STRATEGIC ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT (SEM) PLAN TO 2024

SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

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Introduction

This Strategic Enrollment Management Plan is the first of its kind for Sonoma State University and represents a new phase of the University's development as a campus. Historically, Sonoma State benefitted from large numbers of applications from first-time, first-year students across California, and those students constituted the majority of our enrollment for many years. Under President Judy Sakaki's leadership, Sonoma State has begun to shift its enrollment patterns and strategies, focusing more intentionally on serving our local six-county service region and building transfer pathways from regional community colleges. As a Hispanic-Serving Institution, we are committed to increasing our service to Latinx, Black, Indigenous, and Asian and Pacific Islander populations, as well as low-income communities. In our efforts to meet our targets for the Graduation Initiative 2025, we are making significant progress lowering equity gaps for underrepresented and Pell students.

We are, however, in an unusual moment for building a strategic enrollment management plan. Sonoma State is impacted by new demographic shifts in Northern California, with declines in the number of high school graduates, and new patterns of college-going, in which students are staying closer to home. The international pandemic, COVID-19, has exacerbated these trends and will continue to affect college enrollment for many years to come, with lower numbers of international students and perhaps lower numbers of out-of-region students. In addition, Sonoma State's enrollment has been affected to some degree by the fires that have occurred in Sonoma County and the surrounding regions for the last four years, also reducing our out-of-region enrollment.

Given those influences and the uncertainties around enrollment over the next few years, the plan outlined below is a short-term plan, designed primarily to cover the next three years from fall 2021 to fall 2024. Rather than developing a long-term, ten-year plan, we have chosen to focus on modest targets for yield over a shorter period, while focusing on enrollment strategies that position us for future growth.

This SEM plan focuses primarily on the recruitment side of strategic enrollment management. Our Graduation Initiative Group that is shepherding the campus' work to meet the CSU's GI 2025 targets will be working with partners in all the division and particularly with our Office of Institutional Effectiveness to develop targets for retention. We will fold those into the SEM plan over the next 6 months.

My thanks go to Senior AVP for Academic Resources Dr. Elias Lopez and AVP for Institutional Effectiveness Dr. Heather Brown for their work in preparing this plan. We have benefitted from the assistance of Brent Gage, our consultant from the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO). This plan, and particularly the goals and strategies, have benefitted from constituencies across the campus, and we thank all who have provided feedback, vision, and smart thinking about our enrollment goals.

Dr. Karen R. Moranski
Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Strategic Enrollment Planning in Context

Sonoma State University has a comprehensive [Strategic Plan 2025](), developed in 2017-18 as a result of a comprehensive process that involved nearly 4,000 individuals including faculty, staff, students, alumni and community members. The Strategic Plan has four strategic priorities: student success, academic excellence and innovation, leadership cultivation, and transformative impact. Divisions, schools, and departments developed goals and tactics that align with these four priorities.

In addition to the Strategic Plan, other comprehensive plans are in various stages of development. An Information Technology Plan was developed in 2019, and other initiatives (e.g., Diversity and Inclusion) are underway. A Facilities Master Plan will be developed in alignment with the Strategic Plan, Strategic Enrollment Plan and the Technology Plan.

Given that the Strategic Enrollment Management Plan focuses on the student experience from recruitment through graduation, it must be considered within the context of other campus plans (strategic plan, information technology, diversity and inclusion, etc.). The following diagram illustrates the relationship between the various campus plans.
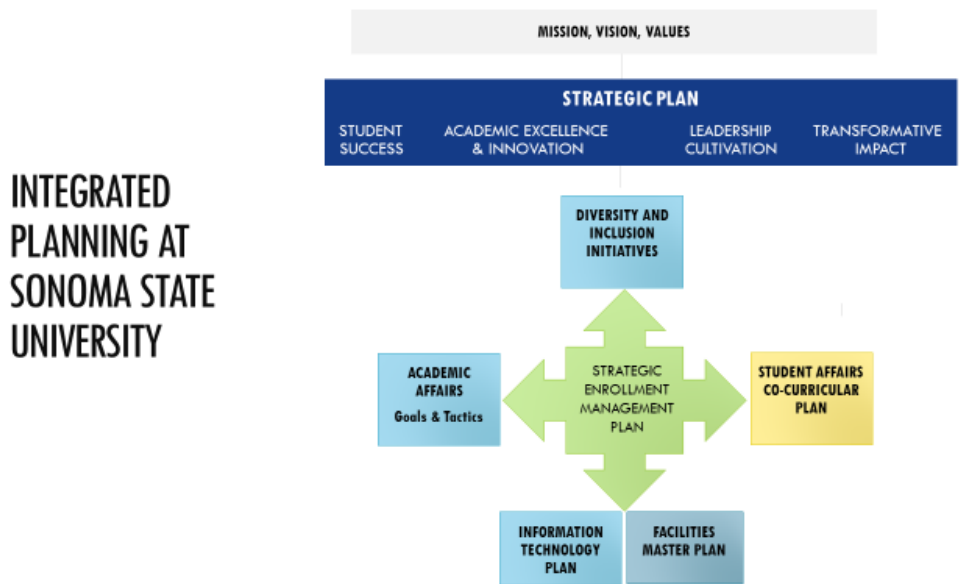
Strategic enrollment management at Sonoma State focuses on 1) recruiting and yielding a diverse student population of first-time, first-year students (FTFY), transfers (FTT), and graduate and post-baccalaureate students, and 2) ensuring that students successfully complete their degrees in a timely fashion in keeping with the targets of the CSU's Graduation Initiative 2025.

In addition to campus enrollment and degree attainment trends, this Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Plan was informed by a review of historical and projected enrollment and degree attainment trends for high schools and community colleges, as well as labor market forecasts for the region and state.

Planning in Uncertain Times

In Fall 2019 and Spring 2020, the campus engaged earnestly in a collaborative process to develop goals and strategies to reach an overall enrollment goal of 10,000. However, as the near and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have become more apparent, we adjusted our SEM Plan. Reflecting our shared core values of adaptability and responsiveness, we will focus efforts on goals and strategies designed to have cost-effective effects on our enrollment over the next three years. During the last year of this SEM Plan, we will establish a new set of enrollment targets and strategies to include those that may take more time to develop and will contribute to sustainable enrollment growth.

Strategic Enrollment Management Indicators

Progress on our SEM Plan will be measured relative to the following progress indicators.

Indicator	Baseline Fall 2020	Target Fall 2022	Target Fall 2024
Fall Cohort Indicators			
FTFY yield rate[1]	7.8%	15%	15%
Transfer yield rate	34.8%	45%	47%
New FTFY students	897	1,992	2,150
New transfer students	678	842	900
One-year persistence rate (FTFY)	78.9%	81%	84%[2]
Annual Indicators			
Total students	7,791	8,449	9,100
Undergraduates	7,141	7,667	8,275
Graduate and Post-baccalaureates	650	782	825
International and Out of State[3]	114	50	125
Traditionally underserved ethnic minority[4]			
Undergraduates	43%	46%	50%
Graduate and Post-baccalaureates	23%	24%	26%

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[1] Yield rate is the proportion of admits who enroll. The COVID-19 pandemic had a dramatic effect on yield for new FTFY students. Yield rates for prior cohorts ranged from 11-16%.

[2] Historical highpoint reached for the 2012 cohort.

[3] International and out of state students are also included in the undergraduate and pbac/graduate students.

[4] Traditionally underserved and underrepresented ethnic minority (URM) includes Hispanic/Latinx, American Indian and Alaskan Native, Black/African American, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander.

Strategic Enrollment Management Goals

The overarching purpose of SEM is to achieve established targets for enrollment at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Towards this, we have identified the following goals to reach our overall enrollment (headcount) target of 9,100 by Fall 2024.

For each goal, offices, roles or teams are noted in parentheses. These entities will lead more detailed tactics and strategies aligned to achieve the assigned goals (and relevant SEM indicators), and to provide regular status updates to the campus.

1. Establish and promote a clear institutional identity that positions SSU as the first choice within our six-county region.
    1.1. Identify and strategically communicate differences between Sonoma State and its primary competitors. **(Strategic Communication)**

        1.1.1. Promote stories and develop talking points about specific academic programs and distinctive aspects of Sonoma State University aimed at attracting prospective students.

        1.1.2. Develop an SSU brand identity that is integrated with all aspects of marketing/communication and university life.

        1.1.3. Refresh University website to be on brand, interactive, and prospective student focused.

    1.2. Prepare to enhance and leverage academic programs to meet market demand and needs. **(Deans)**

        1.2.1. Explore development of pre-majors for all impacted programs that do not already have them.

        1.2.2. Initiate the process to lift impaction status of majors as warranted by trend data and stakeholder input.

        1.2.3. Review labor market and workforce development data for academic programs to leverage and align market positions.

2. Enhance outreach and enrollment strategies that align with SSU's identity as a regionally-serving and Hispanic Serving Institution and that will result in higher yield and enrollment from across the state. **(Strategic Enrollment)**

    2.1. Create and implement a robust, intentional student recruitment plan that targets recruitment of Pell eligible, first-generation, under-represented minority students.

    2.2. Enhance outreach programs for high schools and community colleges in the service region and throughout the state.

    2.3. Initiate an instant admit program in collaboration with the five regional community colleges in the region and track return on investment.

    2.4. Recalibrate events such as Preview Day and Decision Day by aligning content and delivery with audience expectations. Gather and analyze attendee data and feedback to predict likelihood of enrollment, and enhance future events.

3. Further develop dashboards and metrics to measure progress on enrollment and retention. **(Institutional Effectiveness)**

    3.1. Develop a new dashboard that tracks progress towards established enrollment goals.

3.2. Update the "Admits who go elsewhere" dashboard for fall 2020, and enhance the resource to provide additional insight (potentially examining patterns in demographics, location, and institution of origin). Synthesize and share key insights.

3.3. Conduct regression analyses to identify factors associated with enrollment for FTFY and transfer students. Synthesize findings and present preliminary recommendations to SEM Advisory Team.

4. Review and revise processes to increase enrollment of new admits (aka yield).

    4.1. Determine reasonable fee structure, process, and timeline for intent to enroll deposit, housing deposit, and orientation fees. **(Strategic Enrollment Workgroup)**

    4.2. Implement NOMA Nation Orientation modular tracking to track summer melt from June through Welcome Week in August for FTFY and FTT. Further refine Orientation based upon student feedback. **(Student Success and Advising)**

    4.3. Assess the impact of recruitment scholarships and identify ways to expand them strategically to support yield of new admits. **(Financial Aid and Scholarship Workgroup)**

    4.4. Continue to enhance pre-enrollment (block enrollment) for fall and spring semesters for first-time first year students. **(Academic Programs)**

5. Develop a full and continuous communication plan and student support network for students from inquiry to first semester attendance.

    5.1. Develop a detailed communication plan with timelines and roles to fully leverage the customer relationship management (CRM) software. **(Strategic Enrollment)**

        5.1.1. Develop a communication plan specifically tailored to appeal to first-generation, lower income and other underrepresented students.

    5.2. Institute ways to leverage the AdmitHub chatbot to engage students and reduce summer melt. **(Student Success and Advising)**

6. Strengthen student financial literacy and security. **(Financial Aid)**

    6.1. Support FAFSA completion for continuing students.

    6.2. Explore further development of retention scholarship programs.

    6.3. Expand student programming around financial literacy.

7. Strengthen and expand programs and resources that support student retention & persistence with attention to closing equity gaps. **(Student Success and Advising)**

    7.1. Reduce administrative barriers for student success and graduation.

        7.1.1. Review and reconfigure registration holds. **(Student Success and Advising)**

        7.1.2. Continue streamlining disqualification, withdrawal, and reinstatement processes. **(Records)**

    7.2. Expand EAB Navigate (LoboConnect) to run proactive outreach campaigns to increase persistence.

    7.3. Extend proactive caseload management for all Professional Academic Advisors.

7.4. Utilize Peer Success Coaches to proactively outreach students in caseloads to assist with pivotal moments.

8. Increase success and retention of underserved and underrepresented students by expanding programs and services that support academic achievement and a sense of belonging. **(Center for Academic Access and Student Enrichment)**

   8.1. Enhance the Summer Bridge Program by including all departments within CAASE, more academic components (e.g., units earned, apply units toward the Ethnic Studies requirement), and a hybrid delivery model.

   8.2. Create intentional community building opportunities to promote a sense of belonging and inclusion.

   8.3. Conduct a comprehensive review, informed by a student needs assessment and an evaluation of existing services (e.g., holistic advising, direct student service hours such as drop-ins and appointments).

   8.4. Develop Early Warning system strategies to provide outreach and early intervention to at-risk students by developing a plan of action for success.

Charge for SEM Leadership Teams

The President and members of her Cabinet have assigned key individuals from the divisions to work on developing strategies and tactics to achieve the aforementioned goals. Below is the organizational structure we will use for decision-making. The leaders and charges of the groups are the following:

A. **Strategic Enrollment Working Group**

   Chairs: AVP, Strategic Enrollment and [need leader for retention activities appointed by VPSA Sawyer]

   Charge: Provide cross-divisional leadership for strategic enrollment management, including recruitment and retention activities; recommend enrollment, retention, and graduation, goals, targets, strategies and performance indicators, using data-driven decision-making and a framework of inclusion and equity.

   Subgroup: Financial Aid and Scholarship Team, led by AVP, Institutional Effectiveness and Director, Financial Aid with charge to develop financial aid and scholarship programs that will support recruitment and retention efforts using a framework of inclusion and equity.

B. **Academic Affairs SEM Advisory Team**

   Charge: Provide advice to the Provost for goals and operations of Strategic Enrollment, with specific focus on Outreach, Recruitment, and Records and Registration.

C. Graduation Initiative Group

Chairs: AVP, Academic Programs, and Senior Director, Student Success and Advising

Charge: Provide cross-divisional leadership for increasing 2-, 4-, and 6-year graduation rates and reducing equity gaps for underrepresented and low-income students at Sonoma State.

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President ─── Provost (with ─┬─ Strategic Enrollment ─── Financial Aid &
              President's Cabinet)   Working Group          Scholarship Team
                             │
                             ├─ Academic Affairs
                             │  SEM Advisory Team
                             │
                             └─ Graduation
                                Initiative Group
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