

College Spotlight: Sonoma State University, and WUE

Sonoma State University one of 23 schools within the California State University System, the largest 4-year public university system in the country. It is located about 45 minutes north of San Francisco in a suburban/rural setting, on the outskirts of the California Wine Country. So, what sets Sonoma State apart from other schools in the CSU system? Several things:

Sonoma State is one of 14 schools out of the 23 that is part of the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE). According to the WUE website, "The Western Undergraduate Exchange is an agreement among 16 member states and territories, through which 160+ participating public colleges and universities provide steep nonresident tuition savings for Western students." To put this in real terms for SSU, out-of-state tuition for the 2020-21 school year is normally \$19,832, but the WUE rate is \$10,824 for a full-time student...that is a pretty major savings!

The size of SSU is unique to the CSU system. Most of the schools are large; well over 20,000 students, and located in large metropolitan settings. As such, they tend to have a high population of commuter and part-time students. At 8,500 students, SSU is a medium size school, with 3200 of its students housed in a variety of different on-campus housing options. Approximately half of those rooms are held available for first year students on a first come, first serve basis. As with most schools, whenever you accept your admissions offer, you should deal with housing right away to have a better chance of getting your first choice in living arrangements.

What about academics? Of the over 40 majors currently offered, just 10 of them are "impacted". What does it mean to be impacted? Impacted majors are programs that have more students interested in applying than the program has space to accommodate. Due to overcrowding in most of the CSU schools, this is not an uncommon problem for most programs. It is important when applying to any CSU to check the availability of the major that interests you, and to make sure that the major you want is WUE eligible. Even with that possible glitch, most students are able to graduate from SSU in 4 years in the major of their choosing.

The SSU campus is almost parklike. While walking around one immediately notices that there are open spaces of lawn all over the place, with very little hardscape anywhere other than the parking lots around the perimeter of campus. The dorms are mostly located at the perimeter as well, with academic buildings in the center. The Jean and Charles Schultz (of Peanuts fame) Information Center houses the school's library and information technology center, as well as Charlie Brown's café. It is located at the center of campus, with a charming statue of Lucy in front of it. The school was founded in 1961, so most of the buildings are not that old. One of the newer buildings (2018) is the Wine Spectator Learning Center, which houses the school of Business and Economics. It offers state-of-the-art classrooms, as well as a student commons and gardens.

SSU has an active Greek life, with approximately 10% of students participating in one of the 20 different sororities or fraternities. Athletics at SSU are not a huge priority; The Seawolves offer 5 men's and 7 women's DII teams, however there is a wide variety of Intramural and Club sports available with nice athletic facilities centrally located on campus. There are over 120 different recognized clubs and organizations on campus, so there are plenty of opportunities to find a way to get involved. There is also a beautiful theater, The Green Music Center, which serves as a focal point for the arts on campus, as well as for the surrounding community of Cotati.

Sonoma State University is a well-rounded public university that has private school intimacy at a public-school price. It would be worth your time to take a virtual look at this school and see if it has what you are looking for.

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