

# The Importance of Timing of Early Alerts

In this report, we examine how the timing of early alerts sent from CSUN's early alert system (through EAB Navigate), is associated with academic performance in select General Education courses.

## Who Received Early Alerts?

In Spring 2018, CSUN's Office of Undergraduate Studies launched faculty progress reports using EAB Navigate. The program targeted all student athletes and all students enrolled in pre-General Education level mathematics courses. In addition, the effort included students in select lower-division General Education courses with high D/F/WU rates with high enrollment by first-year freshmen. Among non-student athletes, participating courses include:



**ANTH 151:**  
Introduction to  
Biological Anthropology



**ANTH 232:**  
Expressive Culture



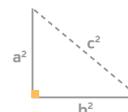
**CHEM 100:**  
Principles of Chemistry



**ECON 160:**  
Principles of  
Macroeconomics



**HIST 161:**  
Survey of the History  
of Latin America



**MATH 196S/QR**  
Math Prep -  
STEM/Quantitative Reasoning



**MATH 102:**  
Pre-Calculus I



**POLS 155:**  
American Political Institutions



**PHIL 150:**  
Introduction to  
Philosophical Thought

## How Do Early Alerts Work?

During the semester, EAB is used to email instructors of the targeted courses two or three times, requesting their feedback on students' academic progress. Faculty then issue an alert for any student at-risk of earning a grade of less than C- or NC with of the following reasons:

- **classroom participation concerns**
- **excessive absences**
- **excessive tardiness**
- **low or failing exam score(s)**
- **missing homework**
- **other**

After a faculty member issues an alert, a case is generated and assigned to the appropriate academic advisor. Within 5 business days, an advisor contacts the student via email, informing them that an alert has been issued. Advisors make strong efforts to meet with them, during which they have robust conversations with students about their challenges, needs, and goals, in addition to pointing them toward resources.

## Data

To examine the association between alerts sent through CSUN's early alert system and academic performance, we examined data that identified students who received at least one EAB alert during the Fall 2018 or Spring 2019<sup>1</sup> semesters. We then merged all early alert data with student demographic data from the Office of Institutional Research.

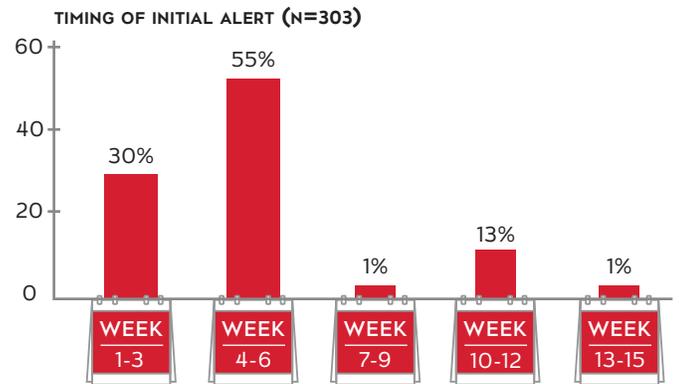
<sup>1</sup> Alert count was low in Spring 2018. After excluding non-letter-graded courses, athletes, and students with incomplete demographic information from our dataset, no alert from Spring 2018 was included in this analysis.

This report focuses on the data for non-athletes, and for courses in which letter grades (i.e., not CR/NC) are given. In all, 302 students received early alerts, with one student having received an alert from the same class taken in two semesters. About 37% of these students received multiple alerts within a single course in a particular semester.

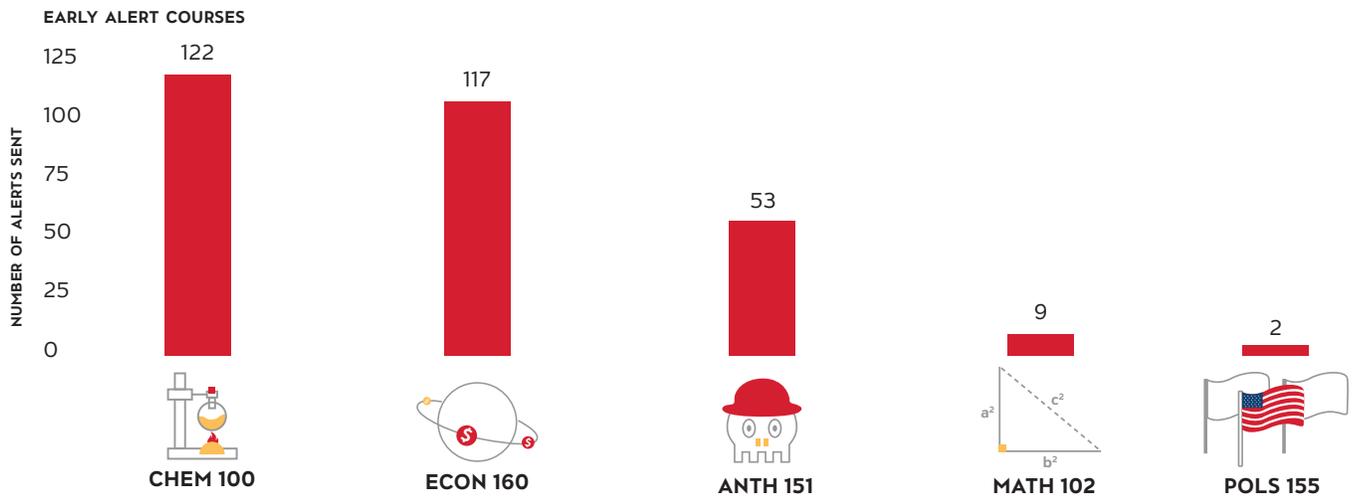
## Initial Alerts

To measure timing, we recorded the time in the semester that an at-risk student received an alert. We focused on the first alert since it likely draws the most attention to an issue or set of issues affecting class performance and because not every student received multiple alerts within a class.

Students received an initial alert either between weeks 1-3, weeks 4-6, weeks 7-9, weeks 10-12, or weeks 12-15. Most initial alerts were sent during weeks 4-6, followed by weeks 1-3.

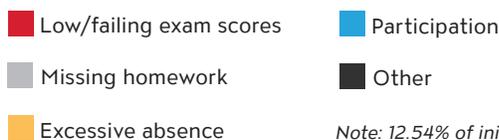


Students most commonly received alerts from CHEM-100 and ECON-160, followed by ANTH-151, POLS-155 and MATH-102.

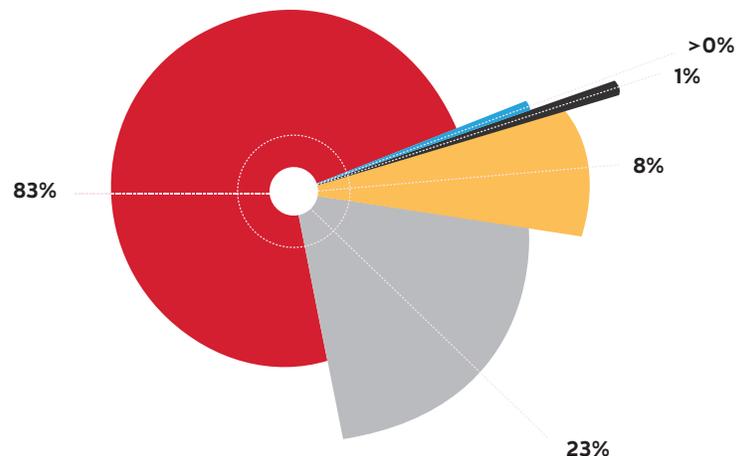


## REASON(S) FOR INITIAL EARLY ALERTS

The most common reason for initial alerts was low/failing exam scores.



Note: 12.54% of initial alerts were issued for multiple reasons.



## Are Early Alerts Associated with Academic Performance?

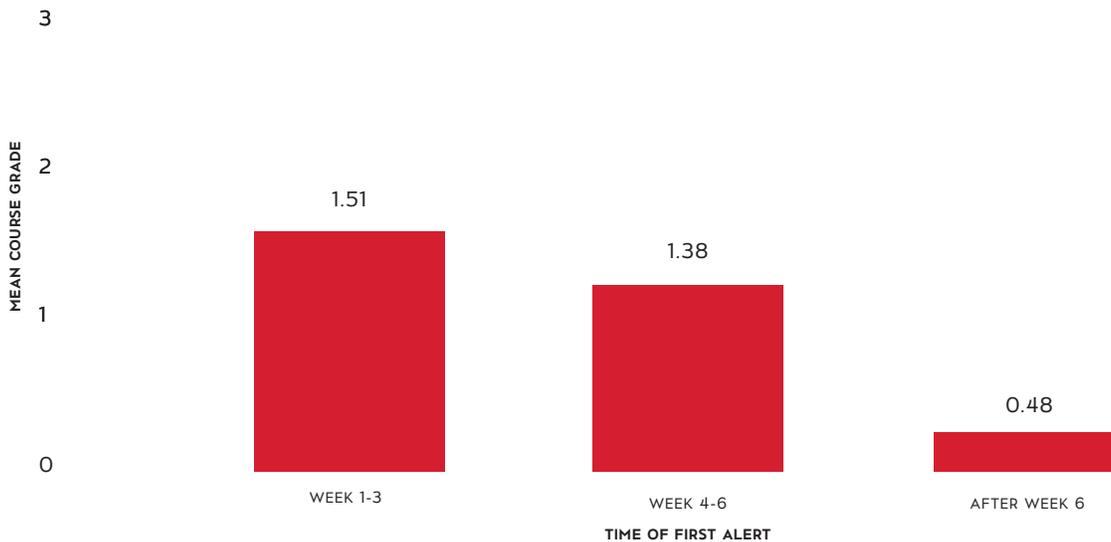
Next, we examined the association between initial early alerts and course grades while also accounting for key student demographic characteristics (gender, race/ethnicity, first generation college status, Pell status, academic cohort, semester) and additional alert information (multiple alerts, alert reasons).

Due to the small number of initial alerts after week 6, we compared students who received an alert between weeks 1-3, weeks 4-6, and 6 weeks or more.

### Results

In comparison to initial alerts issued after week 6, initial alerts issued within the first 6 weeks of the semester were significantly associated with higher course grades (contrasts between outcomes for week 1-3 and after week 6 and between week 4-6 and after week 6 were both statistically significant,  $p < .001$ ).

AVERAGE COURSE GRADE BY TIME OF INITIAL ALERT



### Conclusion

Overall, the results indicate that early alerts are associated with positive student outcomes in a course, especially when they are issued within the first six weeks of an academic term. Since a majority of alerts are issued between 4 and 6 weeks, there is still opportunity to identify at-risk students a few weeks earlier by relying on low stakes assignments, such as quizzes, journals entries, short writing assignments, that can measure students' academic performance prior to midterm exams. In doing so, faculty can intervene sooner rather than later and provide students with additional campus resources.

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