

Sonoma State University

Strategic Enrollment Management Update for 12/4/2023



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Introduction

Hi Everyone,

AS we near the end of the fall term, I wanted to start this update with a quick word about our enrollment target. When asked about enrollment, universities tend to report their fall headcount and full-time equivalents (FTEs) target. In the CSU system, our FTE target is annualized and then measured after our spring census in February. To annualize our target, we add our fall and spring resident FTEs, divide them by two, and add any summer stateside resident FTEs (which we will have starting summer 2024). Our internal goal for the spring 2024 headcount is to enroll at least 5,300 students by the spring 2023 census. This will keep us above our budgeted goal for 2023-24. In this update, I'll focus on our recruitment and retention efforts for spring 2024. I'll also introduce the Strategic Enrollment Funnel and our Finish What You Started campaign.

Sincerely,



Spring 2024 Enrollment

To keep our enrollment above our 2023-24 budgeted headcount, we need to enroll at least 5,300 new and continuing students by our spring 2024 census. We are working toward this goal by focusing on increasing yield for new students and by increasing retention for continuing students.

1. New Student Yield

Our new students for spring are primarily transfer students. During (and since) the pandemic, the number of new transfer students decreased 10-20% throughout the CSU. Community colleges lost substantial enrollment during the past three years and are only now starting to grow again. Thus, we will continue to be challenged to meet our new transfer student goals for the next couple of years. The key is to increase our admitted student yield.

The chart below shows our new student yield for all students from spring 2023, our in-progress numbers for spring 2024 (as of 12/4/23), and our internal goals for spring 2024. The delta is the number of new students we still need to hit our internal goal. We need about 100 more admitted or deposited students to enroll (or deposit and then enroll) to meet our spring goals. It's a stretch, but it is possible.

Enrollment Funnel for Spring		12/4/23		
	Applicants	Admits	Deposited	Enrolled
Spring 2023	851	688	415	362
Step Yield		80.85%	60.32%	87.23%
Spring 2024 (12/4/23)	735	569	327	261
Step Yield		77.41%	57.47%	79.82%
Spring 2024 Goals	800	650	400	360
		81.25%	61.54%	90.00%
Delta	-65	-81	-73	-99

Note: Step Yield is the yield between two adjacent enrollment statuses (app to admit, admit to deposit, and deposit to enrolled).

In this situation, every student counts. There are many ways to increase yield for spring. Given our current resources, we focused on four main strategies to achieve our goals.

- **Increase Applications** - our spring 2024 application was open through November 30th. We have implemented strategies to consider late applications. <https://admissions.sonoma.edu/apply>
- **Award Presidential Scholarships** - We awarded 149 Presidential Scholarships to new transfer students. Students may be in admitted or deposited status. So far, we experienced a 65% yield for scholarship students.
- **Convert Admitted Students to Deposit** - We are continuing to actively communicate with admitted students who have yet to deposit to encourage them to complete the process.
- **Ensure Deposited Students are Advised and Ready to Register** - About 200 new transfer students attended Orientation on Friday November 3rd. An additional 75 signed up for virtual Orientation the following week. We are actively communicating with all deposited students to ensure that they are able to access academic advising and register.

Of course, there are many other activities going on in individual departments and programs connected to our incoming students. Working together, we can create positive experiences for our new students and solidify their commitment to Sonoma State.

2. Increase Fall to Spring Retention

Typically, our spring headcount has been about 8-10% lower than fall. We project about 500 students will graduate in fall 2023. Factoring in our typical rate for additional attrition (drop out, stop out, transfer out, fail out, and withdrawal), we created an internal goal to enroll at least 5,300 students for spring 2024. The goal is slightly lower than our typical fall to spring continuation rate. Spring 2024, is still impacted by our large graduation numbers for 2022-23. If this was a more typical fall to spring, we would expect 5,397 students to be enrolled at the spring census in February (90% of our Fall Census of 5,867).

How can you help?

The most impactful thing we can do to increase our fall to spring retention rate is to actively engage with our current students. This can be as simple as reaching out if a student has not been attending class or often calls in sick to their on-campus job.

When students are struggling with finances, basic needs, grades, social interactions, or just motivation, they may disengage vs. reach out for help. When students do ask for help, we have great services and support programs to connect them to (several are listed below). Our challenge is to identify students who aren't seeking assistance, but need it. Our colleagues in Student Affairs have created a Student Success & Retention Office to collaborate throughout the university to focus on supporting our students and increasing our student success and retention.

1. Collaborate with the Student Success & Retention office and use LoboConnect to identify unregistered undergraduate students and perform personalized outreach.

During registration periods, the Student Success & Retention office periodically sends Retention Reports to campus. These reports summarize registration progress for our undergraduate students. Staff in this office manage our LoboConnect student success platform and use it to perform [campus-wide outreach](#) encouraging undergraduate students to register. Here are some ways to collaborate with the Student Success & Retention Office:

- Schools/Departments can use LoboConnect to run lists of unregistered undergraduate students drilled down by school or department
- Schools/Departments can use LoboConnect to perform customized outreach to their undergraduate students via email/text and include personalized videos, words of encouragement, etc...

Contact [Alvin Nguyen](#) and [Joseph Wright](#) for LoboConnect support and customized outreach ideas.

2. Actively Refer Students to our Academic & Advising Support Offices, Basic Needs, and Student Engagement Offices

There are many programs and services available for our students. It's important to learn about the services and how to refer students to them. Below are some good web resources to help:

- **Academic Support** (Tutoring, Writing Center, Career Services, Supplemental Instruction, etc.) <https://www.sonoma.edu/academics/support>
- **Advising Central** (our advising system is decentralized - thus, many students need our help to navigate our system) <https://advising.sonoma.edu>
- **Basic Needs** (Lobo Food Pantry, Health and Counseling Services, Emergency Housing, etc.) <https://studentaffairs.sonoma.edu/basicneeds>
- **Student Life** (student organizations and events) <https://getinvolved.sonoma.edu>
- **Things To Do at SSU** (links for engagement opportunities) <https://www.sonoma.edu/campus-life/things-to-do>

3. Keep Checking In with Students

If we believe a student is experiencing challenges, we should first try to check in with them to see if we can identify the issue. Checking in with a student can be complex. Some students may not be comfortable talking about their situation, others may overshare. This is an area where we can learn a lot by leaning on each other for help and advice. A few common recommendations include:

- Reach out to students who have stopped showing up for class, work, or other activities. If you don't get a response, let an administrator know. We can work to triage the situation and determine next steps.
- Watch for changes in behavior, dress, motivation, and even hygiene that may indicate a student needs some form of assistance.
- Become familiar with the university's programs and services. If you refer a student, try to connect them with a specific office or person and follow-up to see if they were able to access the service (Active Referral).

Note: The majority of us are Mandated Reporters. It is critical to inform a student of our mandated reporting responsibility. Information on our Title IX Office can be found here: <https://ophd.sonoma.edu> Information on reporting options and confidential resources can be found here: <https://getinvolved.sonoma.edu/how-report>

SEM Made Simple - The Enrollment Funnel

Have you ever wondered how enrollment managers create goals for the number of applications or admitted students they need to achieve an enrollment target? Some enrollment managers (like me) will use Reverse Prediction (or counterfactual prediction). This is a useful statistical tool when you have historical output measures (e.g., enrolled students) but you may not have input variables (e.g., prospects or qualified leads). A recent article in LinkedIn by Aditya Samdani (2023) provides a useful example:

“Reverse prediction seeks to uncover potential causative variables or factors that could have led to a particular observed outcome. For instance, consider a dataset containing information about temperatures and ice cream sales on different days. In a traditional prediction scenario, you would use temperature as an input to predict ice cream sales. In reverse prediction, you would take ice cream sales as the input to estimate the likely temperature on a given day.”

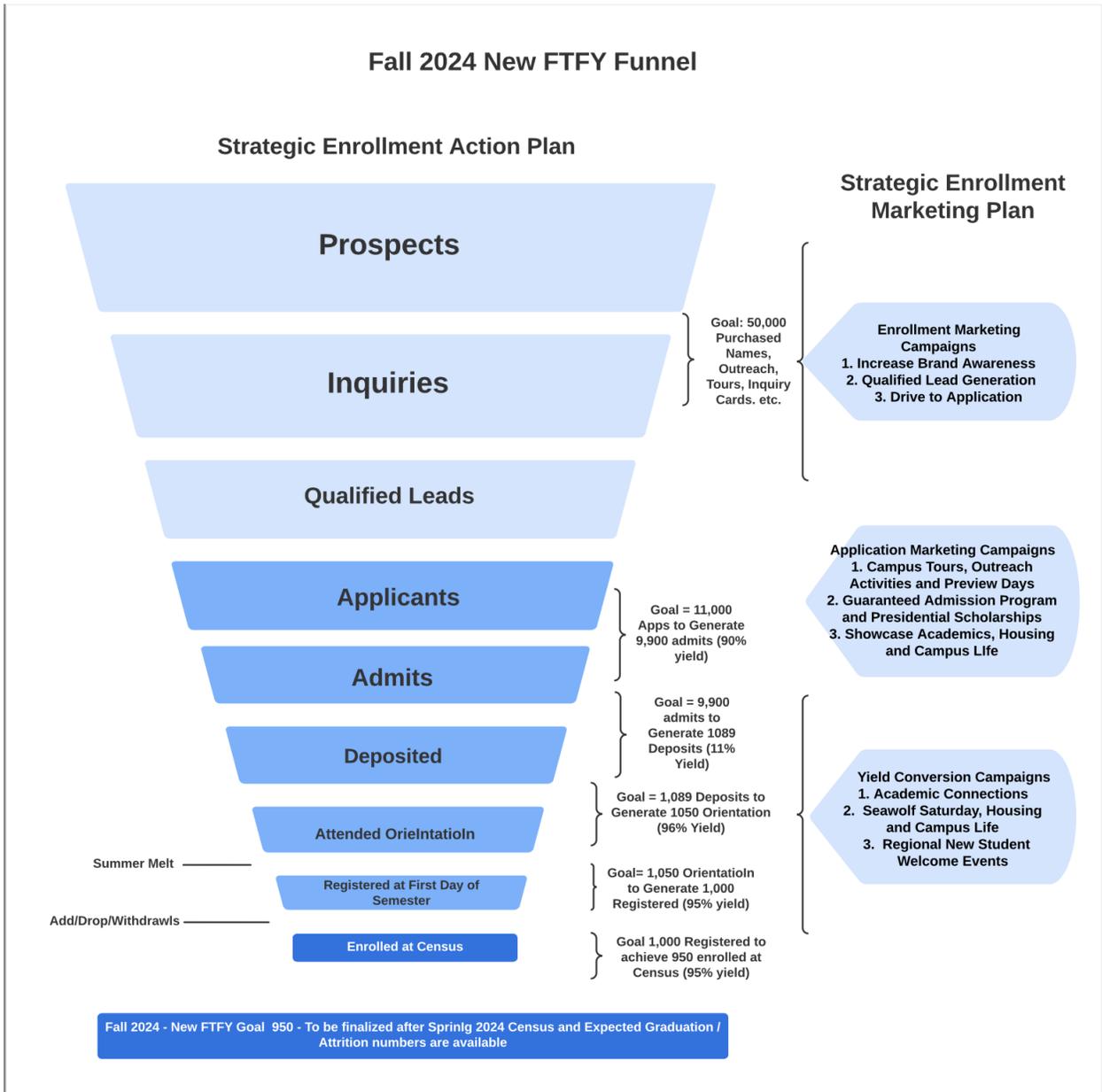
Enrollment managers tend to display the data using an enrollment funnel. If you Google Strategic Enrollment Management, you’ll see lots of examples of enrollment funnels. Some use a table format, others more of a graphic. I tend to use both. The table on page two of this report is a version of our enrollment funnel. I’m also working on a graphic funnel (see next page).

Oh, and if you are interested in reading the full article on reverse prediction, you can access it using this link. You may also be asked to join LinkedIn if you are not already a member. If you don’t want to do that but are still interested in reading the article, reach out to me and I will help you.

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/unveiling-insights-through-reverse-prediction-success-aditya-samdani/>

If you are super interested in other ways to use this tool. Here is a link to a brief by Hanover Research that I used about 12 years ago when I was working on some retention models using reverse prediction with a series of factors and the Student Readiness Inventory (SRI):

<https://www.algonquincollege.com/academic-success/files/2014/12/Predicting-College-Student-Retention-Literature-Review-1.pdf?file=2014/12/Predicting-College-Student-Retention-Literature-Review-1.pdf>



The draft enrollment funnel above is one I am working on using reverse prediction to determine the number of prospects and qualified leads we will need to meet our Fall 2024 FTFY enrollment targets. I like this type of graphic depiction as I can also add action context using the side comment boxes.

My preliminary model for fall 2024 FTFY was based on 950 new FTFY students. This would be about a 5% increase over fall 2023 (new FTFY = 905). Our overall enrollment goal for fall 2024 is

to increase enrollment by about 450 students (including more new students and increased retention for continuing students). Our fall 2024 applications are currently running about 7% ahead of last year at this time. Thus, I believe we could easily enroll 100 to 150 more FTFR. Once we see what our application numbers are in early spring, I will update our prediction model and confirm our final fall goals with President Lee and the cabinet. I'll be sending that information out in one of my spring 2024 enrollment updates.

Let's Finish What You Started Campaign

In the last section of this update, I wanted to highlight a re-enrollment service being offered through our Registrar's Office by Anthony Korsund, Student Success Coordinator. Below is a summary in Anthony's own words:

In my role as the new Student Success Coordinator for the Office of the Registrar, I have the unique challenge and distinct pleasure of working with students who have left the university for various reasons, but are now determined to return and earn their degree from Sonoma State University (SSU). Having 'stopped out' of university myself, I know how setbacks to reaching one's educational goals can feel. It doesn't feel good. So, I take pleasure in advising students on how best to achieve their academic goals after the vicissitudes of life have gotten in the way.

There is often a lot of confusion after one has been academically disqualified, and subsequently questions about how grade remediation, as well as reinstatement and readmission work. I love working with students in these circumstances to craft a plan that will support them in rebounding from the academic jeopardy in which they have found themselves.

Because student circumstances can vary greatly and no one size fits all, I help students craft advising plans that suit their unique needs. There is a lot to navigate as one learns about the various policies governing such things as grade replacement versus grade averaging, course articulation between campuses, or the eligibility criteria needed for a reinstatement petition or to apply for readmission.

While the work can be arduous, it can also be very rewarding. It is wonderful to hear from the students who have been successfully readmitted after a number of years away, or who were able to raise their GPA and return to good academic standing as well as those who have finally earned their degree.

With the support of my colleagues in the Office of the Registrar, partners across campus within the advising community, and student-centered faculty serving on the University Standards Committee, as well as the chairs and staff leading various departments, we have been able to increase the number of students successfully returning to SSU. Our new “Let’s Finish What You Started!” campaign has thus far led to over 60 advising contacts since its launch Fall 2022. \$500 scholarships for students who qualify have helped overcome some financial challenges.. The Office of the Registrar has also seen the number of students successfully reinstated increase from 11 students during the Summer of 2022 to 19 students during the Summer of 2023 with more to come in summer 2024.

Cheers,
Anthony

Conclusion

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



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