

The Path Forward for Sonoma State University

May 31, 2024

Sonoma State University is rooted in the [mission](#) of the California State University, and grounded in the ethos of our campus values known as the Seawolf Commitment - Integrity, Respect, Excellence, and Responsibility. This document, The Path Forward, outlines Sonoma State University's key operating principles and actions related to recent events in the Middle East and related campus protests. The Path Forward supersedes previous university communications in response to the protests so we can reset the dialogue and productively move forward. As a community we must acknowledge the very real and terrible world events taking place. Such events have significant personal and community impacts that are immensely challenging to navigate given the intensity of the emotions and multiple perspectives. The goal of Sonoma State is to support all our students, faculty, staff, as well as our broader community, through these events by coming together to seek inclusive community input, engaging in a respectful dialogue and reflecting impartially in furtherance of learning for everyone.

Free Speech

While the freedom to express even controversial ideas is a cornerstone of learning, those who feel harmed or fearful in the wake of such speech are entitled to university assistance. SSU will meet this obligation and, at the same time, will open a dialogue addressing the relevant perspectives to find ways to create an environment where communication about different viewpoints can occur

simultaneously in furtherance of learning and support of the whole community. While speech will not be regulated for its content, it will be held accountable to our existing campus [Time, Place, and Manner \(TPM\) policy](#) and [Signage policy](#). TPM and signage rules provide protection not only for those exercising their voice, but for those who choose not to. Sonoma State will uphold established TPM and signage parameters to allow for free speech while not impinging on the educational opportunities of others.

Consultation

SSU will hold true to our time-honored practice of shared governance and consultation with key constituents, namely (but not limited to),

- Academic Senate
- Associated Students and other recognized student clubs and organizations
- Deans
- Staff Council
- Chancellor's Office leadership
- Other key stakeholders

As an additional avenue for engagement, students with shared interests are encouraged to seek designation as a [registered student organization](#), providing the opportunity for faculty or staff advisor support and the creation of an advisory structure, if they so choose. Through a registered organization, students are afforded broader opportunities to talk with campus leaders about policy, procedure, and process, as well as issues that may need a campus response.

Socially Responsible Investing

In 2019, The Sonoma State University Foundation (SSUF) adopted a [Responsible Investing Position Statement](#) which demonstrates a commitment to prioritizing environmental, social, and governance (ESG) practices in its investment approach for the endowment. As an overarching goal, SSUF seeks to invest in well-managed corporations providing beneficial goods and services that align with the University's mission, vision, core values, and strategic priorities. It further values business practices that support safe and supportive work environments, build employment opportunities, demonstrate innovation in environmental protection, and benefit the disadvantaged - including charitable giving and inclusion efforts.

SSU will organize a meeting early in Fall 2024 between interested members of the SSU community and representatives of the SSUF Investment Committee to review investments and promote continued discussion around socially responsible investing. While we recognize that the Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and as such has its own independent operating and decision-making authority, SSU will provide opportunities for recognized university stakeholders to express their perspectives through appropriate avenues of discussion in keeping with the current bylaws of SSUF.

Exchange and Study Abroad Programs

SSU will continue to provide Exchange and Study Abroad Programs that support learning consistent with the CSU mission of providing "access to an

excellent education to all who are prepared for and wish to participate in collegiate study” and “prepare students for international, multi-cultural society.”

Sonoma State remains committed to upholding principles of academic freedom and open scholarly exchange. Our campus welcomes opportunities to engage in international and cross-cultural dialogues and experiences for students and faculty, regardless of geographic region or culture, unless regulation dictates otherwise. The global artists, scholars, and students with whom we collaborate represent a range of viewpoints and perspectives that enhance educational opportunities for our campus community. Sonoma State students and faculty scholars are not discouraged from traveling to any region of the world for academic purposes. Sonoma State will not endorse a boycott of scholars or academic institutions, nor will we curtail dialogue or collaboration on research, publications, or other scholarly pursuits.

Curriculum Development

SSU will honor our well-established, collaborative process for the development, modification, and implementation of new, innovative academic courses and programs, under the purview of faculty and in partnership with academic administration. All interested Seawolves are welcome to share their perspectives through established avenues of information sharing in keeping with our current process. Curriculum decisions will always be grounded in our rigorous academic standards and shared governance processes. During academic year 2024-25, Academic Affairs will work with interested academic departments and schools to

offer courses that represent interdisciplinary approaches to developing areas of study, especially those for which our stakeholders have shown a desire for greater offerings.

Commitment

This plan invites all interested parties to join me and SSU leadership to engage in an open, productive exchange that aligns with our established values, policies and procedures, and to best address the educational aspirations of our entire, collective Seawolf community.

In the coming weeks and particularly when fall semester begins, I am confident healing will occur, connections will develop and progress will be made. I commit to keeping the campus and our broader Sonoma State community informed.