

## Town Hall Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

This FAQ document is designed to provide response to questions submitted during the January 30, 2025 town hall.

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### **Is Sonoma State closing or turning into a junior college?**

Sonoma State is not closing nor turning into a junior college. On January 30, CSU Chancellor Mildred Garcia sent a clear message of support for the sustainability of the institution. Here is a key piece of that communication: *Please know that these actions do not signal the beginning of the end for Sonoma State. To the contrary, while it may be difficult to see in the moment, they are the painful steps needed to weather the current and worsening fiscal storm and to begin to reposition the university for the future – a brighter, more sustainable future. I know that I speak for the entire system when I say that we are fully and unwaveringly committed to Sonoma State’s service to the North Bay – and to its diverse and talented students – for generations to come.*

### **Budget Trends/Cuts Over Previous Years**

#### **Did recent construction projects such as the Stevenson Hall Renovation or the installation of the Solar Array contribute to the budget deficit?**

No, recent construction projects like the Stevenson Hall Renovation or the installation of the Solar Array did not contribute to the budget deficit. The construction funds are allocated separately by the state.

#### **What other actions were taken to reduce campus operating expenses prior to the recently announced actions to eliminate degree programs and intercollegiate athletics?**

Over the past five years, and prior to the additional cuts announced in January 2025, the university used a variety of different methodologies to make an accumulated \$26.3 million in base budget reductions. These reductions began in 2020-21 with each division taking a 12% budget reduction. In the years that followed, the university further reduced its operating expenses through position management, which included not filling vacated positions, offering two voluntary separation programs, and reducing the instructional pool related to reduced enrollment. In 2024-25, the division of Academic Affairs implemented an Academic Reorganization to further reduce the university’s operating costs and better reflect the needs of the campus’ smaller student population.

#### **Why is such a significant amount being cut in one year instead of over several years?**

The university was mandated by the Chancellor’s Office to balance the budget by 2025-26.

#### **In October an announcement was made that projected the deficit at \$21 million, but in January it increased to \$23.9 million. What led to this?**

We anticipate that there will be some enrollment loss related to the eliminated programs, which increased the number built into the deficit plan.

### **How can students, faculty, and staff be more involved and informed in the budget process?**

The campus strives to make budget planning transparent and collaborative. University Budget Plans are posted annually and are accessible on the [University Budget & Resource Planning website](#). Additionally, the campus holds two budget forums each year, one in the fall and one in the spring. These events are open to the campus community and are offered with both in-person and online options. Recordings from past budget forums can be found [online](#). In addition, last fall, Interim President Cutrer held a Town Hall on the campus budget deficit, explaining the mandate to eliminate the deficit in one year, demonstrating the reasons for the deficit, and indicating that all options would be considered in order to balance the budget.

### **Reserves**

#### **Why is the university not using reserves to fill the budget gap? Has the university used any of its reserves previously?**

Sonoma State has spread its base budget cuts over a six-year period by using reserves as one-time resources to avoid taking the full cut in a single year. However, reserves are depleted once used and do not solve the base budget shortfall.

### **Revenue Generation**

#### **Has Sonoma State considered renting vacant on-campus housing to local community members?**

The residential housing program at Sonoma State prioritizes students' needs, and students continue to account for 2,000 on-campus residents. Due to a lower student population on campus, some units have been designated for faculty, staff, and non-traditional student housing. Additionally, the university continues to utilize the housing inventory for summer conferences and other major events, and does not currently plan to offer units to outside community members.

#### **Have revenue-generation opportunities like selling or leasing the Green Music Center been considered?**

The Green Music Center includes classrooms, faculty offices, and student rehearsal halls. The largest performance space in the center is Weill Hall, which is more frequently used by students than any other user group. Weill Hall is available for rent by outside users, and additional rentals are being pursued. The Prelude Restaurant space is leased to a partner that is planning to open it as a restaurant. Like all campus spaces, the Green Music Center is composed of state buildings, and Sonoma State cannot profit from the sale of state buildings.

### **Academics**

#### **It has been discussed that the university worked with Gray Decision Intelligence to gather data to inform decisions regarding the Academic Reorganization. Were any of the**

**decisions made to cut programming based on the suggestions of a language learning model or Artificial Intelligence (AI)?**

Gray Decision Intelligence (Gray "DI," not "AI") is a consultant paid for by the Chancellor's Office that assisted in analyzing data on the market demand and economics of our academic programs based on data we supplied. We did not implement AI in the making of our budget decisions. We looked at every academic program on our campus in making our decisions, as did our Academic Master Planning process over the past two years.

**Are there any other programs "on the chopping block"? What guarantees can the university make that there will not be additional future cuts?**

Our goal in the academic program cuts was to impact as few students as possible (only about 1% of the student body will need to change majors), and the budget-reduction plan will stabilize the campus budget, allowing us to move forward as an institution. One of the goals of making these cuts in the base budget now is so we will not have to make further cuts in the foreseeable future, but we are a public institution, dependent on the budget of the state and the system. As a result, we can be impacted when those budgets change.

**Will junior and senior students in eliminated programs be able to complete their degrees?**

Students who are within 60 units of graduation by the end of Spring 2025 can finish their current degrees. Students who are not within 60 units of graduation or are otherwise unable to follow a pathway to graduating within two years will need to change majors by May 22, 2025 (the end of the Spring 2025 semester).

**For those programs being eliminated, such as Art History or Dance, will students still have access to classes in those disciplines?**

Yes, students will have access to courses in the programs being eliminated during the "teach-out" phase through Spring 2027. Courses may be taught under new prefixes.

**My major is not being cut, but I'm interested in taking a course in a program that is being cut. Will those courses continue to be available?**

Yes, a variety of general education and service courses will continue to be taught, including some in the disciplinary areas affected by program eliminations.

**When will teach-out plans be made available?**

Teachout plans will be available to students by March 30, 2025, ahead of Fall registration, which opens on April 14.

**What is going to happen to our COPLAC status?**

Our status in COPLAC, the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges, is unchanged. Sonoma State continues to be a full member. The Provost has addressed this concern with the COPLAC Executive Office and is assured that SSU will remain a member. Many COPLAC institutions have made budget cuts and changes to their program mix and are still grounded in the liberal arts and sciences, as is Sonoma State.

## **Athletics/Transferring Universities**

### **With the closing of athletics, what is going to happen with their facilities?**

The university will evaluate future uses for athletic facilities. We are committed to using these spaces in ways that benefit the broader campus and local community.

### **Can you outline what plans are in place to help students transfer, should they desire?**

Student-athletes considering a transfer can connect with campus resources for guidance and support throughout the process. Resources such as [University Advising](#), the [Office of the Registrar](#), and the [Seawolf Service Center](#) are available to help students navigate transfer processes. Additionally, student-athletes are encouraged to engage with the institution they are interested in transferring to for further assistance and a smoother transition.

### **What support is being provided to student-athletes who have a scholarship?**

Student-athletes will continue to receive their scholarships through undergraduate graduation if they meet eligibility requirements. Scholarships remain intact if a student enters the NCAA Transfer Portal but decides to stay, and will be reinstated if a student transfers and later returns to SSU. For questions about financial aid or external funding, students should contact [finaid@sonoma.edu](mailto:finaid@sonoma.edu).

## **Recruitment/Student Life**

### **What is being done to assure remaining students will have a vibrant campus? What resources are available to those students to ensure their success on campus?**

The Division of Student Affairs oversees a number of programs that enrich campus and contribute to student success. These include programming offered through Student Involvement, Residential Education and Campus Housing (REACH), and over 120 student-led clubs and organizations with themes including academics, culture, professional, performing arts, special interest, political, spiritual, sports, social justice, wellness, and more. Additional student services include University Advising, the Center for Academic Access & Student Enrichment (CAASE), Disability Services for Students (DSS), Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS), and more. A more complete list of student resources can be found on the [Student Affairs website](#).

### **What work is being done to recruit students from the surrounding high schools and community colleges?**

Sonoma State is in the process of rebuilding new student recruitment and enrollment marketing at the university. The university is moving away from an outreach model (used when applications are plentiful) to a strategic recruitment model to increase market share and yield. This transition began in 2023 and should be completed in 2025.

Many aspects of the transition are well underway. Sonoma State has partnered with 20 high schools and nine community colleges for Guaranteed Admission. In addition, the University is actively growing the Dual Enrollment program to help increase A-G completion in the region and build student pipelines to Sonoma State.

Our small recruitment team has been extremely active, participating in more than 300 college nights, fairs, presentations, and school visits throughout the Fall 2024 semester. They have a regular presence at each of the community colleges in our region and are increasing SSU presence at community colleges throughout Northern California and the Los Angeles Community College District.

The campus tour program has grown significantly and provides group and family tours Monday through Saturday. In Fall 2024, the Welcome Center Team led more than 400 tours. Information on students who participate in a tour, campus visit, University event, or other recruitment-related activity are entered into Slate (the University's CRM system) so that we can engage with the students, invite them to events, answer their questions, and help them apply.

Enrollment Marketing has been working to create videos, add to the photo library, and update brochures and written communications to help tell the Sonoma State story and provide a more engaging experience for our prospective students. The university's partnership with Paramount+ and Sonoma Media have garnered well over a million views, increasing our brand awareness and driving traffic to our website.

The Strategic Enrollment Team then works on a series of yield communications, activities, and events to recruit students, helping them accept their offer of admission, pay their deposit, and attend New Student Orientation. Recruiting students through these processes requires active engagement and consistent connection. Competition from other CSUs, UCs, community colleges, private institutions, and out-of-state institutions is increasing rapidly as the number of high school graduates starts to decrease (which will occur for the next 15 years).

The initiatives and activities mentioned above are just part of the work being done to increase Sonoma State's prospective student market share, expand our brand awareness throughout the region, state, and beyond, and increase our overall enrollment. These efforts are starting to show success as the Spring 2025 university enrollment is about 1% higher than Spring 2024 – the first term-over-term increase in enrollment in many years.