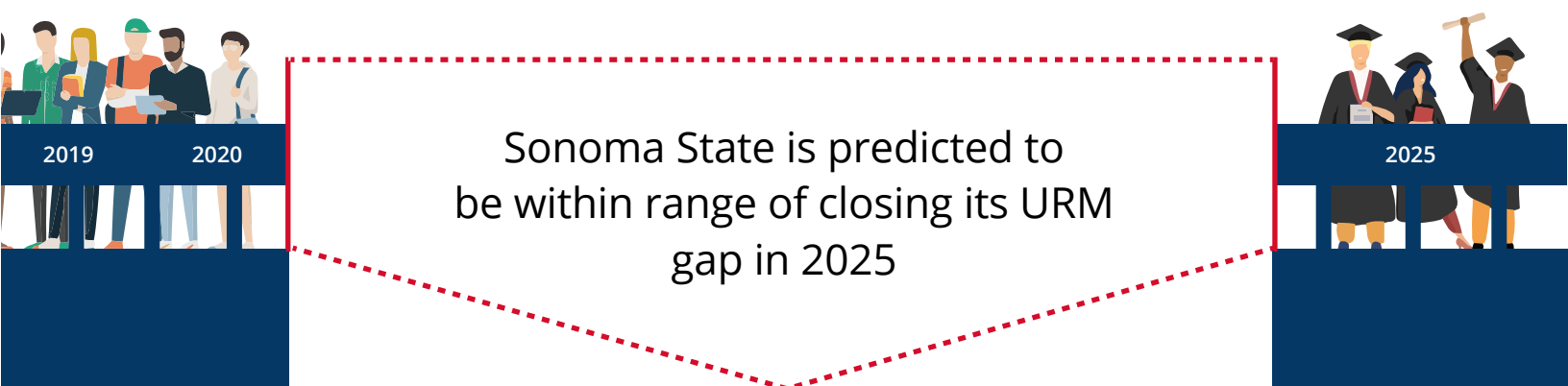# SONOMA STATE EQUITY PROGRESS REPORT

If current trends persist, our model predicts that in 2025, Sonoma State is likely to **eliminate its underrepresented minority (URM) gap**[1,] but this is not a guarantee.

2019   2020   2025

Sonoma State is predicted to be within range of closing its URM gap in 2025

If key indicators show the gap widening in the future, here are three action areas where student gains could be made.

| **Ensure Persistence**	**Reduce Time-to-Degree**	**Increase Re-enrollment**
of currently enrolled URM students.	for currently enrolled URM students:	of URM students who have stopped out:
+0	**+14**	**+18**
URM graduates [2]	URM graduates	URM graduates
This will help to increase **graduation rates**	This may reduce the URM gap by up to **2 percentage points**	This may reduce the URM gap by up to **3 percentage points**

Read the report to learn more about our predictions and review strategies for **closing both URM and Pell gaps.**

In light of the enduring evidence of systemic racism in the U.S., the California State University must strengthen its commitment to social justice by ensuring that all students have equitable opportunities to earn a high-quality, life-changing college degree. To assist Sonoma State in meeting its Graduation Initiative 2025 goals of eliminating equity gaps for underrepresented minority (URM) students and Pell grant recipients, this report provides a set of 2025 equity gap forecasts and offers strategies for closing those gaps over the next four years.

The 2025 forecasts were generated using a predictive model that examined first-year enrollment and retention data for the 665 URM students and 568 Pell grant recipients who enrolled as first-time students in fall 2019, as well as persistence and graduation rates from the 2000-2014 first-time student cohorts.[3] These forecasts identify the specific number of URM and Pell students in the 2019 first-time student cohort who must be supported to graduate by 2025 for Sonoma State to eliminate equity gaps in degree attainment rates.
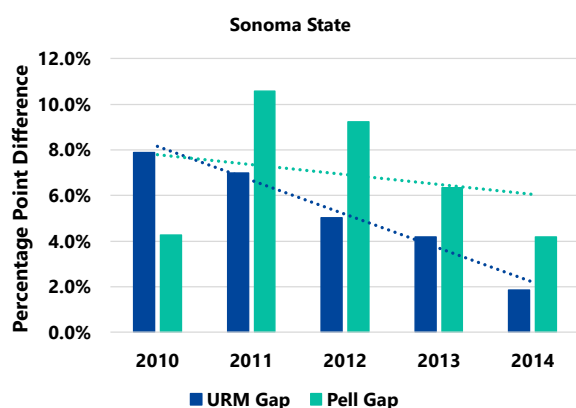
Sonoma State has made excellent progress in eliminating equity gaps among first-time students (see chart at left). Indeed, the URM gap among first-time students who began in fall 2014 was 1.8 percentage points and the Pell gap for this cohort was 4.2 percentage points, indicating that the university is on track to eliminate equity gaps by 2025. However, both gaps have been highly variable in recent years, indicating that Sonoma State must be extremely vigilant if it is to attain and sustain its URM and Pell equity goals.

Sonoma State is on track to close both URM and Pell gaps. However, if equity gaps begin to widen, the university may want to employ targeted support and interventions for students who have historically been the most underserved.

Sonoma State URM Gap Forecast [4]

If current trends persist, and if no significant changes are made in the next four years, our model predicts that SSU will be **within range of closing its 2025 URM gap.**

However, SSU will need to ensure that all 426 URM students in the 2019 cohort who are already on track to graduate within 6 years successfully do so.

Sonoma State Pell Gap Forecast [4]

Similarly, if no significant changes are made in the next four years, our model predicts that SSU will be **within range of closing its 2025 Pell gap.**

However, SSU will need to ensure that all 366 Pell students in the 2019 cohort who are already on track to graduate within 6 years successfully do so.

Focus Areas for Closing the Gaps

Sonoma State can facilitate equitable outcomes by vigilantly tracking its progress toward eliminating URM and Pell equity gaps and continuing to support historically underserved students to ensure that equity gaps remain closed. If indicators that a gap is widening are identified, the following quantifiable areas of focus can help SSU get back on track:

Ensure Persistence of Currently Enrolled URM and Pell Students

Ensure Persistence
of currently enrolled URM students

532 URM students from the 2019 cohort are still enrolled. SSU will need to provide the support necessary so that 94% of these students remain continuously enrolled to ensure that the 2025 URM gap is eliminated. However, SSU has an opportunity to exceed these targets, helping more underserved students achieve their educational and career goals.[5]

Ensure Persistence
of currently enrolled Pell students:
+8 Pell Graduates

Similarly, 473 Pell recipients from the 2019 cohort are still enrolled. If SSU provides the support necessary so that 90% of these students remain continuously enrolled, an additional **8 Pell recipients** would graduate, which may narrow the Pell gap by as much as **1 percentage point.**[5]

Reduce Time-to-Degree for Currently Enrolled URM and Pell Students

Reduce Time-to-Degree
for currently enrolled URM students:
+14 URM Graduates

We estimate that **14 URM students** from the 2019 cohort are on track to graduate in 6.5 or 7 years (i.e., the 2025-2026 academic year). Helping these students complete their course work in time to graduate in the 2024-2025 academic year may narrow the URM gap by up to **2 percentage points.**[6]

Reduce Time-to-Degree
for currently enrolled Pell students:
+13 Pell Graduates

Similarly, we expect that **13 Pell recipients** from the 2019 cohort are on track to graduate in 6.5 or 7 years (i.e., the 2025-2026 academic year). Helping these students complete their course work in time to graduate in the 2024-2025 academic year may narrow the Pell gap by up to **2 percentage points.**[6]

Increase Re-enrollment of URM and Pell Students Who Have Stopped Out [7]

Increase Re-enrollment of URM students who have stopped out:
+18 URM Graduates

Within their first year, 133 URM students in the 2019 cohort left the university, and if previous patterns hold, an additional 190 may stop out in the coming years. Typically, about 7 percent of these students re-enroll, but if SSU were able to convince twice as many to re-enroll, an additional **18 URM students** would graduate by 2025, which may narrow the URM gap by up to **3 percentage points.**[8]

Increase Re-enrollment of Pell students who have stopped out:
+16 Pell Graduates

Similarly, in their first year, 95 Pell recipients in the 2019 cohort left the university, and if previous patterns hold, an additional 169 may stop out in the coming years. Typically, about 8 percent of these students re-enroll, but if SSU were able to convince twice as many to re-enroll, an additional **16 Pell recipients** would graduate by 2025, which may narrow the Pell gap by up to **3 percentage points.**[8]

Intersectionality

This report focuses specifically on equity gaps for URM students and Pell recipients, as these demographic groups are specified in the 2025 Graduation Initiative. However, in implementing interventions to assist these students, and by adopting changes to institutional policies and practices to be more student responsive, it may be useful to recognize the multiple identities for any given student, as well as the interconnected nature of demographic groups. Indeed, as the Venn diagram below illustrates, 43% of all students in the 2019 first-year cohort are URM and 37% are Pell recipients; 24% of all students in the cohort are members of both groups.

Sonoma State

URM: 43%
19%   24%   13%
Pell: 37%
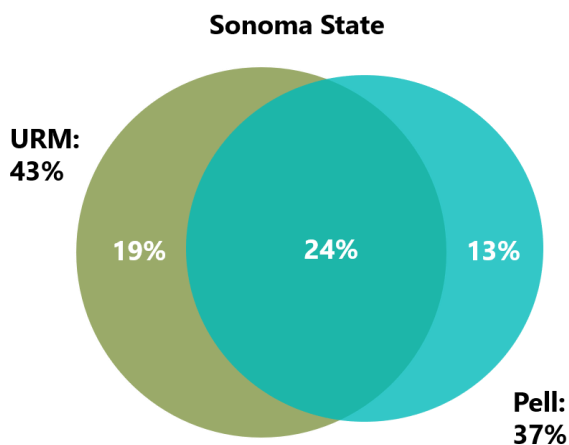
Furthermore, both URM students and Pell recipients may identify as members of other groups that face obstacles in their pursuit of a degree, including those who are first in their families to attend college, undocumented students, students with disabilities, LGBTQ+ students, and veterans. Although this report focuses specifically on URM and Pell students, some campuses—especially those with a high prevalence of these other groups—may find it useful to conduct more nuanced investigations into equity gaps by accounting for more student characteristics and disaggregating the data across various student traits.

Providing the holistic assistance and support necessary to close gaps for these groups may also improve outcomes for URM and Pell students while addressing the broader social responsibility we have to serve all students, regardless of the assets and advantages they bring and the challenges and barriers our institutions pose to them.

A Note About the Predictive Models

Although Graduation Initiative 2025 has established a series of degree attainment goals, this report focuses solely on what it would take numerically to achieve equal graduation rates for URM and non-URM students and Pell recipients and non-Pell recipients. Because the equity gap goals and the graduation rate goals are separate, it is possible to eliminate equity gaps without reaching the graduation rate targets. Campuses are also encouraged to explore models with assumptions that may be more appropriate for their institutions.

Methodologically, the models in this report develop separate predictions for the URM and Pell equity gaps. However, the numbers cited herein are not additive and are presented for the sole purpose of helping campuses identify the magnitude of work and focused effort that needs to occur over the next four years to eliminate equity gaps.

Finally, it is important to note that predictive modeling derives insights from historical data, and as such, new situations are not factored into the forecast. The pandemic has impacted higher education more than any other event in modern history, forcing a restructuring of academic and co-curricular structures seemingly overnight. Quick pivots to online learning and remote student support services have been necessary adaptations, and campuses have been working harder than ever to deliver quality, high-touch educational support in this new modality. The impact of these changes is yet to be borne out and may have a significant effect on SSU's ability to reach the goals of Graduation Initiative 2025.

The time to act is now!

By taking these actions, Sonoma State can meet or exceed the forecasted gaps, and most importantly, help more URM and Pell students attain their educational and career goals.

Action Items

Our models suggest that the SSU community is succeeding in its efforts to close the URM and Pell equity gaps. To ensure gaps remain closed, SSU must remain vigilant and ready to act if key indicators show the gaps begin to widen in the future. While the following list of action items is focused on closing equity gaps for the 2019 cohort of first-time students, the recommendations highlight opportunities to improve outcomes for all SSU students.

1. **Leverage disaggregated student data to bolster efforts to close equity gaps for the 2019 cohort of first-time students. Campus plans should:**

   - Identify who will contact students who left the university in good academic standing among the 133 URM students and 95 Pell recipients who have already stopped out, as well as those who may leave the university in the next two years.

   - Outline a timeline for these efforts and describe the tactics that will be utilized to facilitate and track students' re-enrollment.

   - Establish expectations for how faculty, staff, and administrators will focus on improving outcomes for the 532 URM students and 473 Pell recipients from the 2019 cohort who are currently enrolled.

   - Delineate strategies for reducing time-to-degree among the 14 URM students and 13 Pell recipients in the 2019 cohort currently predicted to graduate in 6-7 years.

2. **Redouble efforts to promote continuous enrollment and reduce time-to-degree among URM and Pell students in the 2019 cohort.**

   - Promote and facilitate summer school and intersession enrollment for URM and Pell students in the 2019 cohort.

   - Bolster support for URM and Pell students from the 2019 cohort who have struggled academically in the online learning environment.

   - Focus on quality advisement to facilitate timely completion of degree requirements in the remaining terms.

3. **Collect qualitative data to better understand why URM students and Pell grant recipients stop out.**

   - Conduct focus groups, exit interviews, and surveys with URM and Pell students who have left the university, especially those from the 2019 cohort.

   - Provide opportunities for interdepartmental dialogue among faculty, academic and career advisers, financial aid officers, mental health counselors, residential life officials, coaches, basic needs coordinators, and others working directly with students who are unable maintain continuous enrollment.

Endnotes

[1] To remain consistent with Graduation Initiative 2025 terminology, this report employs the term "underrepresented minority" or "URM" to refer to African American, Latinx, and Native American students. "Non-URM" refers to any student who is not a member of one of these groups. The term "Pell" refers to students who received a Pell grant in their first term of enrollment. "Non-Pell" refers to any student who is not classified as "Pell".

[2] Increasing persistence among all students will likely improve graduation rates. However, +0 URM/Pell Graduates indicates that additional work to increase persistence among students may not contribute to the elimination of equity gaps.

[3] The forecasts presented in this report utilize historical persistence and graduation rate data to predict six-year graduation rates for URM, non-URM, Pell, and non-Pell first-time students from the 2019 cohort. For each group, two subgroups were created: (1) students who persisted to their second year and (2) students who did not persist to their second year. Six-year graduation rates were then calculated for each subgroup within the 2000-2014 cohorts. Linear regression models were fitted using the cohort year as the independent variable (X) and the six-year graduation rate of the cohort year as the dependent variable (Y). A series of linear regression models were developed for each subgroup and the model with the lowest root mean squared error was selected as the best fit. These models were used to estimate the six-year graduation rates for the two subgroups within the 2019 cohort (i.e., those who persisted and did not persist to their second year). The predicted graduation rates for each subgroup were then combined to create forecasts of the six-year graduation rates for the URM, non-URM, Pell, and non-Pell groups. Finally, the predicted equity gap was calculated by subtracting the predicted six-year graduation rates of the URM and Pell groups from the non-URM and non-Pell groups. While this model is methodologically sound, it does not account for any changes we make now to better support URM students and Pell recipients.

[4] The gap calculations are based on the following predicted six-year graduation rates for the 2019 cohort of first-time students: URM = 64.1%, non-URM = 60.7%, Pell = 64.5%, and non-Pell = 60.5%. All calculations shown in this report are rounded to the nearest whole number.

[5] To determine the percentage of students who must remain continuously enrolled to graduate, the six-year graduation goal was divided by the first-year persistence rate for the URM, Pell, non-URM, and non-Pell groups in the 2019 cohort. The estimated gap was calculated by subtracting the estimated rates of the URM and Pell groups from the non-URM and non-Pell groups. Finally, the difference between the estimated gap and the predicted gap was calculated to show the potential percentage point decrease in equity gaps.

[6] The expected seven-year graduation rates were estimated using data from the 2011-2013 cohorts of first-time students. For each URM and Pell group in these cohorts, the mean percentage point increase in the number of students graduating in seven years (compared to the number graduating in six) was calculated by taking the difference of the six-year and seven-year graduation rates of the three cohorts and averaging them. The mean increase was then added to the forecasted six-year graduation rate for the URM and Pell groups in the 2019 cohort. From here, the estimated gap was calculated by subtracting the newly estimated six-year URM and Pell graduation rates from the predicted non-URM and non-Pell graduation rates. Finally, the difference between the estimated gap and the predicted gap was calculated to show the potential percentage point decrease in equity gaps.

[7] In this report we use the term "stop out" to refer to students who withdraw temporarily from the university. By acknowledging that there are often multiple barriers that affect a student's withdrawal from college and looking at their withdrawal as a temporary stop instead of as a decision to abandon their education entirely, we set the stage for better policies and supports that help students succeed.

[8] The rates at which students re-enroll and graduate in six years were estimated using data from the 2011-2014 cohorts. The re-enrollment rate was calculated by taking the percentage of the total number of students who left at any point during the six-year period and subsequently re-enrolled. The graduation rate was then calculated by taking the percentage of re-enrolled students who graduated in six-years. Based on the assumption that campus efforts designed to increase re-enrollment might result in twice the historical re-enrollment rate, existing campus re-enrollment rates were doubled and applied to URM and Pell groups in the 2019 cohort. The doubled re-enrollment rate, combined with the graduation rates for each group, was then used to estimate the expected six-year graduation rate for URM and Pell groups. This number was then subtracted from predicted non-URM and non-Pell graduation rates, and the difference between the estimated gap and the predicted gap was calculated to show the potential percentage point decrease in equity gaps.