

The Early Alert Program is designed to identify students who are having academic difficulty at any point in their four years at USU. By identifying these students, the staff of the Office of Retention and Student Success can attempt to address their needs, thereby increasing the likelihood of their success. The primary goal of this program is to assist faculty and staff in improving the motivation and performance of underachieving students in an effort to better USU's capacity to retain these students.

While the faculty member should always be the first person to establish contact with the student and address issues, it is true that often faculty do not have the time or resources to get to the root of each student's problem. The Office of Retention and Student Success can support faculty in their efforts to help students.

How does this work?

- Early Academic Alert is a system for identifying students who are having difficulties in a given course. Faculty awareness of potential student problems constitutes the backbone of the Early Academic Alert Program. Students may be identified for Early Academic Alert for a variety of reasons, including frequent absences, lateness, test scores, language skills, and writing ability. Faculty members and instructors who have identified such issues should submit names or A numbers at the following Web address: <http://www.usu.edu/rfye/earlyalert/>.
- Once the notice is received, the Office of Retention and Student Success will contact students via e-mail, appraising them so they can take steps to improve their performance in the class. The names of students identified in the process are also sent to academic advisors. Advisors contacted before midterm can assist students in making more informed judgments about academic plans.
- When a student comes to the Office of Retention and Student Success, a professional staff member meets with the student. Together the staff member and student discuss academic concerns, and the staff member suggests resources for the student to access. A follow-up e-mail is sent within 10 days.

Sample e-mail sent to students

Hello USU Aggie,

Your instructor, Andy Anderson for BIOL 2060, notified our office and requested that we inform you that at this time your academic performance in his course is putting you at risk of receiving a grade below a C. We understand that there are many factors that may be contributing to your performance in class, and that every student's situation is different. Whatever the case may be, there is still time to improve your performance in this class.

We would like to visit with you and help you explore resources that can enhance your ability to achieve academic success. Please take a moment to stop by the Office of Retention and Student Success, at your earliest convenience. We are located in room 314 in the Taggart Student Center, and our office is open Monday through Friday from 8a.m to 5p.m. In addition we strongly encourage you to act on the following suggestions to improve your performance:

- *Talk with your instructor. Ask them for ideas to improve your success.*
- *Visit with your academic advisor. Your advisor has been notified of your instructor's concern about your performance to date and is available to assist you in taking the necessary steps to insure your future success in this class.*
- *Visit the Academic Resource site at <http://www.usu.edu/arc>, which has information about study skills, free tutoring services, and the supplemental instruction program.*

Your instructor has requested that you confirm to us that you have received this e-mail by sending a reply to Noelle.call@usu.edu. In your response, please indicate the actions you plan to take to address this concern.

How is a student identified for Early Academic Alert?

- A student is identified when an instructor notices that, due to a particular reason, the student's work does not meet the standards of the class and needs improvement. The identification is made on the basis of poor performance on an early test or quiz, attendance issues, language or writing ability, or any other number of possibilities. The instructor makes the decision as to what behavior is causing concern regarding the student's success.

Who participates in Early Academic Alert?

- Faculty members, instructors, advisors, and staff work together to provide an effective system of early intervention to improve student retention and success. All instructors are given the opportunity to participate in the Early Academic Alert Program. It is each individual instructor's choice whether or not to participate.

When should an instructor use the Early Academic Alert Program?

- Any faculty member who is concerned about a student's failure to attend classes and /or a student's poor performance in class is encouraged to submit the student's name at the Early Academic Alert Site (<http://www.usu.edu/rfye/earlyalert/>) at any time in the semester. Research shows that the earlier the student is made aware of faculty concerns regarding his or her performance, the sooner interventions can be initiated to increase the student's potential to achieve academic success. Some instructors submit names after the first test, while some wait for two tests to see if there is a pattern. While some instructors submit names of students who have scored below a C on the first test, others prefer to only send in names of students with failing grades. There is a section on the website for submitting comments. This allows instructors to indicate that they are submitting names for reasons other than low test scores.

What should I tell the students in my class about the Early Academic Alert Program?

- Many faculty members place information about the Early Academic Alert Program in their syllabus, and also announce it as part of the class introduction. The following example is used by Professor Andy Anderson in Microbiology:

*Hello to all Elementary Microbiology (BIOL 2060) students. USU has developed an Early Academic Alert Program for students who are having difficulty in their classes. I have agreed to participate in this program and submit the names and A numbers of **all those students who score less than 70 percent on the first exam**. This is an excellent program that is designed to assist students in being successful this semester. I have included a description of the Early Academic Alert Program below:*

- This program is being developed as a retention tool to improve students' academic persistence and to provide students with resources to support their efforts. It is designed for faculty to identify, report, and provide feedback for students who are at risk in a course. Faculty members will be able to electronically detail concerns regarding student performance and behavior or simply provide a list of students.
- These referrals will be reported electronically to the Office of Retention and Student Success. Within 24 hours of a referral, the Office of Retention and Student Success will make contact with the student, and offer a meeting with the student to discuss concerns and to connect the student to campus resources appropriate to the student's needs. The Office of Retention and Student Success will conduct ongoing assessment to evaluate the level of student response and outcomes of the effort.

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