

Sonoma State University

**Strategic Enrollment
Management Update for
10/25/2023**

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Introduction

Hi Everyone,

As we start to see beautiful fall colors on the campus, and begin to break out sweaters (my favorite time of year), I wanted to start sending periodic Strategic Enrollment Management updates. This first update will provide important numbers and dates. I'll also start to provide a section titled SEM Made Simple. This section will provide brief tutorials on Strategic Enrollment Management. As we move forward, I will begin to add more highlights and stories. I hope you will find this information useful.

Sincerely,



Fall Census and our Future Enrollment Goals

Sonoma State has experienced six years of declining enrollment. The numbers reflected in the two graphs below represent our final year of declining enrollment. Now we grow.

Fall 2023 Enrollment at Census (9/18/23)

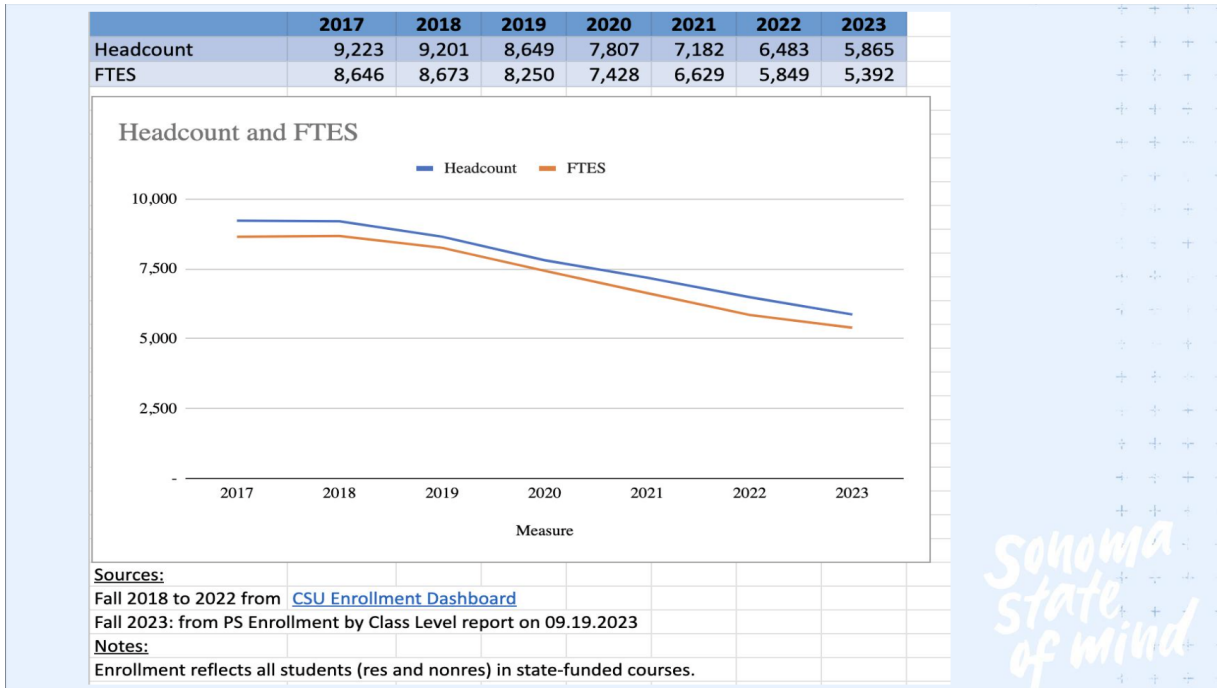
Fall Headcount = 5,865 (-9.5% compared to Fall 2022)

Fall FTEs = 5,392 (-7.8% compared to Fall 2022)

This year's drop in enrollment was expected and was primarily a result of the large graduating class in spring and summer 2023 that constituted 37% of our total student body for 2022-23.

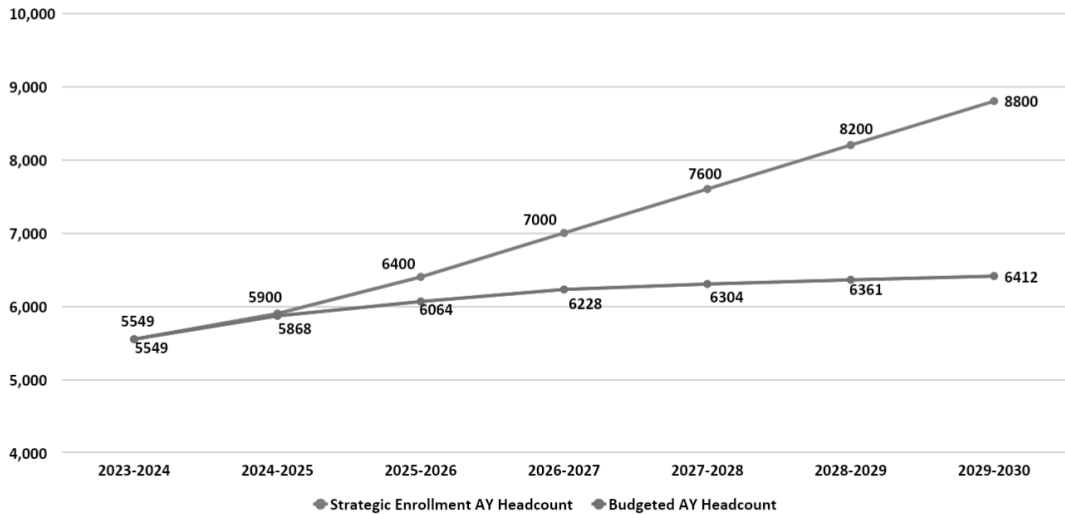
Fall 2023 new student yield is up. Three of the five academic Schools had increased FTFY yield. New transfer yield is up 13.2% over the fall 2022.





As presented at the University’s Budget Forum on October 2, 2023, our budget office has developed a multi-year plan to support our enrollment goals. In the graph below, the lower line is our budgeted headcount; the top line shows our strategic enrollment goals.

Multi-Year Enrollment Planning



We are off to a good start. Our budgeted headcount for 2023-2024 is 5549. Our Fall headcount was 5865. Thus, we are currently 316 students ahead of our budgeted headcount. Now, we must focus on current student retention, and new student yield for spring 2024 to ensure that we stay above our budgeted headcount.

Spring 2024 New Students and Fall to Spring Retention

Our new student orientation for spring 2024 admits will be Friday, November 3rd, 2023. We are offering an in-person experience for our new students with programs in the morning and advising in the afternoon. We will help our new students build their spring schedules and populate their shopping carts in Peoplesoft so they are ready to enroll during their registration appointment in mid-November. We are also offering additional virtual advising appointments for students the week after Orientation. Find more information here:

<https://orientation.sonoma.edu/spring-2024-new-student-orientation>

We are also working on New Student Orientation for summer 2024. We will have in-person orientation and a virtual option. We will continue to offer Parent and Family programming at the event and our popular Week of Welcome events at the beginning of the fall semester. For your planning, the summer orientation dates are provided below:

- 1.) Summer Orientation Dates (Mondays and Fridays/ Session Size: 200 Students)
 - a.) Transfer Students (FTT):
 - i.) Monday, June 10 (Science & Technology)
 - ii.) Friday, June 14 (SBE)
 - iii.) Monday, June 17 SOE
 - iv.) Friday, June 21 (Arts & Humanities)
 - v.) Monday, June 24 (School of Social Sciences)
 - b.) First Time First Year (FTFY):
 - i.) Monday, July 8 **will include priority reg students* (Science & Technology)
 - ii.) Friday, July 12 (Science & Technology)
 - iii.) Monday, July 15 (SBE)
 - iv.) Friday, July 19 SOE
 - v.) Monday, July 22 (School of Social Sciences)
 - vi.) Friday, July 26 (Arts & Humanities & Undeclared)

More information on Fall 2024 Orientation planning will be coming soon.

How can You Help?

The biggest enrollment challenge facing Sonoma State is building awareness. Throughout the pandemic, we have lost visibility from a large group of our California K-12 and community college students. Sonoma State offers amazing academic programs and student life experiences - but if students are not aware of us, they won't apply. We are building a new, directed, and personalized marketing and communication campaign. I'll provide more information on that campaign in my next update. For now, here are three opportunities to help us build awareness.

1. Encourage Prospective Students to Tour the Campus!

The students and guests in the picture below were preparing to tour the campus during Preview Day on October 21st. Help us grow our campus tour program. Students, their friends, and families can sign up for a tour here:

<https://admissions.sonoma.edu/experience-ssu/campus-tours>



2. Help Prospective Students Inquire and Apply

Enrollment growth starts with our prospect and application pools. We are beginning to implement a new tool to help us grow our prospect pool. The software program is called Slate and it allows us to identify, communicate with, and track our prospective students. Our goal is to ask every prospective student who interacts with any part of our University to complete an inquiry. Soon we will be sending a QR Code you can use to link prospective students to the inquiry form. You could place the code on your web pages, brochures, and even the back of your business cards. Meanwhile, please ask prospective students to sn inquiry form using this link:

<https://go.sonoma.edu/register/inquiry>

In addition, the link below allows prospective students and their families to choose from several options which includes accessing our admission brochure in Spanish.

<https://linktr.ee/sonomastate>



Un ambiente que inspira

Nuestra universidad se encuentra en el corazón del Condado de Sonoma, ubicada entre colinas y montañas rocosas, entre ciudades y campos serenos. A solo una hora en automóvil de San Francisco y con vistas espectaculares de la costa. Siempre hay algo nuevo que descubrir.

Con 4,200 hectáreas de tierras preservadas más allá del campus, puede llevar su educación al aire libre, realizar investigaciones en laboratorios vivientes y explorar la belleza ilimitada y las maravillas ecológicas de la región.



La Universidad de Sonoma orgullosamente es miembro del Sistema Universitario del Estado de California, uno de los sistemas universitarios más asequibles del país.



» sonoma.edu/campus-life/about-area

Of course, students interested in Fall 2024 should apply now.

<https://admissions.sonoma.edu/how-apply>



If you, or a prospective student you know needs help, you can always reach out to our Outreach Team. They are traveling most of the time, but are very good at monitoring their email and reaching out to prospective students with questions. Here is a link to the team:

<https://admissions.sonoma.edu/contact-us/student-outreach-recruitment-counselor-directory>

SEM Made Simple - Prospects, Qualified Leads, and Applicants

Outreach and recruitment is complex work. Three main objectives guide this work:

1. Expand the University's Prospect Pool

Prospecting is much more than getting students to complete inquiry cards. The Outreach Team's Prospect Plan is strategic and intentional. Each year, they determine where to send our limited resources (college fairs, high school visits, campus events, etc.). The work to maximize SSU brand awareness throughout our region, the state, and beyond. Our goal is to connect with students most likely to be interested in Sonoma State and build affinity with our partners (counselors, teachers, school administrators, alumni, etc.).

Every University Interaction with K-12 Schools, Community College partners, friends, neighbors, community organizations, etc. is an opportunity to identify prospective students and expand SSU brand awareness.

2. Identify Qualified Leads

Many people assume the term "Qualified Lead" refers to our admission criteria. In reality, the term identifies prospects who have expressed (or are likely to express) a serious interest in attending SSU. Qualifying leads helps us provide more personalized communications to convert leads to applicants.

There are many factors that help us identify our qualified leads. Some factors identify specific students we want to recruit (e.g., our music department is currently looking for students who play bassoon, euphonium, tuba and strings; our School of Business has capacity for students who want to explore Economics). Some factors match a student's area of interest to a club, program, or opportunity at SSU (e.g., students interested in Greek life, experiential learning in their major, student research, or club sports).

Identifying areas of interest helps us to create more personalized communications. The more we can show students how SSU offers academic programs and co-curricular opportunities they are interested in, the more likely they will apply.

3. Help us Convert Qualified Leads into Applicants

Ultimately, our goal is to convert our qualified leads into applicants. Getting a student to apply is still very early in the recruitment process. Once students apply, many universities move into a “compliance communication” mode. Most compliance communications revolve around meeting deadlines and sending transcripts. Often at this stage, there is also a shift in the language used in the communications. As you might imagine, compliance communication is very different from recruitment communication.

We must adjust our communication and marketing messages to ensure that we continue to *recruit* students throughout the application cycle. At Sonoma State, we basically have a five-step cycle: Apply, Accept, Deposit, Orient, and Enroll (and stay enrolled :-). At the same time, we are trying to steward students through financial aid and Dream Act processes. It is not unusual for prospective students to be receiving all these communications from multiple schools. Thus, the more easy, engaging, and mobile-friendly our communications can be, the more likely our students are to stay engaged with, and choose Sonoma State.

Language matters. Not only is it critical to offer information in multiple languages, the words we select send specific messages to our prospective students. As one example, I'll highlight our use of the word “dorms.”

As a student in the early 1980's, I lived in a dorm. I've also managed housing organizations with dorms at multiple universities throughout my career. Dorms are typically small, rectangular rooms (usually cinder block), shared by multiple students which are arranged in long hallways with a large shared restroom. Most students have a specific idea of what it means to live in a dorm. But dorms don't exist at Sonoma State. Thus, students who don't have access to our campus may not realize that we offer a very different kind of residential living.

We offer apartment-style, residential living. The more I experience our housing, the more impressed I am. I'm not surprised that Sonoma State was recognized as having the Number One Housing in the CSU.

Thus, I'd like to challenge all of us to change our language. Let's look for, and eliminate the word “dorm” wherever it exists. Let's replace it with apartment-style, residential living. This small change in language can make a big difference in the way our prospective students think about living on our campus.

Conclusion

I hope this information was helpful. I will send out additional updates periodically. Meanwhile, if you have any questions, feedback, or new ideas, please feel free to reach out to me directly.



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