600 in the 2011 cohort).

**PROBATION RATES BY COLLEGE**

We also find differences across the six undergraduate colleges. Looking specifically at the fall 2011 entry cohort, rates were highest for freshmen and transfers alike in the Colleges of Chemistry and Engineering.

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**1<sup>st</sup> Year Probation Rates by College, Fall 2011 Cohort**

	New Freshmen	New Transfers
College of Chemistry	7%	19%
College of Engineering	6%	15%
College of Environ. Design	5%	3%
College of Letters & Science	4%	6%
College of Natural Resources	3%	6%
Haas School of Business	n/a	2%

Source: Cal Answers (Undergraduate Cohorts)

However, transfer entrants in these two colleges, as well as transfers in Letters & Science, had significantly higher probation rates than their freshmen peers in the same college.

Note, however, that the numbers of new transfer students in certain colleges are relatively small; the College of Chemistry, for example, had about 55 new transfers in fall 2011. Thus, the 19% probation rate above corresponds to just ten new transfer students placed on 1<sup>st</sup> year academic probation in the College of Chemistry.

**Transfer Students Have Significantly Higher 1<sup>st</sup> Year Probation Rates than Freshmen**

**ADDITIONAL PRE-UCB FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH PROBATION**

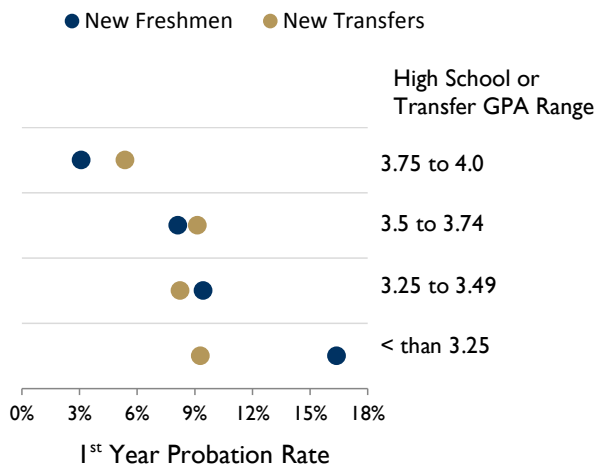
Focusing again on fall 2011 entering transfers and freshmen, we used a combination of admitted applicant data and registered students' data to expand the scope of analysis and better understand additional factors associated with probation.

**High School or Transfer GPA**

Prior GPA (high school or transfer GPA) is associated with the likelihood of 1<sup>st</sup> year probation; students with higher pre-UC Berkeley GPAs have a lower likelihood of being on probation. As shown below, the probation rate for new freshmen with an unweighted high school GPA of 3.75 to 4.0

is 3%, which is similar to the overall freshmen probation rate of 4%. However, for freshmen with a slightly lower GPA range of 3.5 to 3.74 we see an 8% rate. Finally, for new fall 2011 freshmen whose pre-UC Berkeley GPA was less than a 3.25, the probation rate was 16%.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Year Probation Rates by Pre-UC Berkeley GPA and Entry Status



Source: Undergraduate Admissions

A relationship between prior GPA and probation is also seen for transfer students; of new fall 2011 transfers with a transfer GPA of 3.75 or above, 5% were placed on probation, with the rate at or above 9% for students with lower transfer GPAs.

Another way to consider this is by comparing academic indicator means for students on probation versus students who did not end up on probation. For freshmen there is a significant statistical difference (based on t-tests) for the differences in GPA and test scores. The difference for transfer students was not statistically significant (based on t-tests).

Taken together, the t-test analysis and the frequency of results as charted above indicate that pre-UC Berkeley GPA predicts whether or not a new freshmen will be placed on academic probation in their first-year, but for transfer students, their prior GPA is not as predictive.

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### Incoming Academic Indicators by Entry Status and 1<sup>st</sup>-year Probation Status

	On Probation	Not on Probation
New Freshmen		
GPA (unweighted)	3.67	3.84
GPA (weighted, uncapped)	4.08	4.29
SAT Composite	1906	2033
ACT Composite	28	30
New Transfers		
Transfer GPA	3.70	3.75

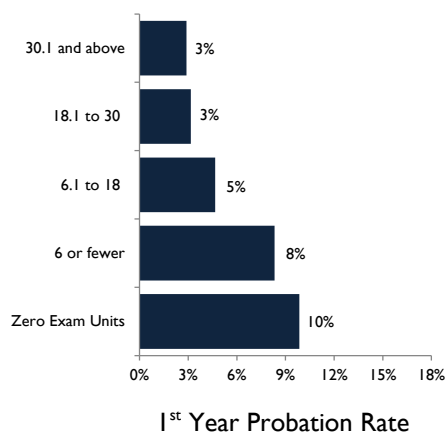
Source: Undergraduate Admissions

### New Students' Prior GPA is a Major Factor Associated with 1<sup>st</sup> Year Probation Once at UC Berkeley

#### Number of Exam Units

Another academic-input factor found to be associated with probation status is the number of Advanced Placement/Exam units that students completed while in high school. Similar to prior GPA, there is a negative relationship between academic probation and the number of exam units students enter with, such that as exam units increase the likelihood of being placed on 1<sup>st</sup> year probation decreases. However, compared to prior GPA, exam units was less of a contributing factor/correlate.

1<sup>st</sup>-Year Probation rate (New Fall 2011 Freshmen), by Range of Exam Units Completed Prior to Entry



Source: Cal Answers (Students Registered; EOT snapshot)

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### Parent Income and Education

Finally, we examined the effect of parent education and income. For freshmen there is a clear relationship between both parent income and education and probation rates, not as much for transfers.

### Median Parent Income by Entry Status and 1<sup>st</sup>-year Probation Status

Median Parent Income	On Probation	Not on Probation
New Freshmen	\$68,000	\$100,000
New Transfers	\$52,809	\$70,492

Source: Undergraduate Admissions

### Median Parent Income by Entry Status and 1<sup>st</sup>-year Probation Status

Probation rates by level of Parent Education	New Freshmen	New Transfers
No High School	9.6%	11.2%
Some High School	7.9%	10.3%
HS Diploma	6.2%	7.2%
Some College	5.7%	5.1%
2-year Degree	5.1%	6.9%
4-year Degree	4.8%	5.7%
Post-baccalaureate deg.	3.3%	8.0%
Missing	7.2%	1.3%
1 <sup>st</sup> gen College Going	7.4%	8.4%
1 <sup>st</sup> gen Bachelor earning	6.7%	7.3%

Source: Undergraduate Admissions

Probation rates for freshmen decline as the level of parent education rises. For transfers there is no obvious relationship. We think this may be because transfers are a more heterogeneous group than freshmen – they are older and in general have life experiences that may mitigate somewhat the positive or adverse effects associated with parent demographics.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF ACADEMIC PROBATION: THE GRADUATION RATES OF STUDENTS BASED ON 1<sup>ST</sup> YEAR PROBATION STATUS

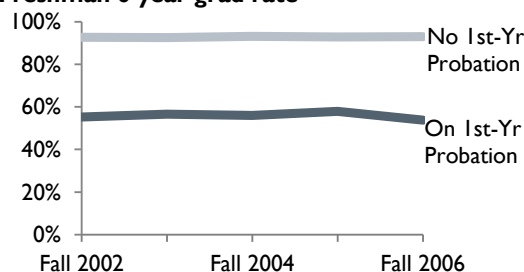
Six-year graduation rates for entering freshmen and four-year graduation rates for transfers are equally high, at around 91%. AVC-CFO

However, when looking at graduation rates based on students' early experience with being on academic probation at Berkeley, we find much lower rates for the students placed on probation.

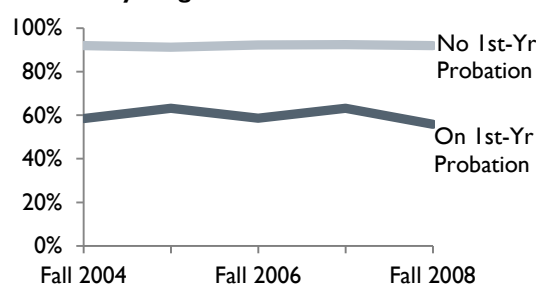
The charts below display graduation rates by probation and entry statuses. For freshmen, 6-year rates are shown, whereas 4-year rates are highlighted for transfers—both corresponding to the federal reporting metrics for assessing persistence to degree by entry as a new freshmen or transfer.

### Graduation Rates by Probation Status

#### Freshman 6-year grad rate



#### Transfer 4-year grad rate



Source: Cal Answers (Undergraduate Cohorts)

We see from the freshman chart that the 6-year graduation rate for students on 1<sup>st</sup> year probation is low, at less than 60%. This is equally true for new freshmen who entered in Fall 2002 as it is for freshmen who entered in Fall 2006—and all the years in between. This lower 6-year graduation rate of about 60% compares to a rate of over 90% for the freshmen entrants who did not have early experiences with being on academic probation. The transfer student chart above looks almost identical to the freshman chart, highlighting that there is a phenomena of substantially lower graduation rates for students placed on 1<sup>st</sup> year probation, irrespective of entry status.

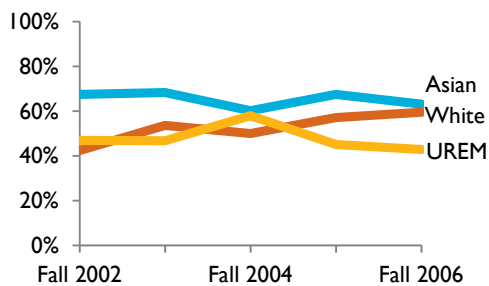
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Indeed, as shown in the chart, 92% of the Fall 2008 entering cohort of transfer students who were not on 1<sup>st</sup> year probation graduated by Spring 2012—compared to only 56% of their Fall 2008 cohort peers who were on probation early on in their Berkeley studies.

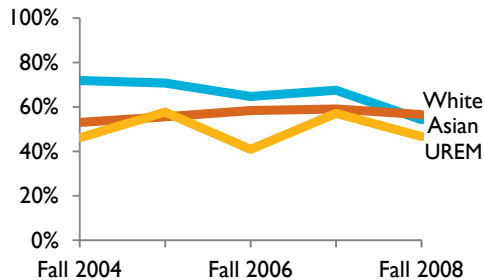
This phenomenon of across the board lower graduation rates is also found when we look at students by race/ethnicity.

**Graduation Rates of Students Placed on 1<sup>st</sup> Year Probation, by Race/Ethnicity**

**Freshman 6-yr grad rate (On 1<sup>st</sup>-Yr Probation)**



**Transfer 4-yr grad rate (On 1<sup>st</sup>-Yr Probation)**



Source: Cal Answers (Undergraduate Cohorts)

Not shown above, when we examine graduation rates over a longer time period for all students who were on 1<sup>st</sup>-year probation, we find that an additional 7% of freshmen graduate after the standard graduation rate window, as do an additional 8 to 9% of transfers—a positive finding.

**An additional 7 to 9% of students on 1<sup>st</sup>-yr probation eventually graduate—however it is outside of the standard graduation rate reporting timeframe**

Further, these figures are much higher than what we find for students not on 1<sup>st</sup> year probation (< 2% freshmen; < 3% transfers).

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Photo Courtesy of the University of California

A longer time to degree for students on probation likely reflects the need for these students to repeat courses for which they did not receive a passing grade—courses that may be prerequisites for a course sequence or for a desired major. As the curriculum data is migrated into Cal Answers, UC Berkeley’s data warehouse, it will be easier to conduct analysis to better understand this prolonged persistence and the challenges that arise after being placed on probation.

Taken together, one of the goals of this analysis is to expand what is known about students on 1<sup>st</sup> year probation so as to help inform the larger campus conversations around targeted student services, and supporting all students as they work toward completing their Berkeley degree.

For more student statistics and briefing notes on the student experience and [academic probation](#), visit the Analyses & Reports section of the OPA website below.

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