

# Memo

**To:** Beth Merritt Miller, Assistant Vice Provost for University Advising  
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**From:** Matt Carlton, Statistics Department

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**Subject:** Freshman Success Program — AY 2017-18

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## I. Executive Summary

This memo provides a statistical summary of the academic performance of first-time freshmen that entered Cal Poly in Fall 2017 and fell on academic probation at the end of either Fall 2017 or Winter 2018. We summarize term and cumulative GPAs, academic standing, and retention, both university-wide and by college.

At the end of Fall 2017, 327 first-time freshmen fell on AP, of whom 309 (94.5%) participated in FSP. These participants had a similar average winter cumulative GPA to previous years' participants (see Table 1). However, just 44.0% of them got off AP by the end of Winter 2018 and just 49.5% by the end of Spring 2018; in previous years, the comparable values were around 52-53% and 59-61%, respectively. On the other hand, 81.6% of these freshmen were retained into Fall 2018, a higher percentage than in any previous cohort.

An additional 343 freshmen fell on AP for the first time at the end of Winter 2018, of whom 326 (95.0%) participated in FSP. Their average spring cumulative GPA was similar to previous years (see Table 2), although the percent of students off AP at the end of Spring 2018 (64.1%) was lower than in previous years. Again, paradoxically, this group of freshmen had the highest fall quarter retention rate (91.1%) of any FSP participant cohort ever.

## II. GPA, AP, and Retention Results Across Several Years

Table 1 summarizes GPA, AP status, and retention status for winter FSP participants. While a lower percent of participants got off AP than in previous years, a higher percentage than ever were retained into their second year at Cal Poly.

	Winter Quarter FSP			
	2018	2016	2015	2014
<i>Summary statistics</i>				
Mean cum GPA at end of winter quarter	2.013	2.075	2.003	2.049
Percent off AP at end of winter quarter	44.0%	52.1%	53.5%	53.5%
Mean cum GPA at end of spring quarter	2.059	2.120	2.121	2.087
Percent off AP at end of spring quarter	49.5%	59.2%	61.1%	61.8%
Percent enrolled next fall quarter	81.6%	78.2%	71.8%	70.1%

**Table 1** – Summary statistics for Winter 2018 FSP participants, as well as comparison data from three previous years (2016, 2016, 2014).

Table 2 summarizes GPA, AP status, and retention status for winter FSP participants. Comparing to previous years, we again see a similar next-term GPA, lower percent of students off AP after one quarter, but a higher percent re-enrolled for fall.

It is critical to remember that, due to an error computing GPAs at the end of Winter 2016, no students participated in the First-year Success Program in Spring 2016. The corresponding column in Table 2, noted in red, shows results for the students who *would have* participated based on their academic status. In particular, notice that their statistics are not very different from those of other years — this suggests that either the FSP intervention is not having a differential impact, or the colleges’ efforts to compensate for a lack of FSP were sufficient to produce the same, positive effect.

	Spring Quarter FSP			
	2018	2016	2015	2014
<i>Summary statistics</i>				
Mean cum GPA at end of spring quarter	2.241	2.253	2.236	2.251
Percent off AP at end of spring quarter	64.1%	71.8%	69.7%	80.2%
Percent enrolled next fall quarter	91.1%	88.9%	86.1%	86.8%

**Table 2** – Summary statistics for Spring 2018 FSP participants, as well as comparison data for three previous years (2016, 2015, 2014). NB: Students in the 2016 column, marked in red, did not participate in FSP due to a glitch in computing Winter 2016 term GPAs.

### III. GPA Trends for 2017-18 FSP Students, By College

Table 3 summarizes the mean term GPA across the first year for the Winter 2018 participants, separated by college. In previous years, all colleges saw a substantial term GPA increase from fall to winter; the same trend appears in the most recent data. In previous years, almost all colleges saw a decrease in mean term GPA from winter to spring. But in the most recent year, CLA students increased their mean term GPA substantially from winter to spring (2.061 to 2.372); three colleges (CAFES, OCOB, CSM) saw modest increases, and just two (CAED, CENG) saw modest decreases in the mean term GPA of their FSP students.

<i>Mean term GPA</i>	Winter 2018 FSP Participants		
	Fall 2017	Winter 2018	Spring 2018
CAFES	1.512	1.969	2.046
CAED	1.581	2.094	2.075
OCOB	1.596	2.135	2.242
CLA	1.505	2.061	2.372
CENG	1.580	2.186	2.017
CSM	1.496	1.978	2.085

**Table 3** – Mean term GPA by college and quarter for Winter 2018 FSP participants.

Table 4 summarizes academic probation and retention information for the Winter 2018 FSP participants, separated by college.

	Number of Students	CP Cum GPA $\geq$ 2.0 Winter 2018	Retained to Spring 2018	CP Cum GPA $\geq$ 2.0 Spring 2018	Retained to Fall 2018
CAFES	81	37%	93%	52%	75%
CAED	31	52%	90%	58%	84%
OCOB	55	51%	98%	62%	84%
CLA	27	41%	85%	67%	85%
CENG	46	59%	89%	59%	89%
CSM	67	43%	97%	52%	82%

**Table 4** – Academic probation and retention statistics for Winter 2018 FSP participants.

Table 5 summarizes the mean term GPA across the first year for the Spring 2018 FSP participants, separated by college. As in previous years, all six colleges saw dramatic increases in term GPA from winter into spring.

<i>Mean term GPA</i>	<b>Spring 2018 FSP Participants</b>		
	Fall 2017	Winter 2018	Spring 2018
CAFES	2.528	1.604	2.206
CAED	2.572	1.670	2.220
OCOB	2.513	1.636	2.305
CLA	2.695	1.431	2.133
CENG	2.727	1.519	2.179
CSM	2.466	1.478	2.313

**Table 5** – Mean term GPA by college and quarter for Spring 2018 FSP participants.

Table 6 summarizes academic probation and retention information for the Spring 2018 FSP participants, separated by college.

	Number of Students	CP Cum GPA $\geq$ 2.0 Spring 2018	Retained to Fall 2018
CAFES	59	61%	86%
CAED	29	76%	93%
OCOB	36	69%	94%
CLA	30	53%	97%
CENG	121	64%	92%
CSM	50	68%	90%

**Table 6** – Academic probation and retention statistics for Spring 2018 FSP participants.