



SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY

Strategic Enrollment Management Plan

2026-2029



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Message from the President

Colleagues,

I am pleased to provide this introduction to San Francisco State's Strategic Enrollment Management Plan. I am encouraged by the thought that many of you will soon be reading this plan. We must do things quickly and differently to address the demographic realities of the present and the future.

As I write this, we have recently made organizational changes which demonstrate that enrollment challenges and opportunities are a critical institutional priority. Those changes are only one step. We all must recognize how we can contribute to the success of SFSU in attracting, enrolling, retaining and graduating the students who power the economies of our city, region and state.

The pressures on higher education and a constantly evolving competitive landscape require us to be agile and forward thinking. We cannot rely on old practices and traditions. Instead, we must be bold, creative and strategic.

Enrollment management is a university-wide responsibility. We cannot operate in silos. Each one of us has a vital role to play in the success of the University and our students. We can and should work together to make SFSU a welcoming environment for students to learn and succeed.

I hope as you review this plan, you will think about opportunities to support the important work it outlines. Work that will transform the lives of current and future students, their families and their communities. Let it inform and inspire your work every day.

Best,

Lynn Mahoney, Ph.D. President

Executive Summary

In 2021, SFSU published a 5-year Strategic Enrollment Management Plan (SEMP) to respond to multiple years of expected and unexpected enrollment decline. Much of this work was spurred by recommendations from EAB, a national partner in the enrollment space, to help us forge a path forward through the dynamic landscape of higher education in the Bay Area and the state of California. The plan focused on five broad pillars with the goal of stabilizing enrollment between 2022–2027:

1. SFSU’s Identity (Brand and Marketing)
2. Size and Mix of the Student Body
3. Retention
4. Academic Program Mix
5. Organization Recruitment Capacity and Structure



Important efforts and investments by the institution followed to support these five pillars including efforts to ensure strategic focus at the Cabinet level, innovative cross-unit collaboration, centralization of academic advising and our first-ever awareness marketing campaign. While these approaches provided a solid foundation, results have not been realized, and our enrollment decline has become more precipitous.

In response to the deepened need, the California State University (CSU) Chancellor’s Office during summer 2025, contracted EAB to re-engage with SFSU, and provide updated and new recommendations to stabilize, and potentially reverse the decline, SFSU’s undergraduate enrollment. These recommendations assume the declining demographic in CA, particularly our region, and the competitive landscape to attract and retain students. EAB both acknowledged what has been accomplished over the last five years and challenged us to think differently and aggressively.

The release of these recommendations and interest from the CA State Legislature to increase enrollment have ignited a new sense of urgency for SFSU to realize our potential to turn the tide on the year-over-year decline that has threatened our institutional financial stability.

In August 2025, President Mahoney restructured Enrollment Management and kicked off an expedited timeline for a new SEMP for us to address immediate opportunities and challenges which will ultimately set us up to stabilize and rebound enrollment. Additional resources have been committed by the Chancellor’s Office to assist us in our efforts.

We must respond to this critical moment and, as an institution rooted in shared governance and responsibility, commit to working together to address this call to action.

The path forward requires new thinking and a different approach. Thus, rather than broad pillars, this plan outlines very specific efforts that can drive enrollment — both through recruitment and retention. This is a collective effort, bridging all Cabinet areas, that reflects the shared commitment and responsibility to work differently, more creatively and with more urgency than ever to make a difference.



As you will see in the Recruitment Plan, we are becoming increasingly strategic in the areas of prospective student search and recruitment territory management. We are developing tools for our campus community to be ambassadors for the university and will leverage alumni connections to broaden our reach. Our marketing and communication efforts will enter a new phase of engagement with much more direct and intentional messaging and advertising.

Similarly, the Retention Plan highlights many of the ways in which we are building upon past successes and introducing new efforts. We will continue our focus on identifying and removing administrative barriers and double down on our efforts to re-enroll students who have stopped out. We also have been deliberate in intensifying our focus on career and workforce alignment, particularly in a world in which artificial intelligence is becoming increasingly relevant.

These strategies and tactics will be reviewed on a regular basis to benchmark progress and adapt as necessary. All have clear metrics and key performance indicators that will allow us to be agile in our resource alignment. Cabinet will receive quarterly progress reports and be alerted if specific efforts need to be augmented or eliminated as the landscape continues to shift with us.

Mission, Vision and Strategic Priorities

SFSU finalized an evergreen institutional strategic plan in August 2022. This plan focused on six priority areas, designed to be committed to a direction but agile in metrics to account for an uncertain future and to guide the institution through years to come in an environment that was clearly evolving and volatile. The University's first SEMP was developed simultaneously to the overall institutional strategic plan.

SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY

OUR MISSION

San Francisco State University educates and equips students to thrive in a global society. We deliver academic excellence by pursuing knowledge, inspiring creativity, supporting our diverse community and advancing social justice and positive change in the world.

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- 1. Our Commitment: Educational Equity and Student Success**
We strive to provide every student with transformative educational experiences that support their academic and future success.
- 2. Working with Purpose and Passion: An Improved Employee Experience**
We strive to make our university a great place to work where everyone can meaningfully contribute to the success of our students and the SFSU community.
- 3. SFSU: Your University, Our University, One University**
We strive to foster an inclusive community where all members – students, alumni, staff, faculty and administrators – are welcomed and valued.
- 4. The Academic Edge: Relevant Education and Pathways to Success**
We strive to ensure holistic student learning that reflects our commitment to social justice, integrates liberal and professional education, and leads to rewarding careers.
- 5. Fiscal Sustainability: Transparency, Literacy and Shared Objectives**
We strive to thoughtfully manage our resources and make strategic investments to implement, a resilient forward-looking financial model.
- 6. An Engaged Community Partner: A Leading Force for Good in the Bay Area**
We strive to serve our communities by building strategic collaborations with a broad range of Bay Area partners and by modeling environmentally sustainable practices in the university's operations.

OUR VISION

San Francisco State University aspires to be a great place to learn, teach, work, create and innovate. We will be a leader among public universities in advancing transformative change locally and globally.



OUR VALUES



INCLUSION AND BELONGING



LEARNING, CREATIVITY AND EXPLORATION



EQUITY AND JUSTICE



LOCAL AND GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT



EMPOWERMENT AND TRANSFORMATION

The opportunity to create a new SEMP with a clearly developed and currently applied institutional strategic plan lends expansive opportunity. We, as an institution, are more firmly planted in the six institutional priorities after two years of implementation. We have seen these priorities in practice — incorporated into all aspects of campus culture, community engagement, global perspective and, most importantly, shared, responsible decision making.

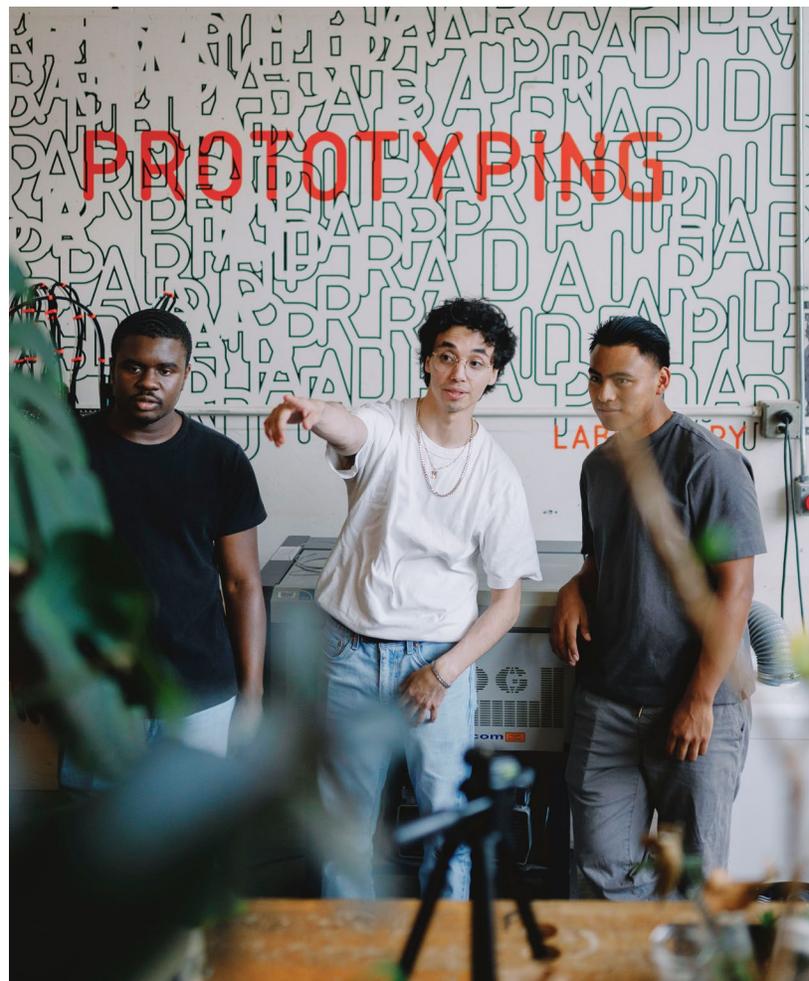
Educational Equity and Student Success emerged as the top priority for our university-wide strategic plan and that is significant in the development of a new SEMP. It underscores our guiding principle; we must attract, enroll, retain and graduate students in an intentional and thoughtful manner. Our duty is to meet students and provide access and opportunities for success by considering their context, reassessing our assumptions, updating our processes and imagining creative solutions to persistent barriers.

Our commitment to our employees, institutional priority two, is significant to what you will see in this SEMP. This work doesn't happen without an enthusiastic engagement of those providing front-line student service, teaching and learning and co-curricular opportunities. This plan was intentionally created with the voices of over one hundred staff, faculty and administrators, which exemplifies the need for a workforce that is fully committed to our student body.

Institutional priorities three (“One University”) and five (“Fiscal Sustainability”) are intertwined in that they solidify our commitment to a shared understanding of our mission and values. It speaks about how we treat one another, value inclusiveness, transparency and shared objectives. If we want our students to belong, then we all must feel informed, valued and engaged. This is reflected in the engagement that ultimately developed this SEMP — campus stakeholders involved in not only considering how enrollment affects their units but thinking about an enrollment landscape and how individual efforts contribute to collective goals.

Similarly, institutional priorities four (“Academic Edge”) and six (“Engaged Community Partners”) are emerging with more significance than ever as we steady ourselves on a path towards stability. Global and national politics, artificial intelligence, consumer behavior and trust all merge to create an unstable landscape for higher education. What looks to be true is the need to be relevant, career-focused and adaptable to the lives of our students. Opportunities exist in our local economy, which has global reach, to have our graduates emerge as entrepreneurs, researchers, professionals and public servants but above all, as ethical and socially justice-minded professionals that provide good within their individual and collective reach.

This new SEMP is aligned with and reflects our mission-driven institutional priorities.



Campus Profile

Founded in 1899, SFSU is a major urban public university within the CSU system. Located in one of the world's most diverse and innovative cities, SFSU is committed to providing broad access to high-quality education, advancing social justice and preparing students to thrive in a global society.



Academics and Mission

SFSU offers a comprehensive range of undergraduate, graduate and certificate programs across seven colleges: Liberal and Creative Arts, Science and Engineering, Health and Social Sciences, Business, Education, Ethnic Studies, and Professional and Global Engagement. The university is nationally recognized for founding the first College of Ethnic Studies in the United States, an enduring symbol of its leadership in equity and inclusion.

The university's mission emphasizes intellectual discovery, civic engagement and access for students from all backgrounds. SFSU's core values of equity, community, innovation and social responsibility inform its curriculum and student experience.

Campus and Community

The main 141-acre campus is located in southwest San Francisco, just minutes from the Pacific Ocean, downtown and proximity to employer focused regions like Biotech Bay and Silicon Valley. Students benefit from access to a global economic hub and a network of partnerships across technology, health care, education and the arts.

More than 200 student organizations support engagement across cultural, academic and professional interests. SFSU students are known for activism, community service and leadership, continuing the university's long-standing tradition of civic involvement.

Students and Demographics

San Francisco State University serves approximately 20,713 students (Headcount, Fall 2025). Of these, about 17,943 are undergraduates and 2,770 are graduate or post-baccalaureate students. Nearly 70% of SFSU students identify as students of color, making it one of the most diverse universities in the nation. Nearly 40% of undergraduate students are Pell Grant eligible and over 32% of undergraduates are the first in their families (first generation) to attend college.

Notable Achievements and Impact

SFSU has conferred nearly 300,000 degrees since its founding and has produced distinguished alumni in business, public service, journalism and the arts. It ranks among the nation's top universities for promoting social mobility and diversity. The university's location and commitment to equity make it a critical contributor to workforce development and innovation in the Bay Area and beyond.

Overall Enrollment Landscape

National Context: Forces Shaping U.S. Enrollment

Higher education across the United States faces a new era of volatility marked by converging demographic, behavioral, and competitive pressures. The analysis from EAB's 2024–2025 engagement with SFSU emphasizes that enrollment performance is no longer explained by demographics alone—it reflects the intersection of shrinking high school cohorts, declining college-going rates and intensifying market competition.

Between 2025 and 2030, the number of 18-year-olds nationally is projected to decline by roughly 12%, with sharper declines in the West. California is experiencing a 16% decline in 18-year-olds projected from 2023–2035. Meanwhile, the college-going rate has fallen 8.6% since 2012 nationwide, and in California, from 78% in 2010 to 72% in 2023, with further declines expected to 68% by 2035. This means the potential pool of college-bound students is contracting faster than demographics alone suggest.

Nationally, students are applying to more institutions, an average of 8.3 per enrolled student in 2023 versus 3.7 in 2001. Simultaneously, national yield rates have effectively halved. Public universities with acceptance rates above 65% now require application growth of 22–32% every five years simply to maintain enrollment stability. At the same time, net tuition revenue per student has dropped 10–20% nationally, as rising discount rates and affordability concerns constrain institutional finances.

In short, higher education nationwide serves a smaller, more selective, and more price-sensitive student market. Institutions must compete not only for students but for their confidence in the value of a degree.

California and Bay Area Trends

California mirrors these national pressures but with greater intensity. The state's youth population is shrinking rapidly, and college participation continues to decline. California is expected to lose more than 88,000 18-year-olds by 2035, reducing first-time college enrollment by about 20% if current trends persist. Out-migration from the Bay Area, especially among low and middle-income families, further reduces the number of local college-bound students.

At the same time, competition has intensified: UC campuses are admitting more California residents — in Fall 2024, undergraduate enrollment rose by 2%, community colleges are expanding tuition-free programs and other CSU campuses are aggressively marketing to students once predominantly served by us. The result is a smaller, more competitive local market where affordability and proximity alone no longer ensure enrollment growth.

Institutional Context: San Francisco State University

Our enrollment trajectory has declined significantly over the past decade. Between 2019 to 2024, first-time freshman student enrollment declined 36%. At the same time, new transfer enrollment declined by 34%. Recently, transfer students have shown more stabilization while first-time freshman decline has accelerated. Our campus-based projections and EAB's projections on first-time freshman indicate that a further decline is imminent unless action is taken.

Our current yield rate, around 8–9%, trails peer CSUs, suggesting that many admitted students apply without strong intent to enroll. Many of our CSU competitors have yield rates of between 10–20%, while some even near 25%.

Regional factors also weigh heavily: San Francisco's high cost of living, housing scarcity and urban quality-of-life concerns make it a less appealing destination for many college students. These perceptions, combined with safety and affordability concerns, challenge our competitive positioning.



Institutional Strengths and Opportunities

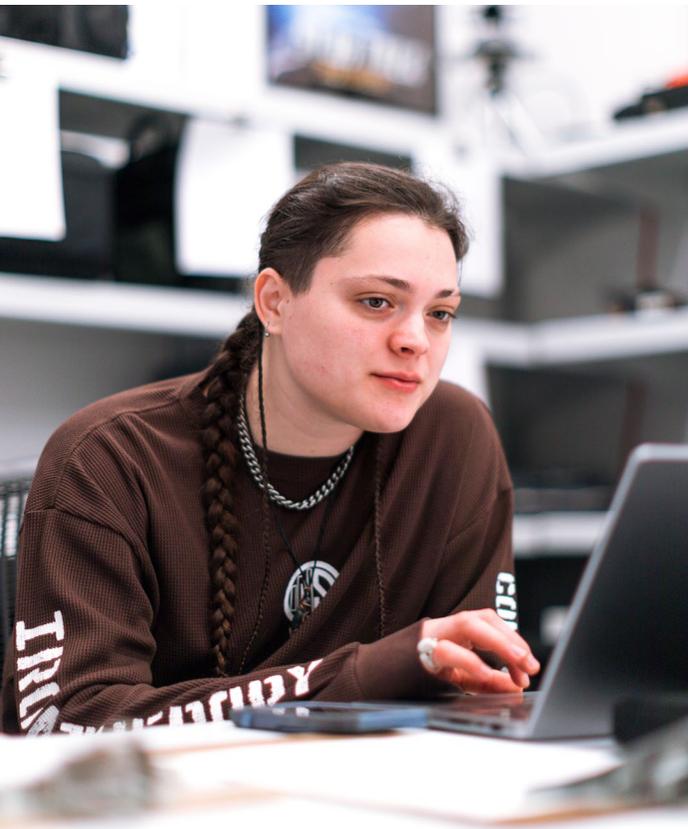
Despite these headwinds, we maintain core advantages that can support strategic recovery. Our mission-driven focus on access, social justice and diversity resonates with first-generation and underrepresented students. Creating a focus on high-opportunity academic programs to grow will help improve interest and yield.

We have been recognized for providing an affordable, high-quality education that leads to social mobility. Research.com listed SFSU as the most affordable university in California in 2025. Similarly in 2025, we made MSN.com’s list of the Top 20 institutions in the nation for return on investment and Wall Street Journal’s Top 25 national list for social mobility.

Our geographical position in San Francisco may lend opportunity now that was not there in the recent past. The city itself is turning a corner in terms of reputation and economic opportunity. Academic program alignment, career and internship integration and an outcome focused approach to presenting our value statements and the student experience can help us reemerge as an engine for the regional workforce and present clear return on investment for students.

Conclusion

National and regional enrollment pressures have created permanent market correction — the pressures are not a temporary dip but rather reflect a need for doing our work differently. Our path forward lies in embracing strategic differentiation, modernizing recruitment infrastructure, and aligning our mission of equity and access with the pragmatic needs of today’s students. With focused execution and investment, we can stabilize enrollment and reaffirm our vital role as an accessible, transformative institution in the Bay Area.



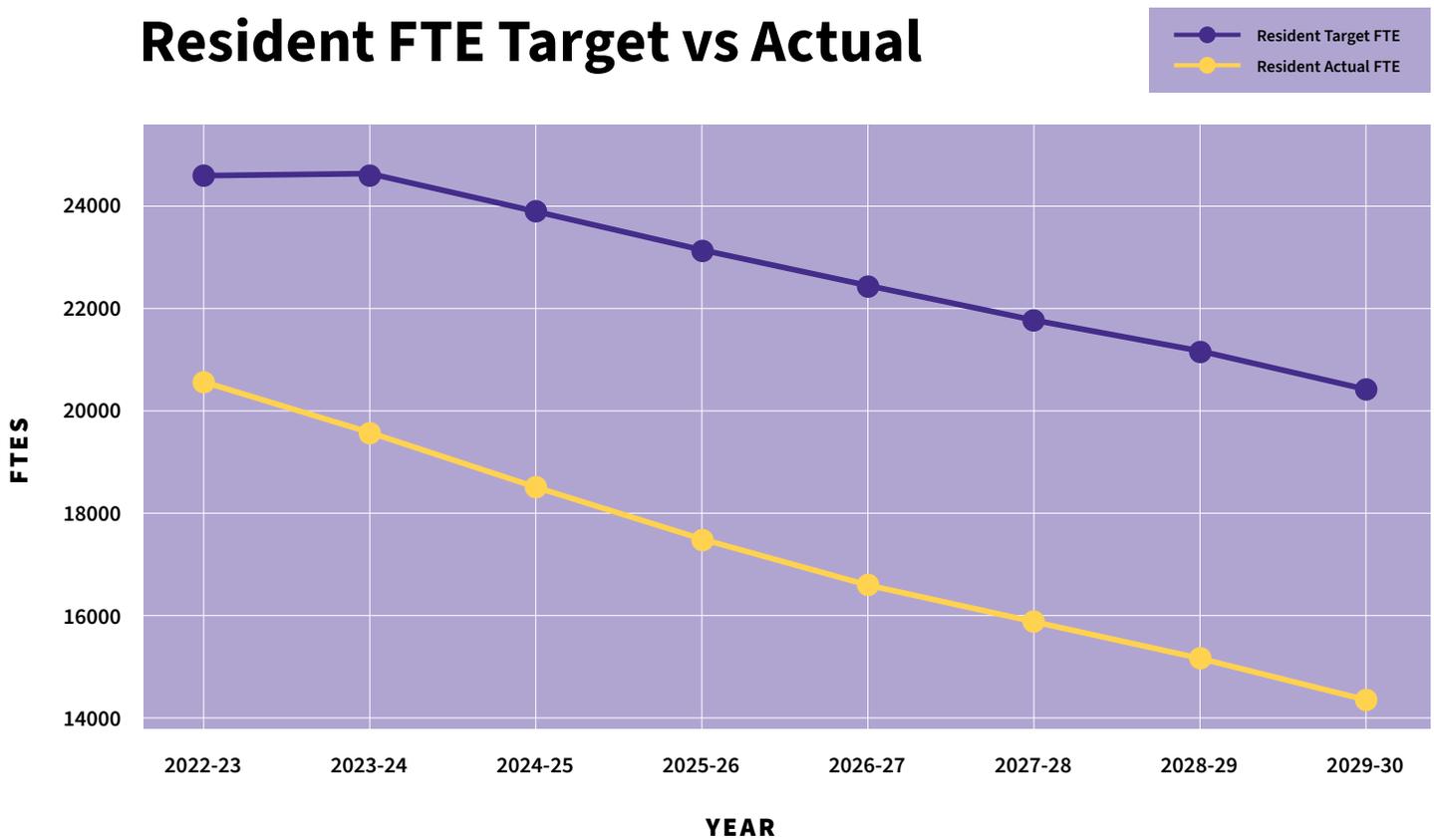
Introspection and Projections

While ambitious and well-intended, our last SEMP did not drive our day-to-day efforts forward in a way that garnered anticipated (and needed) results. It was broad, lacked specificity and frankly, authority to do what it needed to drive us to execute our strategy differently, more creatively and more focused than before. Now, with aligned resources, organizational restructuring and an ever-evolving focus on the need and desire to drive enrollment, we are better positioned than ever to do the work.

Our Executive Summary appropriately outlines the historical engagement with EAB and our evolution of our strategic enrollment work. However, a sobering moment came when legislatively mandated enrollment projections showed stark realities by 2030.

The projections depicted below are the likely outcomes of the status quo. Doing the same thing, the same way and expecting a different result in an increasingly competitive landscape will not yield the results we need. Instead, the projections below predict our worst-case scenario and should serve as motivation to take the recommendations, plans and strategies outlined in this document as a roadmap to a different future state.

Resident FTE Target vs Actual



Process and Document Structure

Process

When President Lynn Mahoney announced the organizational restructuring of Enrollment Management and the (then) potential investment from the Chancellor's Office, we immediately began the creation of a new SEMP. Our prior SEMP had been intended to take us through 2027. However, the urgency facing us called for a new, bolder and expedited approach.

It was clear to SFSU leadership that the broad pillars of our prior plan were foundational, but in and of themselves, were not going to support the work that we needed to accomplish in the timeframe and environment we operate in. Instead, we needed to create something that will operate as a blueprint for enrollment strategy and activity that will guide both the immediate future and sustain us through the next several years. Typically, a SEMP would be developed over a one-year period. However, we wanted to be aggressive in our approach to meet the urgency of the moment. Thus, this planning process kicked off on September 15, 2025, and is complete as of December 2025.

We developed a unique approach:

- All organizational units across the institution were active in the development of the plan.
- Over forty work groups were charged with creating blueprints that would guide their work as it relates to enrollment over the next several years.
- All groups needed to detail historical context and key performance indicators that would allow efforts to be measured and reevaluated on a regular basis.
- All the blueprints needed to be actionable, resource aware and fit within the institution's overall strategic plan and enrollment priorities.

From September 15–November 15, 2025, the workgroups created three drafts of their plans which were reviewed by senior leadership for both recruitment and retention. This was an iterative process of feedback, meetings, consultation and development to ultimately create what is included in this document.

Cabinet members were consulted early in December 2025 to review the full document, with particular attention to the sections most relevant to their areas.

It became clear that the enthusiasm of the work groups produced a longer, more detailed document than originally intended. The submissions from each work group will serve as planning documents that guide individual efforts, mark pivotal timeframes and anticipated deliverables. The details of each blueprint won't be broadly shared; however, this document represents summary level information on our collective efforts.

Document Structure

This document is structured to underscore the motivation behind our efforts and to demonstrate the campus community's commitment to achieving results.

The SEMP includes the following:

- General overview and historical contexts, trends and opportunities typical of strategic enrollment management plan
- Recruitment situational analysis and key performance indicators which focuses on the ways in which we attract prospective students and see them through to enrollment. The redacted blueprints support this summary level section.
- Retention situational analysis and key performance indicators which focuses on how we set our enrolled students up for persistence and success. The redacted blueprints support this summary level section.
- Addendums addressing international and graduate student populations that remain an important part of our overall enrollment strategy

Much of this document is the work of incredible colleagues committed to doing their part to help change our enrollment trajectory.

In true SFSU fashion, we are tapping into our grassroots culture and recognize broad strokes will do little while **many focused efforts** add up to results.

Recruitment Plan

Recruitment Plan — Situational Analysis & KPI Identification

Overview and Background Information

SFSU will strengthen recruitment outcomes using data-driven strategies that reflect its mission of access, equity and student success. In May 2020, the offices of Undergraduate Admissions and Outreach were merged into a single operational unit called Undergraduate Admissions and Recruitment (UGAR). The transition to a “recruitment” model versus an “outreach” model was significant — it signaled that we were going to be more intentional in our efforts rather than passive. Additionally, this merger acknowledged the need that the operational admissions team, who read applications, processed transfer credit, etc., needed to be more connected to the recruitment team that initiates and fosters connection with prospective students and influencers.

SFSU, and the CSU system, had benefited from years of demographics that did not require much proactive effort — there were more than enough college-going high school graduates and transfer students to meet enrollment targets. As the state experienced out-migration, declining demographics due to birth rates and a more critical view of higher education as worthwhile, tactics for recruitment needed to change.

Despite merged efforts, SFSU continued to experience an enrollment decline. First-time freshman enrollment declined 36% between Fall 2019–2024; new transfer enrollment declined 34%. Yield (admit to enroll) has also declined. Competitors gained a greater share of the Bay Area prospective student market. SFSU yield falls below that of competitors — suggesting that the issue is not application volume but applications from the right applicant and securing interest and intent of those applicants.

Efforts moving forward must be even more intentional and strategic. The Recruitment Plan provides detailed blueprints for specific efforts focused on the following areas:

Search and Recruitment: A redesigned approach to how UGAR deploys recruitment team members to attract first-time freshman and transfer students who are likely to choose SFSU. These efforts will return to a more local focus. Team members will be trained to have greater impact when they visit feeder schools, attend college fairs and represent SFSU in the community.

We have already begun restructuring our approach to search — the proactive process of identifying, reaching and engaging prospective students before they inquire or apply. Over the last several years Enrollment Management (EM) has gathered data to direct efforts more efficiently and effectively. Our partners, namely EAB Enroll360 and Niche, are working with us to adjust paid search and fulfillment efforts.

EAB made several recommendations about the campus tour and visit program. Students who visit campus are more likely to enroll than those who do not. We are in the process of redesigning our tour schedule to include more evening and weekend opportunities and tour script to more effectively message our distinctive and impressive campus. Similarly, we are providing opportunities for campus partners to plan campus visits that may be more thematic in nature than a traditional tour. With financial support from the Chancellor’s Office, we have an opportunity to hire additional student ambassadors.

In 2025, one EM leadership team member’s role was expanded to focus on partner engagement. This fosters better relationships with community-based organizations and high school and community college counselors. Within these partnerships is our Guaranteed and Direct Admission program with San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) and City College of San Francisco (CCSF).

SFSU has a rich history of collective action and that holds true in the recruitment space. Our faculty, staff and alumni are eager to participate in stabilization efforts. It has been a struggle to coordinate efforts, which have made us appear disjointed and unorganized to community partners. This plan addresses that by creating deliberate strategies and a Recruiter’s Toolbox for alumni and campus partner engagement.

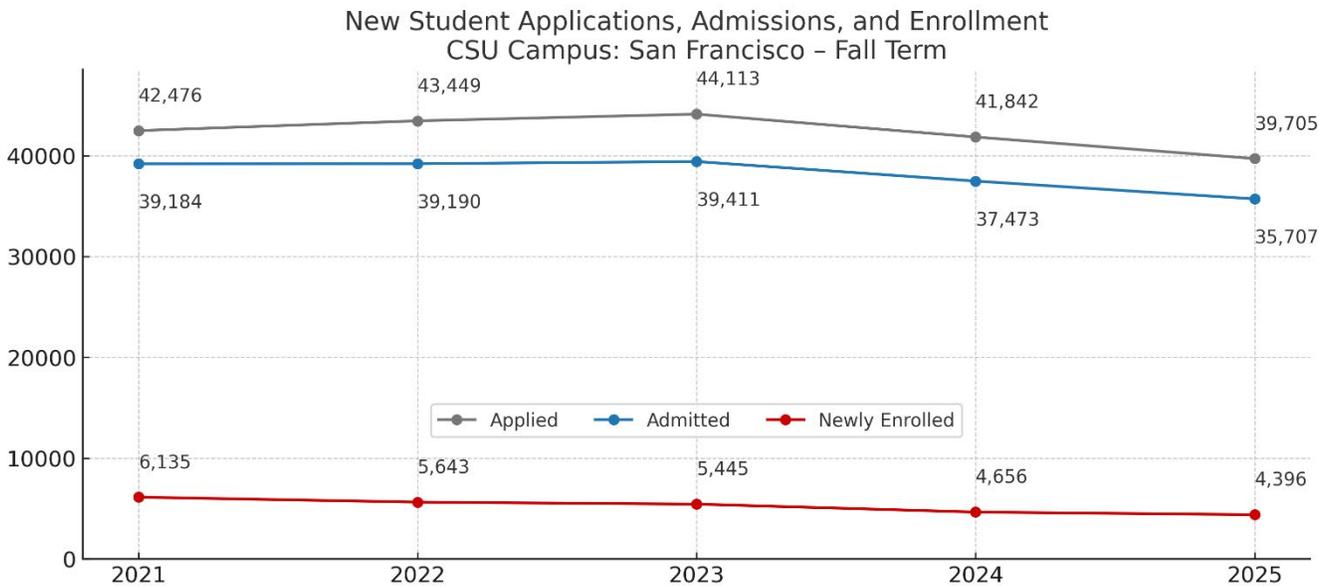
Affordability and Financial Aid: EAB’s recommendations applaud the improvements made to financial aid processing and timing over the last several years but point to many opportunities for continued improvement. SFSU has one of the lower net prices among institutions in the Bay Area; however, we have not done the best job explaining this to prospective students and supporters. Even with that net price, the cost of living in San Francisco is a barrier to enrollment. Our strategies around financial aid and cost are focused on leveraging scholarship dollars, explaining affordability and return on investment and maximizing federal and state grant aid to ease the burdens of cost.

Marketing and Communications: EAB also acknowledged how far we have come in the realm of marketing and communications. Since their prior assessment in 2020, we launched our first-ever application marketing campaign, created a position focused on enrollment communications and implemented new strategies for digital engagement. However, more can be done to be impactful. This plan will outline our planned strategies for more specific communication that differentiate us from our competitors, highlight recent alumni and demonstrate a clear path to a career. This will be done through a variety of channels including SFSU website, social media, paid digital advertising and more.

The Recruitment Plan addresses the demographic, behavioral and competitive forces shaping SFSU’s future enrollment. It focuses on restoring enrollment stability, improving yield and establishing the University’s market position as a first-choice destination for diverse, career-minded students in the Bay Area and beyond.

Data/Analysis

Application, Admission and Enrollment Trends 2020–2025 (freshman and transfer):



	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Acceptance Rate	92.2	90.2	89.4	89.6	89.9
Yield Rate	15.7	14.4	13.8	12.4	12.3

Type of institution where students (freshman and transfer) admitted to SFSU enrolled Fall 2024 (CSU system website):

Any CSU: 42%	UC: 17%	Unknown: 13%
	CCC: 16%	Other 2 or 4-year: 12%

Top 6 other CSU campuses where students (freshman and transfer) who applied to SFSU enrolled Fall 2023-2025 (CSU system website):

Top 6 other CSU campuses where students (freshman and transfer) who applied to SFSU enrolled Fall 2023-2025 (CSU system website):

	FA2023	FA2024	FA2025
San Jose	2,793	2,708	2,732
Sacramento	1,255	1,383	1,192
Long Beach	912	885	817
San Diego	998	819	733
Fullerton	849	713	648
East Bay	934	767	598
Total	7,741	7,275	6,720

Key Performance Indicators

These are overarching key performance indicators — subsequent sections will provide more detailed breakdowns of key performance indicators tied to individual efforts.

KPI	Definition	Baseline	Target	Data Source	Follow Up Frequency	Reporting Party
Overall Application Volume	Number of applications (freshman and transfer) received (fall term)	FA2025: 39,705 FA2024: 41,842 FA2023: 44,113	FA2026: 41,800 FA2027: 43,290 FA2028: 44,850	Institutional Research (IR)/ CSU Data Dashboard	Weekly	IR/UGAR
Overall Enrollment	Number of admits who enrolled	FA2025: 4,396 FA2024: 4,653 FA2023: 5,445	FA2026: 5,310** FA2027: 5,915 FA2028: 6,570	Institutional Research (IR)/ CSU Data Dashboard	Biannual (fall/spring semesters)	IR
Overall Yield	Percent of admits who enrolled	FA2025: 12.3% FA2024: 12.4% FA2023: 13.8%	FA2026: 14.2%** FA2027: 15.3% FA2028: 16.4%	Institutional Research (IR)/ CSU Data Dashboard	Biannual (fall/spring semesters)	IR
Overall Melt	Percent of accepted admission offers (AAO) not enrolled	FA2025: 20%* FA2024: 15.8% FA2023: 16.2% FA2022: 17%	FA2026: 17% (assuming FA2025 20% is final) FA2027: 16% FA2028: 15%	IR/*UGAR, IR census not completed	Biannual (fall/spring semesters)	IR

SFSU applicants who chose a top 5 CSU overlap	Percentage of SFSU applicants who chose a top 5 CSU overlap	FA2024: 16% FA2023: 16%	FA2026: 15% FA2027: 14% FA2028: 13%	CSU Applications & Admissions Dashboard (AAD)	Annual	CSU AAD
SFSU admits who chose a CCC	Percent of SFSU admits who chose a CA Community College	FA2024: 15% FA2023: 14%	FA2026: 14% FA2027: 13% FA2028: 12%	CSU AAD	Annual	CSU AAD
SFSU admits who did not enroll in college (National Student Clearinghouse)	Percent of SFSU admits with enrollment Unknown	FA2024: 14%	FA2026: 12% FA2027: 10% FA2028: 8%	CSU AAD/National Student Clearinghouse	Annual	CSU AAD

Notes & Attachments

**14.2% yield based on goal of 26,100 Freshman Accepts X 10% yield = 2,610 freshmen and 11,250 Transfer Accepts X 24% yield = 2,700 transfers.

Recruitment Plan - Blueprints

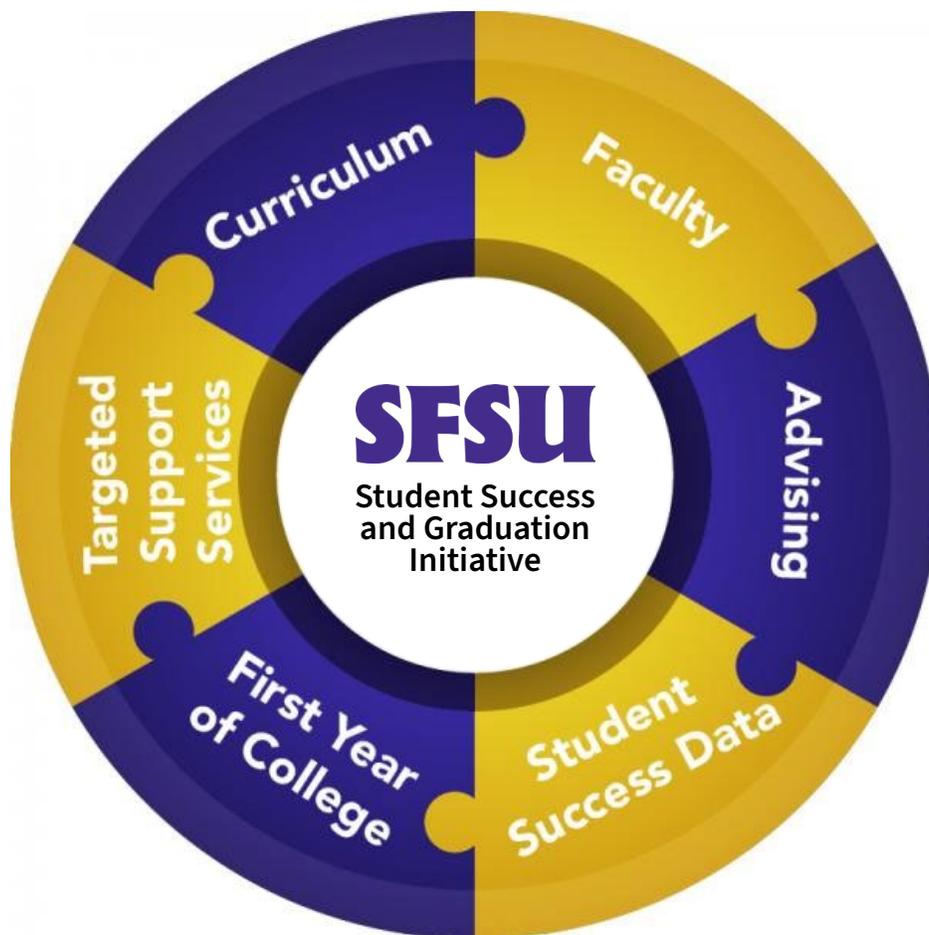
- Recruitment Plan — Situational Analysis & KPI Identification
- Recruitment Plan — Recruitment and Territory Plan
- Recruitment Plan — Freshman
- Recruitment Plan — Transfer
- Recruitment Plan — Western Undergraduate Exchange
- Recruitment Plan — Specialized Populations
- Recruitment Plan — Search
- Recruitment Plan — Tours and Visits
- Recruitment Plan — Partnership Engagement
- Recruitment Plan — Dual Enrollment
- Recruitment Plan — Ambassador Toolbox
- Recruitment Plan — Alumni Engagement
- Recruitment Plan — Orientation
- Recruitment Plan — Academic Offerings
- Recruitment Plan — Affordability
- Recruitment Plan — Financial Aid Leveraging
- Recruitment Plan — Scholarships
- Recruitment Plan — Marketing Strategy
- Recruitment Plan — Website Content, Maintenance and Governance Plan
- Recruitment Plan — Social Media Strategy
- Recruitment Plan — Journey Mapping
- Recruitment Plan — Messaging Highlights
- Recruitment Plan — Differentiation
- Recruitment Plan — Parent, Guardian, Support Engagement

Retention Plan

Retention Plan – Situational Analysis & KPI Identification

Overview and Background Information

SFSU is committed to improving student persistence, closing equity gaps, and strengthening degree completion across all programs. Grounded in the University’s mission and values of access, diversity, and social justice, this plan leverages institutional data to identify key performance indicators and inform strategies that support sustained, equitable retention. The CSU system launched Graduation Initiative 2025 (GI 2025) in 2016 and asked each campus to develop their [own plan](#). SFSU’s focused on improving course availability, improving advising, increasing use and access to student success data, improving first-time freshmen’s first year experience, targeted support services and faculty hiring and development based on curricular needs. The campus Student Success and Graduation Initiative Committee (SSGI) on campus, which had wide representation across campus, had its focus revised to overseeing the implementation of the campus GI 2025 plan.



That commitment was renewed in the 2022 [campus strategic plan](#). The first priority of the plan is Educational Equity and Student Success: “We strive to provide every student with transformative educational experiences that support their academic and future success.” Again, the university-wide SSGI committee had its charge revised to oversee implementation of this priority by setting the campus metrics for making progress on this goal. Those metrics include reduction of equity gaps in retention and graduation, increased credit accumulation in the first year (without equity gaps), reduction of the failure rate in high impact classes, increasing student use of tutoring, and reducing administrative barriers.

When President Mahoney arrived at SFSU, she created an Enrollment Operations committee that evolved into an Incoming Enrollment Operations and a Retention Operations committee, which both meet once a week. Those committees have representation from all Cabinet areas and have been able to make many major important changes including, for example, changing the order of priority course registration. Their work was commended by our accrediting body, WASC, in our re-affirmation review a couple of years ago.

One of the CSU goals for GI 2025 was complete elimination of retention and graduation equity gaps. As the initiative progressed, however, we were not collectively seeing the progress we had hoped. Given that, the Chancellor's Office asked all the campuses to focus on five specific equity priorities that they saw as most likely to reduce or eliminate equity gaps.

- Priority 1 Re-engage and re-enroll under-served students
- Priority 2 Expand credit accumulation opportunities (summer and intersession)
- Priority 3 Ensure equitable access to degree roadmaps
- Priority 4 Eliminate administrative barriers to graduation
- Priority 5 Promote equitable learning practices and reduce DFW rates

SFSU embraced these priorities and established work groups to make progress. Some of the priorities we had already made significant progress. For example, we already had over 90% of our students using our degree planner tool. Others, we learned that we hadn't even known there was a problem. For example, we hadn't previously reviewed data to see if our students were accumulating credits at different paces by demographic group. It turns out that our under-served students were not accumulating credits at the same rate as their peers and we doubled down on our Think 30 campaigns (earn 30 over fall, spring, and summer) via advising, social media, texts and other means. The Retention section of this new SEM plan includes a continued focus on many of these priorities.

Provost Amy Sueyoshi has also made retention and graduation top goals for her senior leadership. In October 2022, she provided each college dean with a memo with specific goals for their college retention and graduation rates. She has updated those goals annually and continues to make graduation and retention the central focus on leadership retreats and priorities.

Academic advising influences a students' experience and can affect retention. SFSU has significantly restructured its academic advising model to create a more unified, student-centered system. Funding from the Graduation Initiative 2025, campus investment, and the Stupski Foundation has allowed us to better align advising resources with student needs and provide a more proactive approach.

Previously, our shared model of advising was decentralized, fragmented and confusing to students. The Undergraduate Advising Center (UAC), college resource centers and major program faculty advised students. The Educational Opportunity and Pathway Programs also offered advising to students in their program.

Starting in Fall 2020, the university began simplifying its advising services by moving to a caseload model for first-year freshmen. All freshmen were assigned an academic advisor within the UAC with the goal of improving first-year retention. After this new approach, our first-year retention rate increased by 1.8% in one year (from 80.7% to 82.5%). It is important to note that this gain was even more significant given the global pandemic and a 7% decline in first-year retention nationwide at that time.

Building on that success, in January 2023, we consolidated advising services and brought all professional staff advisors working in Academic Affairs into the UAC in the Administration Building. The new UAC opened in a renovated space and combined the work of the separate college advising centers and the first-year advising team under one unified structure. College advising teams remained intact but began operating within this shared space to promote consistency and collaboration.

Additionally, in Fall 2023, SFSU introduced a “whole degree advising” model. Professional advisors took on comprehensive advising for all degree requirements, including majors, minors, and general education. This shift aimed to provide a one-stop location for advising, improve access and build a robust referral system between professional and faculty advisors. The caseload model for advising was expanded beyond the first year to include second-year students, ensuring continuity of support through the transition to upper-division studies (i.e. students have the same assigned advisor for their first two years at SFSU).

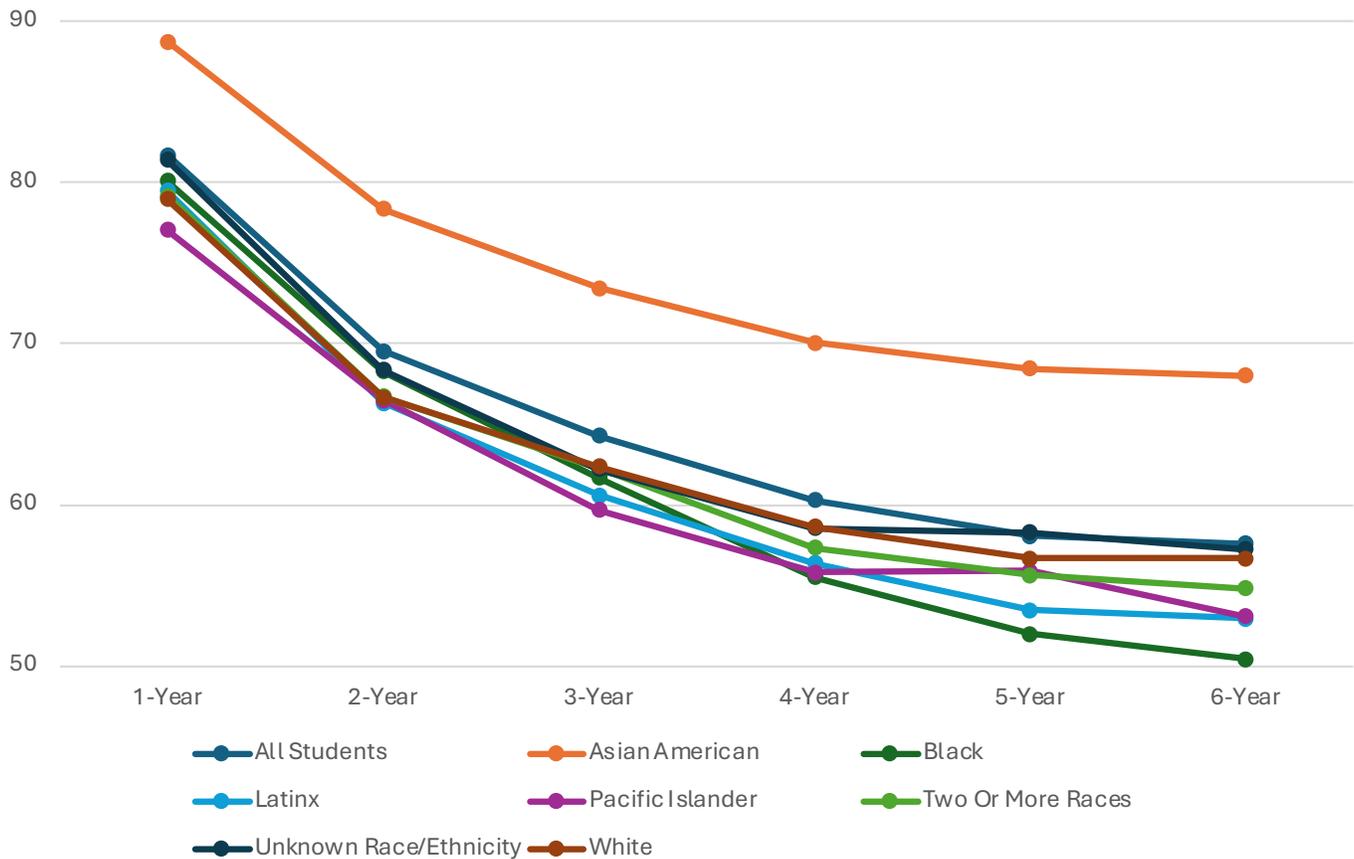
Faculty continue to handle course substitutions and major/minor exceptions, while professional advisors manage most degree planning. The UAC works closely with academic departments to keep abreast of curricular changes and to follow departmental guidance on when and how to refer students to faculty advisors.

Overall, the changes SFSU has made to our academic advising model have shifted the campus from a fragmented advising system to more coordinated model designed to enhance student support, simplify advising processes, and foster collaboration between professional staff and faculty. The SFSU advising model has been recognized across the CSU as an effective, student-centered approach to delivering academic advising.

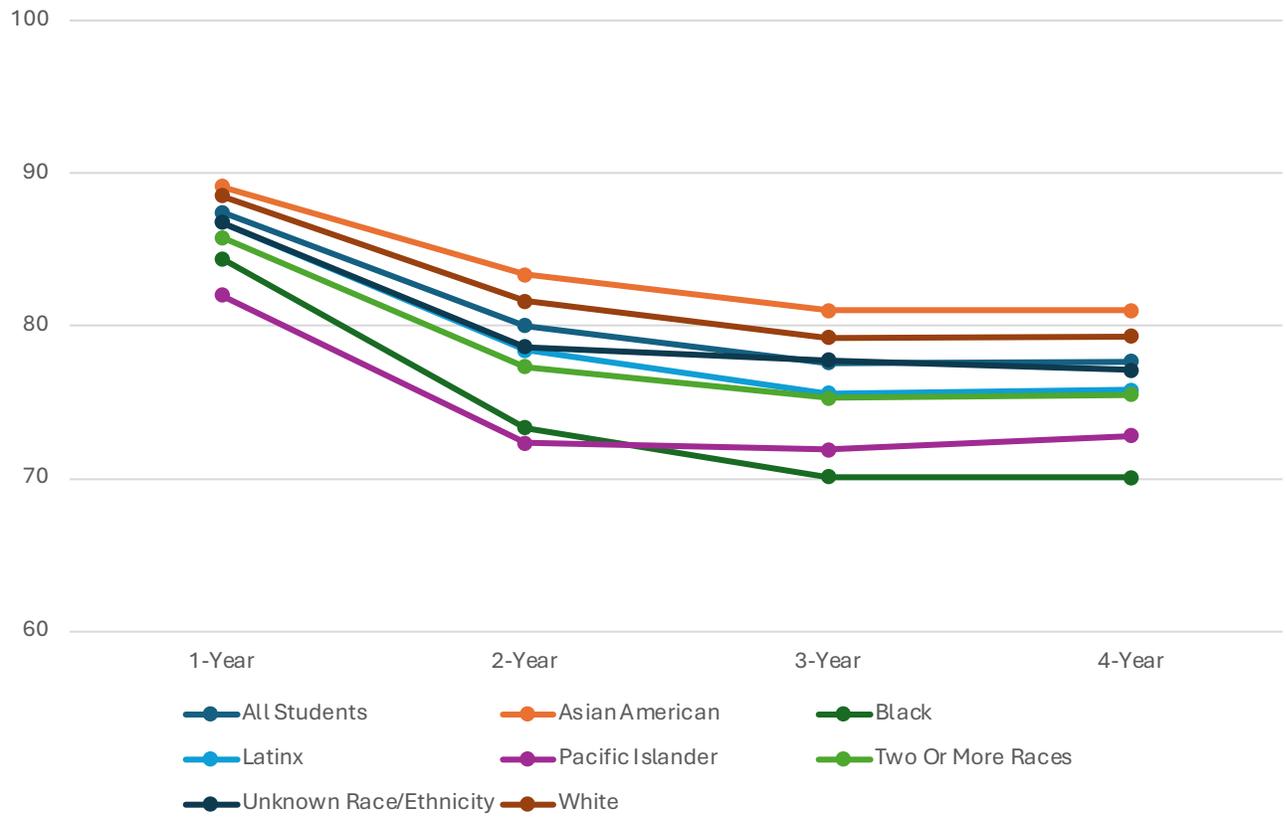
As the descriptions above show, recent initiatives demonstrate a maturing, data-informed approach to student support. However, since Fall 2017, only 27% of students who stopped out have returned, representing more than 17,000 students who left without completing a degree. This can be viewed as a strategic imperative to re-engage former students, strengthen early intervention practices and align campuswide resources to create a more coordinated, student-centered approach to retention and success.

Data/Analysis

Average Freshman Retention Rates by Ethnicity Across Years

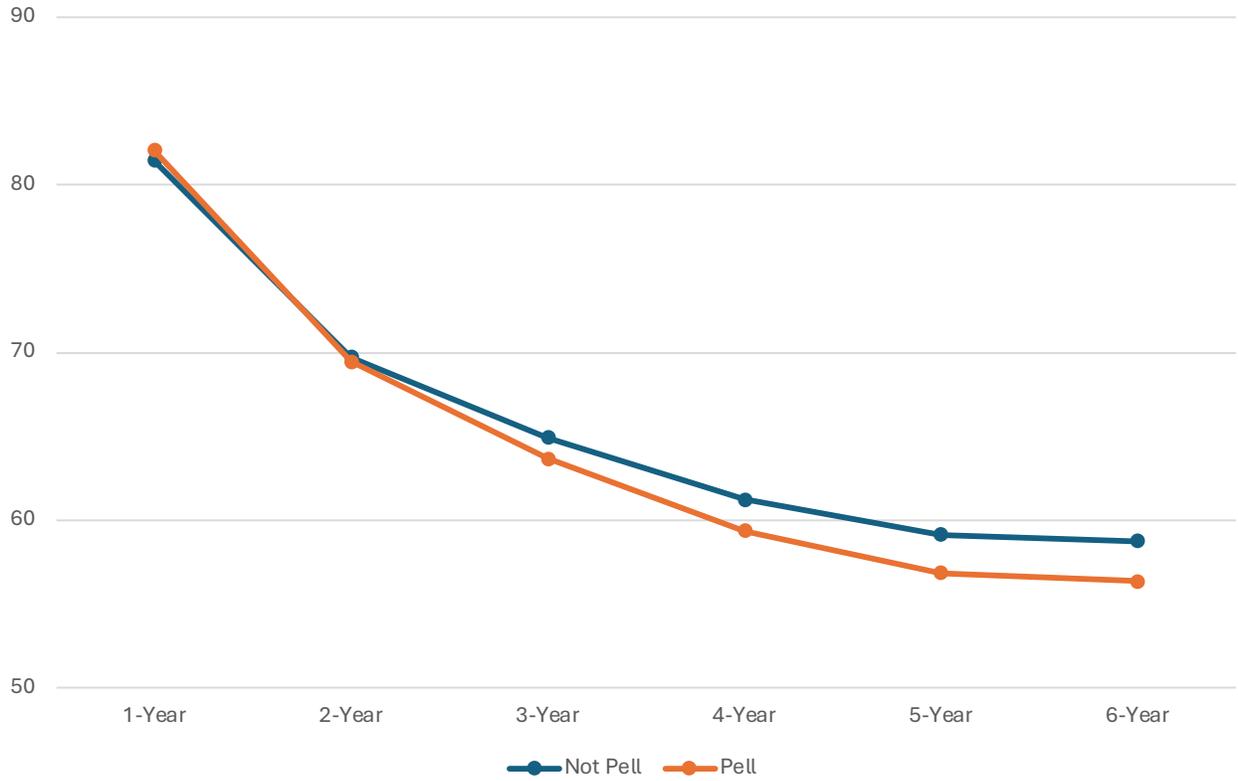


Average Transfer Retention Rates by Ethnicity Across Years

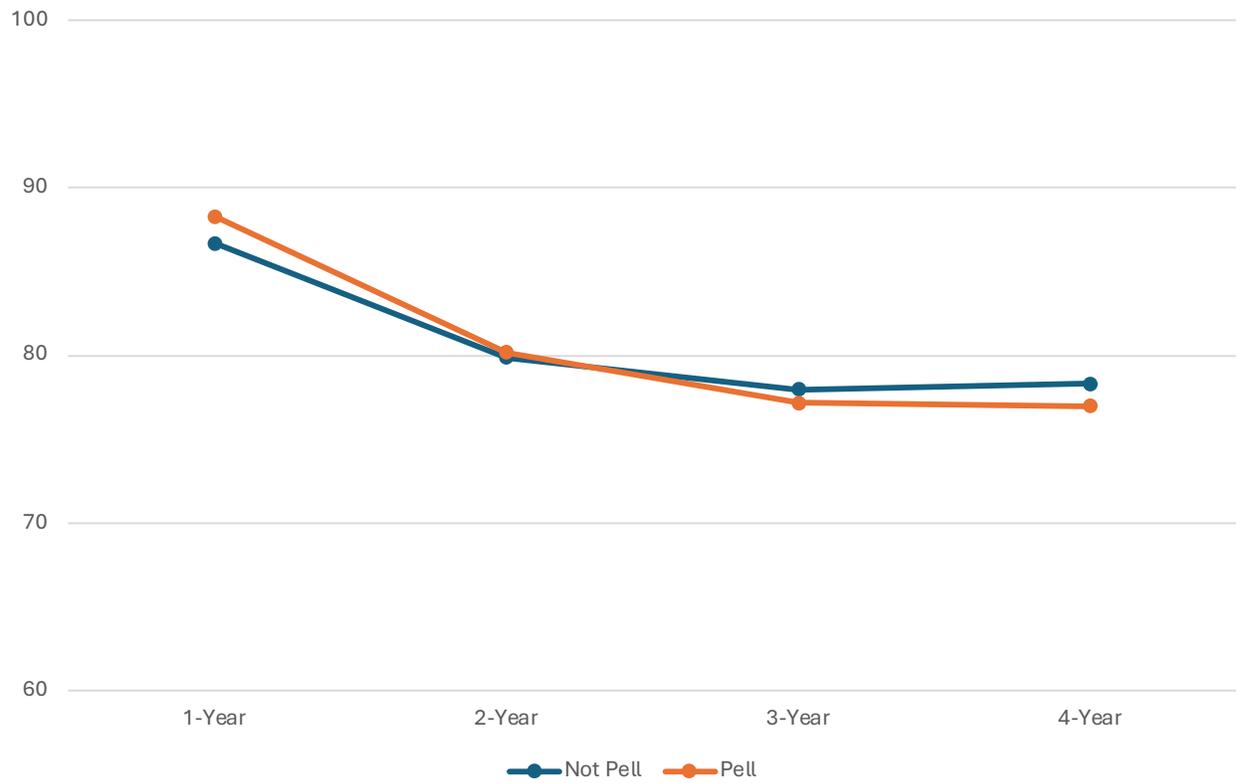


2009 to 2019 Cohorts for both Freshman and Transfer Charts

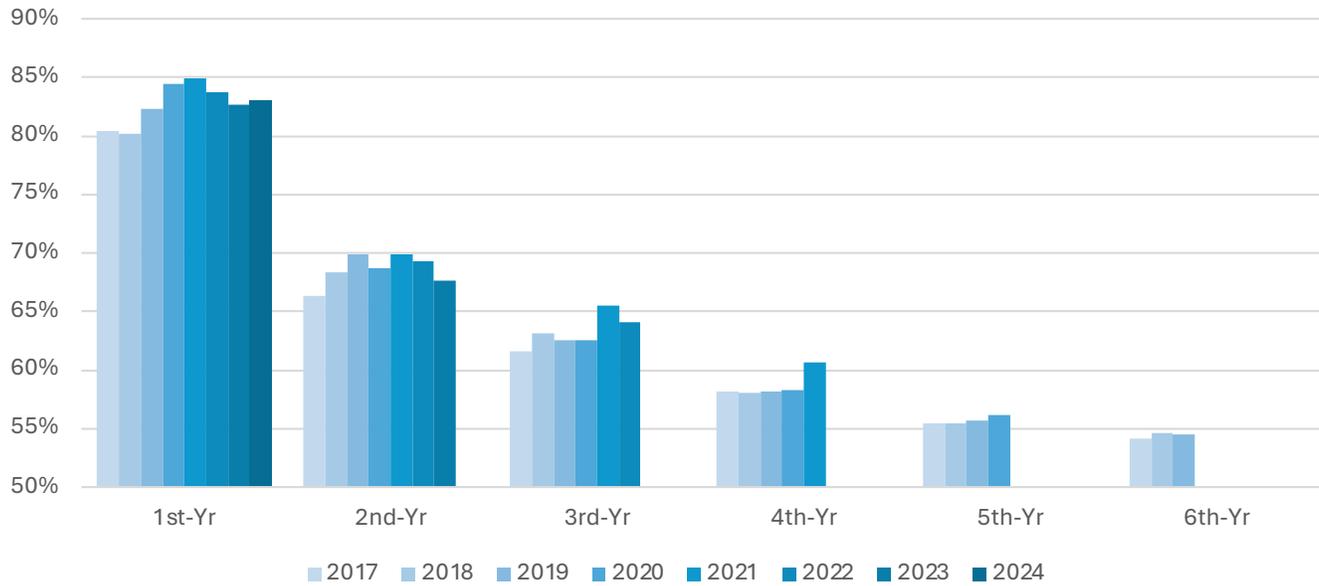
Average Freshman Retention Rates by Pell Across Years



Average Transfer Retention Rates by Pell Across Years

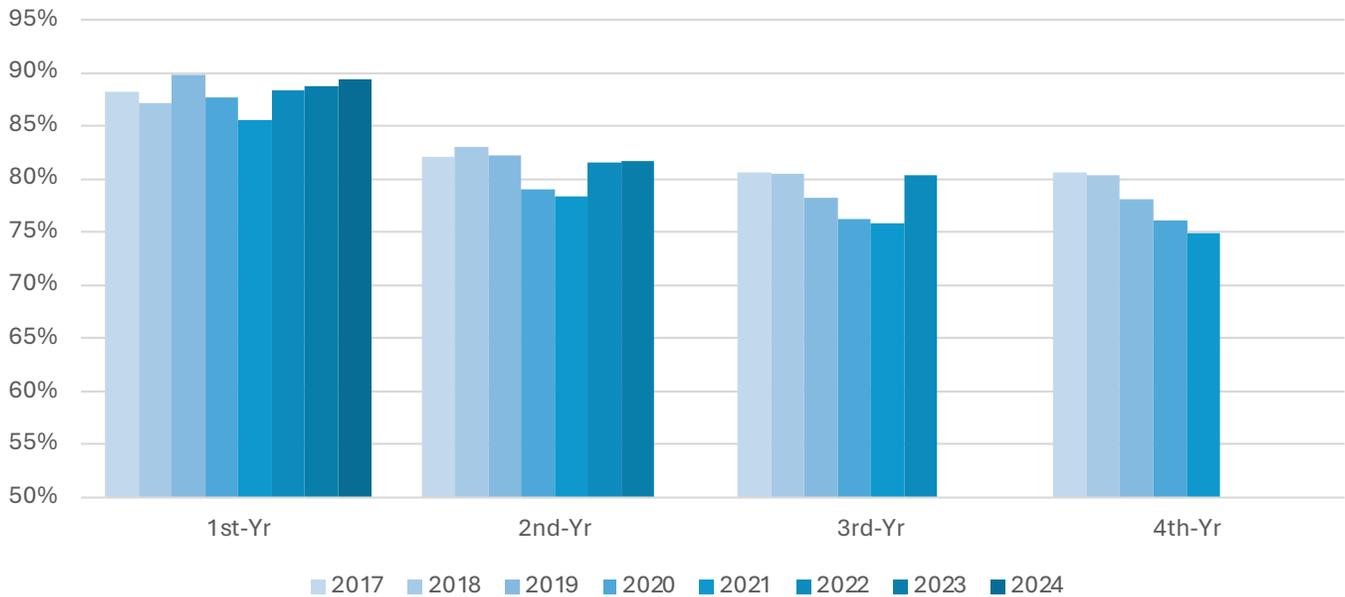


Freshman Retention by Cohort



SFSU’s potential to improve its Freshman 6-year graduation rate has been historically undercut by its loss of students over their first 2–3 years of enrollment. (SFSU SSGI 2025 Update 10/2025)

Transfer Retention by Cohort

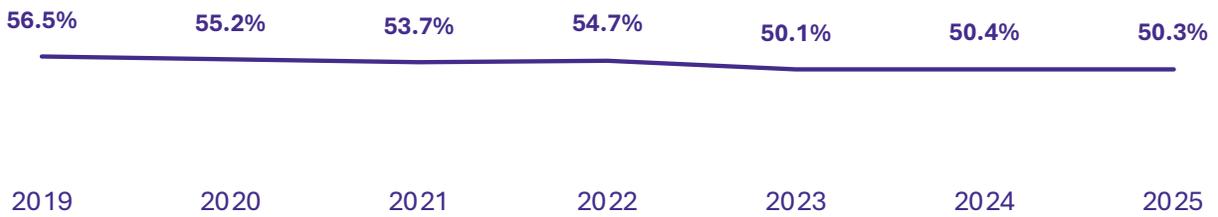


SFSU’s potential to improve its Transfer 4-year graduation rate has been historically undercut by its loss of students over their first 1–2 years of enrollment. (SFSU SSGI 2025 Update 10/2025)

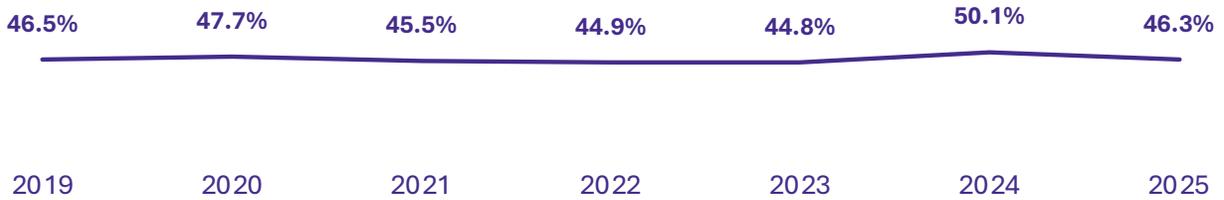
Freshman 4-Year Graduation



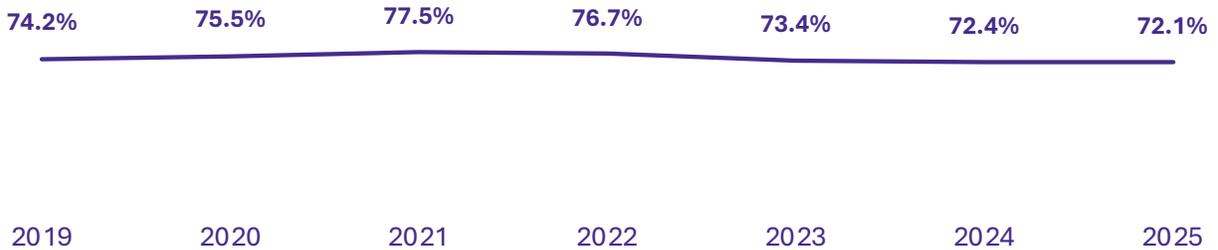
Freshman 6-Year Graduation



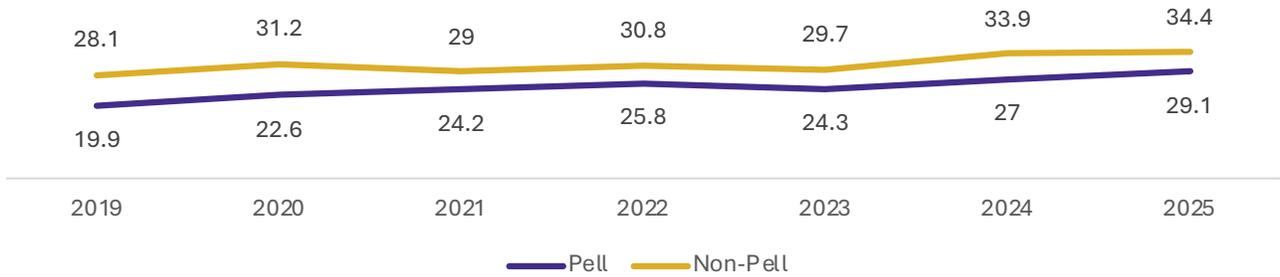
Transfer 2-Year Graduation



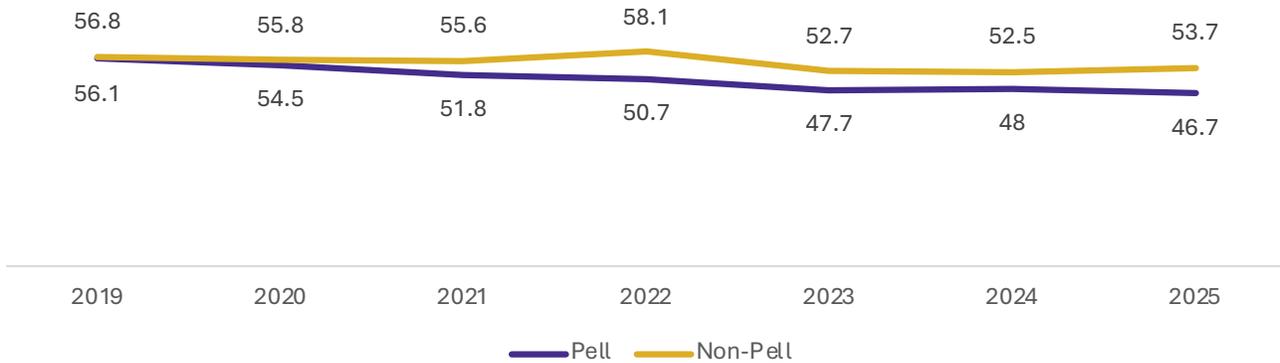
Transfer 4-Year Graduation



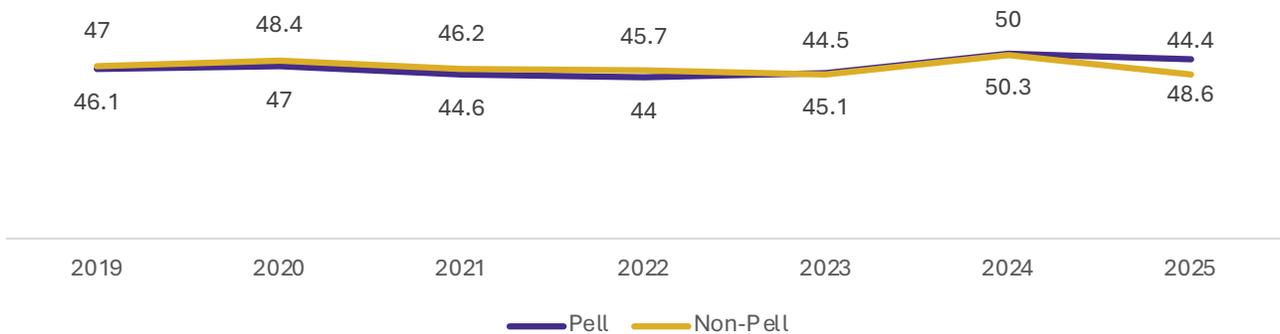
Freshman Pell vs Non-Pell 4-Year Graduation



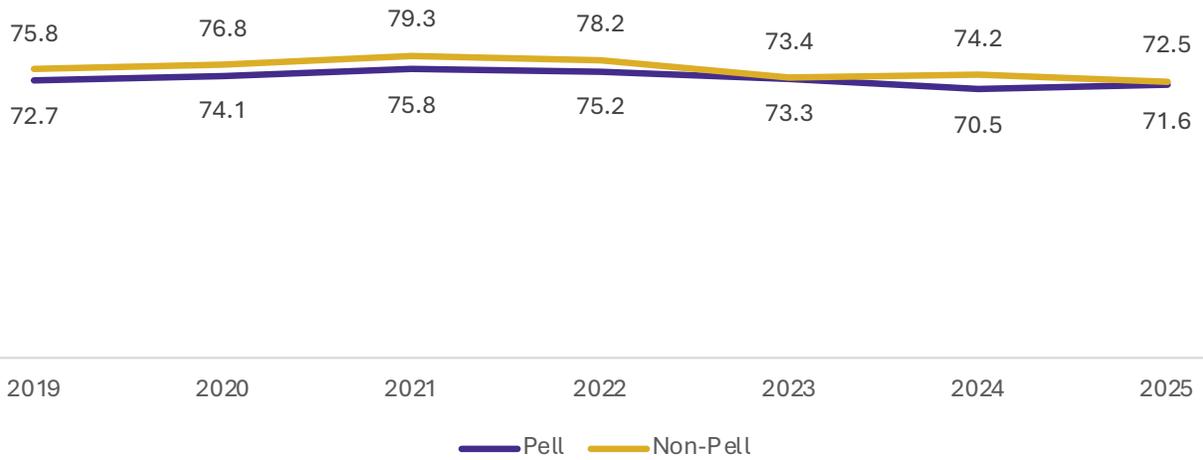
Freshman Pell vs Non-Pell 6-Year Graduation



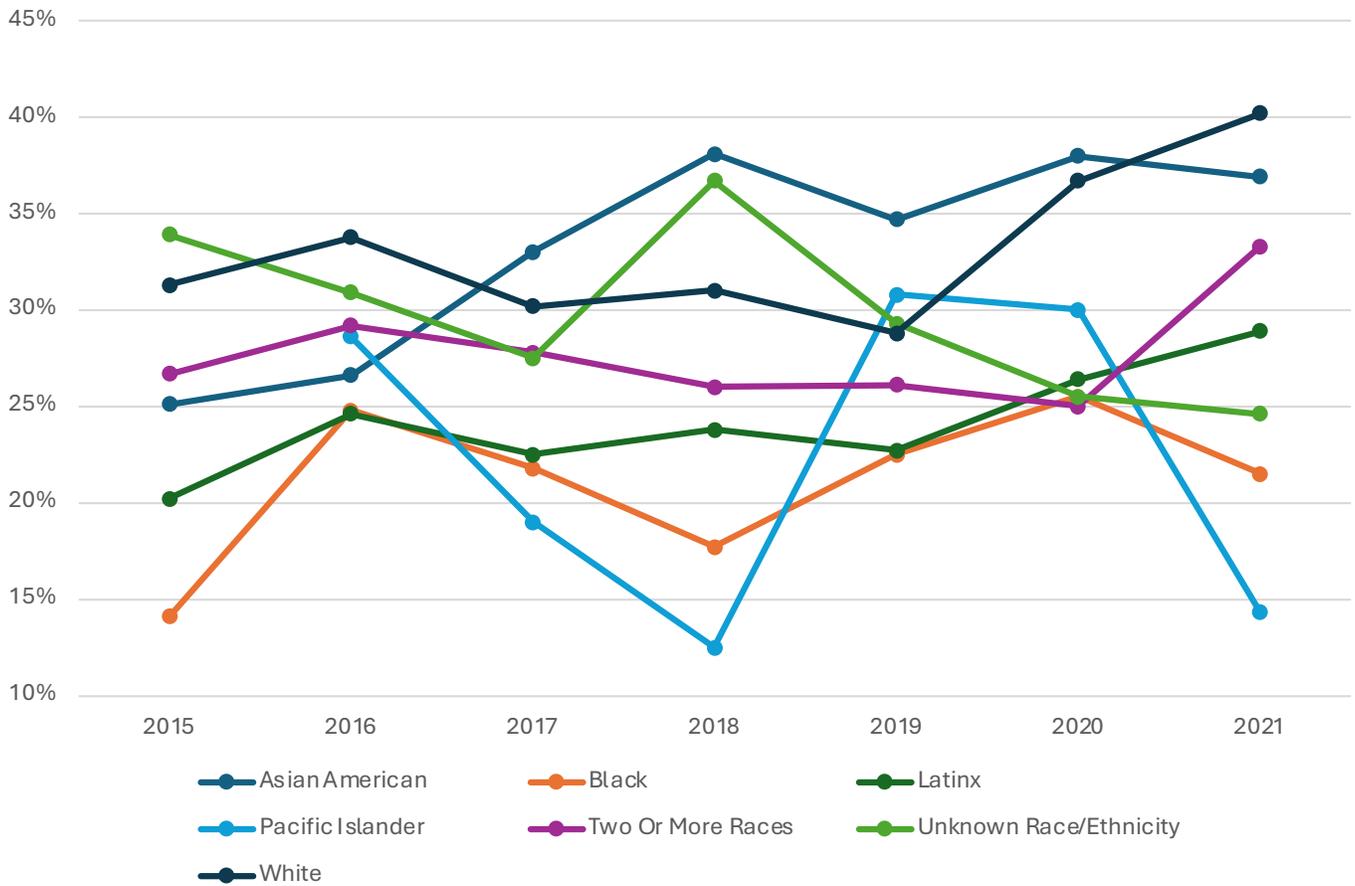
Transfer Pell vs Non-Pell 2-Year Graduation



Transfer Pell vs Non-Pell 4-Year Graduation



Freshman 4-Year Graduation



Need for Change

While SFSU’s overall retention rates remain steady, many students, especially those who have made meaningful academic progress, pause their studies before completing a degree. Faculty and staff have a unique opportunity to strengthen the student experience by improving continuity of communication, creating clearer academic pathways, and building stronger connections between coursework, support services, and post-graduation goals. By aligning day-to-day practices with shared retention priorities, the University can enhance student momentum and increase degree completion.

Planning

Key Initiatives: The key initiatives for our retention work are outlined in the sections that follow.

- Leverage existing data and predictive analytics and create new data sources to guide retention efforts and identify students who need support.
- Decrease time to graduation by increasing students’ credit accumulation each year.
- Continue to reduce administrative barriers to students’ progress to degree.
- Continue and improve our re-enrollment campaigns.
- Improve our student service and consistency of quality across support units.
- Improve students’ sense of belonging and identity.
- Improve our family and supporters’ engagement.
- Better connect our current students with alumni to highlight life after SFSU and networks that students can use for career development.
- Improve communication with our current students.
- We also will both create stronger career connections and make them more visible to students.
- With an eye to preparing students for careers of the future, we’ll also make sure that students graduate with the skills to ethically utilize artificial intelligence tools.
- Finally, we will ensure that all students receive an inclusive, accessible, and intentional education by supporting faculty development.

Key Performance Indicators

The KPI for the overall analysis should focus on retention and graduation rates. Specific areas of interest will be specified in sub-sections within this report.

KPI	Definition	Baseline	Target	Data Source	Follow Up Frequency	Reporting Party
Overall Re-tention Rate	Percentage of enrolled students who continue from one academic year to the next, inclusive of all student levels and populations.	3-year average base-line from IR data.	Annual increase of 1 percentage point overall and within key demographic groups.	IR Retention Dashboard; CSU Data Dashboards	Annual	IR/Aca-demic Affairs

FTF Graduation Rate	Percentage of first-time, full-time students who complete a degree within 150% of normal time.	3-year average baseline from IR data.	.5% increase for 3 years	IR Graduation Dashboard; CSU Data Dashboards	Annual	IR/Academic Affairs
Transfer Graduation Rate	Percentage of transfer students who complete a degree within 150% of normal time after transferring in.	3-year average baseline from IR data.	.5% increase for 3 years	IR Graduation Dashboard; CSU Data Dashboards	Annual	IR/Academic Affairs
Graduation Rate by Demographic Group	Graduation rates disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, first-generation status, and other key identity groups.	3-year average baseline from IR data.	1% increase per year overall and for each demographic group	IR Graduation Dashboard; CSU Data Dashboards	Annual	IR/Academic Affairs
Overall Retention and Graduation for Pell-eligible students	Retention and completion rates for Pell-eligible students compared to non-Pell-eligible peers.	3-year average baseline from IR data.	.5% increase for retention and 1% increase for graduation	IR Graduation and Retention Dashboards; CSU Data Dashboards	Annual	IR/Academic Affairs

Retention Plan - Blueprints

- Retention Plan — Situational Analysis & KPI Identification
- Retention Plan — Administrative Barriers
- Retention Plan — Credit Accumulation
- Retention Plan — Leveraging Data/Analytics for Proactive Outreach
- Retention Plan — Student Service Consistency and Expectations
- Retention Plan — Retention Grant Strategy
- Retention Plan — Belonging and Identity
- Retention Plan — Parent, Guardian, Support Engagement
- Retention Plan — Alumni Engagement
- Retention Plan — Communication Policy and Expectations
- Retention Plan — Visible Career Connections
- Retention Plan — Adaptive and Responsive Pedagogy
- Retention Plan — Artificial Intelligence
- Retention Plan — Re-enrollment Strategy

Implementation and Next Steps

The creation of this document was a sprint and now, the work really begins.

This document was the collective effort of many campus leaders and team members who offered insight, questioned the status quo and ultimately crafted a new way of doing our business in an effort to realize results that are different than what we have been experiencing.

The creation of a plan is a necessary step in paving a path forward. Doing the work is a different challenge — but one that we are ready to take on. With Cabinet’s approval the individual efforts outlined in this document will be implemented simultaneously to ensure that we do not waste time that we do not have.



Each vice president understands the commitment their team has made to these plans and will work in consultation with EM and the DUEAP to monitor progress, meet objectives and adapt as circumstances warrant.

Timelines and Key Performance Indicators will be organized in a manner that creates easy tracking mechanisms. Cabinet will receive weekly updates on our progress and be made aware of challenges that impede success. Quarterly progress reports will be provided to those involved to ensure transparency and accountability.

The call for creativity and urgency was met in the creation of the SEMP and now it will translate to the work we do.