

Strategic Enrollment Management

Phase II: Strategy Development



UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN COLORADO

Division of Student Affairs
and Enrollment Services

The background image shows a lecture hall with a speaker on stage. The speaker is a man in a blue polo shirt and khaki pants, standing at a wooden podium and speaking into a microphone. Behind him is a large projection screen displaying a collage of images of football players in blue and white uniforms. Overlaid on the screen are several circular call-to-action buttons with white text and blue borders: 'SUBMIT THE FAFSA AND CASHA', 'TELL US YOUR PLANS', 'SUBMIT HOUSING APPLICATION', and 'SIGN-UP FOR ORIENTATION'. The audience is seated in rows of wooden chairs, facing the stage. The room has a modern, curved design with recessed ceiling lights.

Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) is a comprehensive process that helps institutions determine, achieve, and maintain their optimal recruitment, retention, and graduation rates, where ‘optimal’ is defined in the academic context of the institution.

~ Bob Bontrager, past president of AACRAO

Introduction

In September 2022, the University of Northern Colorado (UNC) initiated a comprehensive process of developing a strategic enrollment management (SEM) plan. The SEM planning process was launched as a response to UNC's current situation. Over the last five years, UNC experienced a gradual decline in student enrollment reflecting high school graduation trends in the region and state.

From Fall 2017 to Fall 2022, UNC has seen a five-year decline in first-year students of 44%, while Pell-eligible students have decreased by 52% and Under-Represented Minority students (URM) declined by 41% over the same period. While the overarching purpose of SEM is to optimize enrollments, improve student success, and ensure the fiscal viability of UNC's future, the identification of UNC's 'optimal' size and student demographics into SEM will be integral to the overall implementation of the SEM process (optimal enrollment is defined in the academic context of the institution). As we think about the number and types of students at UNC, our expanded offerings will inform our overall thinking and planning.

Enrollment pressures are not unique to the University of Northern Colorado. Many similarly situated regionally comprehensive universities began to see declines before the pandemic that were exacerbated by pressures over the past two years. The reasons are multifaceted, but they include decreased birth rates following the 2008 Great Recession and increases in high school graduates opting to move directly into the workforce.

According to the **National Student Clearinghouse Research Center**, there were 662,000 fewer students enrolled in undergraduate programs in spring 2022 than at the same time last year. Students question whether college is a "valuable" option that leads to good-paying jobs and better career prospects. Students from low-income families and students of color are more prone to question if college is the appropriate venue for their post-secondary options. The primary reasons for overall enrollment declines could be attributed to declining high school graduation rates in Colorado, the immediacy of job opportunities, and the greater recruitment competition from out-of-state higher education institutions for talented Colorado high school graduates.

The goals, strategies, and tactics in this plan are designed to mitigate the impact of these forces and grow enrollment back to a level necessary to ensure that the institution successfully fulfills its missions.

Background

What do we do?

Importance of Strategic Enrollment Management

The benefits of SEM is achieved through:

- **Establishing clear goals** for the number and types of students needed to fulfill the institutional mission.
- **Promoting students' academic success** by improving access, transition, persistence, and graduation
- **Promoting institutional success** by enabling effective strategic and financial planning
- **Creating a data-rich environment** to inform decisions and evaluate strategies.
- **Improving** process, organizational, and financial efficiency and outcomes
- **Strengthening** communications and marketing with internal and external stakeholders
- **Increasing** collaboration among departments across the campus to support enrollment expectations.



Strategic Framework: Rowing Not Drifting

Based on Key Action 1 of phase two of UNC's Strategic Plan (Develop and implement a Strategic Enrollment Management Plan), the campus established an organizational structure to facilitate broad participation in the development phase of the SEM plan. The Strategic Enrollment Management Steering Committee, co-chaired by Stephanie Torrez, AVP for Academic Student Support, and Pete Lien, AVP for Enrollment Services lead a process to develop clear enrollment goals and strategies for the campus. The Vice President for Student Affairs & Enrollment Services serves as executive sponsor to the SEM Steering Committee.

To ensure open communication with the campus community, the steering committee will develop a SharePoint site to share important documents, resources, and minutes for the SEM process. The Teams site is a crucial tool for assisting programs and units to develop tactics and action plans aligned with SEM enrollment expectations.

There are three primary stages of development in SEM planning that UNC will undertake during the 2022-2024 academic years. **This document provides an overview of phase two, Strategy Development.**

First phase

01

SEM occurred in early Fall 2022. UNC developed 6-8 broad statements that frame data-informed issues to drive change in our enrollment and student success. Additionally it allows UNC to meet the vision and strategic plan of the college. The SEM goals were developed in phase one and located on the [UNC SEM website](#).

Second phase

02

This stage began during the Spring and Fall of 2023. Strategies are 3-4 more focused, but still relatively broad, statements for each goal to identify a direction that will support that goal. Information in this document highlights phase two's efforts.

Third phase

03

Third stage will include work at the unit/academic program level to create tactics and action plans. Tactics are 3-4 specific statements for each strategy with supporting steps, timelines, personnel, and metrics to operationalize that strategy--the road map for how to achieve each strategy and support the goals.

PHASE II: Strategy Development (Spring and Fall 2023)

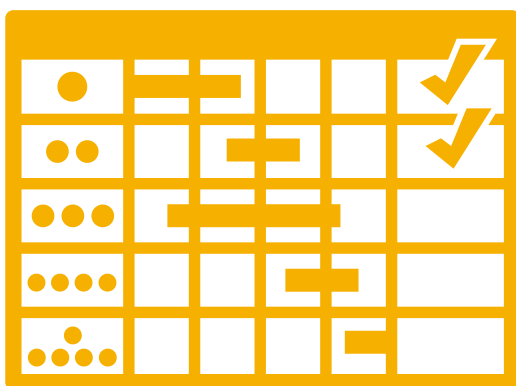


SEM Planning Assumptions

What is the optimal enrollment to ensure UNC's financial sustainability and fulfillment of its mission?

UNC's revenues are derived primarily from two sources--state funding and tuition revenue. Tuition and fee structures are approved annually by the Board of Trustees based on the average enrollment for the previous academic year. According to the current campus comprehensive plan, UNC's physical campus is designed to accommodate 10,000 students, with about 40% living in residence on campus. After much consideration and deliberation, the SEM Steering Committee has determined that through the implementation of the proposed SEM plan, UNC's enrollment will rebound to 12,000 residential and online students by 2029-2030.

Planning Assumptions for SEM Plan Development



- **Optimal campus size** of 12,000 students by the 2029-2030 academic year.
- **Fall 2023's objective** was to stabilize enrollment and then begin enrollment growth from Fall 2024 through Fall 2029 admission cycles.
- **NFT (New First Time)** UG enrollment targets: 1,300 students for Fall 2023, 1,500 students for Fall 2025, 1,700 students for Fall 2027, and 1,800 students for Fall 2029.
- **Total Graduate enrollment targets** for Greeley and extended campuses: 2,650 for Fall 2023, 2,750 for Fall 2025, 2,900 for Fall 2027, and 3,000 for Fall 2029.
- **Housing Occupancy** will increase to 72% by Fall 2029.
- **Campus UG Retention** targets: 75% for Fall 2023, 77% for Fall 2025, 79% for Fall 2027, and 80% for Fall 2029. Targets will also be set at the college level on an annual basis.

The profile of UNC's student body reflects its mission, using fall 2023 as a reference year.

UNC's primary mission historically has been to serve the State of Colorado by providing high quality educator preparation at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Many undergraduate students live and learn in residence and many come from lower-income households and are the first in their families to attend college. According to its Carnegie classification, UNC is a doctoral-level public university with academic programs balanced among education, the arts, sciences, and allied health-related professions. UNC must balance the value of selectivity with its commitment to underserved populations, especially given its unique role as a four-year college or university in rural Northern Colorado. The goals, strategies, and tactics in this plan attempt to reconcile the value of "exclusivity" (i.e., selectivity) with "inclusivity" (i.e., access and student success) to achieve optimal enrollment to fulfill its mission.

Proposed Student Body Profile

- **29%** of undergraduate degree-seeking students will live on campus.
- **73%** will be traditional-aged undergraduates.
- **80%** of undergraduates will come from the state of Colorado.
- **33%** of undergraduates will be Pell eligible.
- **38%** will identify as an ethnic minority.
- **25%** or more will identify as Latine/Hispanic
- **43%** of undergraduates will report being 1st generation.
- **67%** of undergraduates will report as female.
- **25%** of our overall headcount will be graduate students. 75/25 split for Undergraduate/Graduate.



SEM Goals with Campus-wide Strategies

Goal 1: Increase the recruitment and retention of degree-seeking undergraduate (UG) and graduate (GR) students to align with UNC's strategic vision for a diverse and vibrant community.

- 1.1. Enhance student data collection measures and leverage the data across university systems to support recruitment and retention across all stages of the student life cycle.
- 1.2. Become an Hispanic Serving Institution in ways that celebrate the rich diversity of the student body and affirm students' cultural and familial backgrounds.
- 1.3. Develop data-informed multiyear UG and GR recruitment and retention plans with specific and measurable targets for first-year, transfer, and international populations (for Greeley, Extended, and CUE campuses).
- 1.4. Evaluate promising practices implemented within the last five years and prioritize those for continued investment.

Goal 2: Increase non-degree, for-credit enrollment across UG and GR course offerings to support our communities' educational needs and professional growth.

- 2.1. Create and maintain a simplified and accessible application and enrollment experience and financial options for certificate, micro-credential, and non-degree-seeking students.
- 2.2. Expand existing and develop new service or partnership agreements with regional high schools.
- 2.3. Identify and promote courses appealing to non-UNC, non-degree-seeking populations.
- 2.4. Implement communication and marketing infrastructure to promote non-degree-seeking enrollment opportunities.
- 2.5. Investigate and implement academic offerings to support workforce needs and professional development.

Goal 3: Ensure that institutional policies and practices promote equitable access and opportunity for ALL students to succeed.

- 3.1. Incorporate DEI priorities into enrollment goals in alignment with the comprehensive university-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic plan.
- 3.2. Biennially conduct a comprehensive analysis of policies, practices, and procedures at the institutional and unit levels and make changes to address issues of disproportionate access, impact, or barriers experienced by students.
- 3.3. Expand the use of effective and inclusive recruitment and retention practices and policies.
- 3.4. Recognize and reward faculty who adopt inclusive pedagogy that leads to equitable student outcomes and experiences.

SEM Goals with Campus-wide Strategies

Goal 4: Foster a shared sense of responsibility for students' success.

- 4.1. Enhance and promote shared expectations among faculty and staff in student retention and success.
- 4.2. Develop and promote timely and relevant co-curricular programming that aligns with students' interests and institutional learning outcomes.
- 4.3. Develop and implement activities or programs that foster meaningful connections between students and faculty/staff, creating a campus culture of servingness.

Goal 5: Maintain an academic portfolio that reflects our high-quality standards and commitment to career readiness and lifelong learning.

- 5.1. Develop and deliver curricula that address the needs of today's learners and ready students for future jobs and careers.
- 5.2. Enhance the student employment experience and access to career readiness opportunities.
- 5.3. Design student employment opportunities that embed career readiness skills into employment expectations.
- 5.4. Increase the visibility of the Office of Career Readiness and student participation in affiliated programming.

Goal 6: Sustain a distinctive and inclusive identity that reflects UNC's strengths and displays our value proposition.

- 6.1. Elevate the UNC brand to make UNC a destination of choice.
- 6.2. Build and sustain local, regional, and international partnerships.
- 6.3. Utilize the recent brand audit findings to build and promote UNC's brand identity, appealing to and inclusive of all students regardless of program, college, or campus location.
- 6.4. Identify and leverage institutional data, promotional narratives, and points of pride to promote the value of UNC and its learning outcomes.

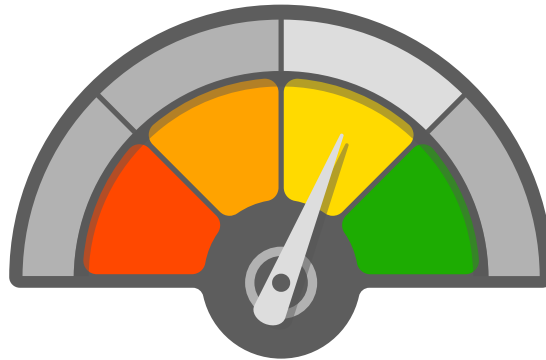
Goal 7: Maintain the fiscal vitality of UNC while ensuring attendance is financially manageable.

- 7.1. Increase the campus's awareness of the relative cost of attending UNC.
- 7.2. Identify financial barriers for students and enhance institutional practices and priorities to sustain affordability.
- 7.3. Enhance faculty and staff grant-seeking to align with the institution's priorities.
- 7.4. Identify the financial gaps impacting students and develop a philanthropic strategy to expand the institution's capacity to assist.

Key Enrollment Indicators (KEIs)

Key Enrollment Indicators (KEIs)

Successful enrollment management plans set specific goals and metrics for monitoring progress. In preparation for receiving input from campus stakeholders and with the assistance of the Data Team, the SEM Steering Committee has identified several key enrollment indicators for monitoring the success of the SEM plan in the coming years. The key enrollment indicators below are based on projections through the completion of Rowing Not Drifting 2030 (2029 – 2030 academic year). Monitoring key enrollment indicators will include disaggregated data to help identify systemic equity gaps and opportunities for action.



1. Yield of Admitted Students (Undergraduate & Graduate)
2. Melt of Admitted Students (Undergraduate & Graduate)
3. First Time Full-time (FTFT) & Continuing Enrollment (FTE)
4. Graduate & Undergraduate Applications In-State, Out of State, WUE, & WICHE
5. Cohort Persistence and Progress Rates
6. 2-, 4- and 6-year Graduation Rates (Undergraduate and Transfer Students)
7. Reduce Gaps in Educational Outcomes
8. Time to Degree Completion (Undergraduate & Graduate)
9. Degrees Awarded by Level
10. Career Placement Rate
11. Percent of Full-time Faculty teaching FTFT and UG students
12. Diversity of Instructional FTE relative to Student FTE
13. Extended Campus Enrollment (Lowry, Loveland, Greeley Campuses)
14. National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Quality of Educational Experience
15. HERI (Higher Education Research Institute) Climate surveys
16. Percent of students who have completed gateway Math and English before earning 30 hours.

Next Steps - College/Department Tactic Development (Phase III)

The third stage of SEM plan development will include work at the college and department levels to create tactics followed by efforts at the unit/academic program level to create tactics and action plans. Tactics are 3-4 specific statements for each strategy and are the detailed steps and operational plans (timelines, personnel, and metrics) that contribute to the overall success of the SEM effort.

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Phase III: Tactic Development

Example of SEM Goal, Strategy, Tactic, and Key Enrollment Indicators

GOAL 1: Increase the recruitment and retention of degree-seeking undergraduate (UG) and graduate (GR) students to align with UNC's strategic vision for a diverse and vibrant community.

STRATEGY 1.1: Enhance student data collection measures and leverage the data across university systems to support recruitment and retention across all stages of the student life cycle.

TACTICS:

1.1.a: Provide coaching, resources, and training to improve the quality of the communications UNC is having with prospective and returning students specific to individual student populations (i.e., 1st generation, marginalized communities, low-income, etc.).

1.1.b: Create and share college and program-specific funnel reports to provide transparency on admitted and enrolled student numbers and goals.

1.1.c: Incorporate high-touch proactive outreach to continuing students who are at risk of not persisting based on institutional data.

1.1.d: Create a financial aid and scholarship program for D6/Evans school district students that covers the cost of tuition based on student/family needs.

1.1.e: Launch a summer bridge program for 1st generation and/or marginalized groups to build community and support and reduce inequities.

1.1.f: Create a data-sharing plan and policy to educate and inform all campus stakeholders on recruitment and retention initiatives and support.

KEI:

- Increase cohort persistence and progress rates by 1% (annual increase)
- Increase institutional yield rates (admitted to enrolled) by 1% (annual increase)
- Decrease institutional melt (number of students confirmed who do not enroll) across 1st generation and underrepresented communities by 1% (annual decrease)

Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

Glossary of Terms

Applied - The student has submitted a completed application for review to attend the University.

Admitted - Student has been admitted to the University and qualifies for enrollment in coursework.

Career Readiness Competencies - There are eight competencies, each of which can be demonstrated in various ways (Career and Self-Development, Communication, Leadership, Critical Thinking, Equity and Inclusion, Teamwork, Technology, and Professionalism).

Confirmed students - Students who have submitted their “confirmation” or enrollment deposit, indicating they plan to enroll in the term in which they applied and were admitted.

Concurrent Enrollment - Students who are currently in the 9th through 12th grade, may qualify to enroll in college courses during the Fall and Spring semesters under the **Concurrent Enrollment Program**. High school students taking college courses on campus with a university or college.

Dual Enrollment - The **UNC Dual Enrollment** program provides opportunities for high school students to take college-level coursework locally. Students earn dual credit (both high school and college credit) via one course taught on-site at their high school.

Diverse campus community - The diversity within our university and state is a distinct advantage that we celebrate and nurture. We ensure learning occurs through meaningful discussion of shared and different experiences, viewpoints, and ideas. <https://www.unco.edu/unc-magazine/web-extras/rowing-not-drifting.aspx>

Enrolled - Students enrolled in courses at the University.

Full-time student - A student enrolled in 12 or more credits for fall and spring semesters.

First Time Full-Time Freshmen Cohort (FTFT) - Includes students classified as ‘First Time’ based on fall final registration status, or first time in summer directly preceding fall term, and were full-time (defined as 12 or more credits) in the fall term.

Graduate Enrollment - Enrollment numbers for Graduate (GR) students only; the student has a bachelor's degree and is working on an advanced degree such as a Master's, Specialist, or Doctoral program or is pursuing a license.

In the State - A student is classified as a resident for tuition purposes.

Key Enrollment Indicators (KEI) - Consists of high-level enrollment categories such as student attributes (e.g., major, demographic characteristics, online learners), institutional attributes (e.g., program capacity), external factors (e.g., funding mechanisms, economic trends), and performance metrics (e.g., course completion, first-term and first-year retention, graduation rates).

Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

Glossary of Terms

Main Campus - Main campus students include students with one or more state-funded hours.

Extended Campus - Extended campus students are students with only cash-funded courses.

New First Time - New first time is defined as a student attending post-secondary education for the first time after high school at the undergraduate level. New first-time exclude non-degree-seeking students. Some first-time students enter with enough credits that they are technically not first-year students in credit count.

Non-Degree Seeking Graduate - Non-degree seeking graduate status refers to a student who has at least a bachelor's degree and has either applied to our Graduate School and has not yet been admitted or is wanting to take classes but not pursue a degree.

Non-Degree Seeking Undergraduate - someone who wishes to take classes through UNC but does not wish to pursue a degree.

Out of State - Student is classified as non-resident for tuition purposes. Out of State includes WUE (Western Undergraduate Exchange students and students with unknown residency).

Persistence rate - captures the share of students who continue enrollment into the following term or year.

Recruitment - the process of actively seeking out and attracting potential students to an academic institution or program.

Retention - The practice of student retention encompasses all the things the institution does to influence this rate, working to prevent students from leaving school before completing their degree.

Retention rate - is defined as the percentage of students enrolling in consecutive fall terms.

Transfer - New transfer students are undergraduate students who are enrolled in their first term and have earned college credit(s) at another institution. Transfer students are expected to be in good standing at all previous institutions. Strong candidates at admission have a minimum of 30 college-level credit hours and a cumulative 2.4 GPA or higher from all institutions attended.

Transfer Full-Time Cohort - Includes students who were classified as 'Transfer students' based on fall final registration status and were full-time (defined as 12 or more credits) in the fall term.

Undergraduate Enrollment - Enrollment numbers for Undergraduate (UG) students only; in most cases, the student is working towards a bachelor's degree or is enrolled in 100-400 level courses.

Yield - Percentage of admitted students who officially enroll and are counted at the census at each start of term (i.e. Fall, Summer, Spring).

Appendix B: SEM Planning Resources

SEM Planning Tactic Development Resources

- I. Considerations for developing and evaluating tactics.**
 - a. Tactics should be clear, realistic, and attainable.
 - b. There should be specific, relevant, and clearly articulated success metrics or indicators (qualitative and/or quantitative) identified.
 - c. Compare and benchmark the results of your tactics against the best practices and standards of the industry
 - d. Monitor and implement changes based on findings.

- II. UNC Data: <https://www.unco.edu/data/>**
 - a. Fact Books – designed to provide baseline information about UNC. Includes data on overall student enrollment (undergraduate and graduate), new recruitment and enrollment profiles, new student success outcomes, degrees awarded, and staffing information.
 - b. Public Dashboards – Graduation and retention information, Human Resources information, Financial Aid, Aims2UNC, and Alumni Employment data.
 - c. Power BI – Student Success, Admissions Monitoring, and Academic Program Health dashboards.
 - d. Graduation and Equity for Action Dashboards – Information on courses with the largest GPA equity gaps; persistence for students once they've achieved junior status, potentially overlooked equity gaps, and information on early retention and persistence opportunities and gaps.
 - e. Survey Data – <https://uncoedu.sharepoint.com/sites/Surveys> (listed as one of the options on the horizon navigation for the unco.edu/data/ website).

- III. Becoming an Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) <https://www.unco.edu/hsi/>**
 - a. Strategic Plan
 - b. Milestones
 - c. Data

- IV. Center for Enhancement of Teaching & Learning**
 - a. Learning Communities
 - b. Teaching Resources & Toolkits
 - c. Webinars

Appendix C: Enrollment

Overall View

	Reference Year			Target Year	
	Fall '19 Final Headcount	Fall '25 Final	Fall '27 Final	Fall '29 Final	Change from Reference Year
Undergraduate Headcount	9,810	7,094	8,108	9,000	(810)
Degree Seeking	8,448	6,094	6,958	7,750	(698)
New First-Time	1,814	1,500	1,700	1,800	(14)
New Transfer	689	575	675	775	86
Continuing	5,945	4,019	4,583	5,175	(770)
Non-Degree Seeking	1,362	1,000	1,150	1,250	(112)
Graduate Headcount	3,120	2,522	2,754	3,000	(120)
Degree Seeking	2,668	2,247	2,379	2,580	(88)
New First-Time	961	750	825	913	(48)
Continuing	1,707	1,497	1,554	1,667	(40)
Non-Degree Seeking	452	275	375	420	(32)
Total Headcount	12,930	9,616	10,862	12,000	(930)

Growth Rates Year-Over-Year

	Fall '24 – Fall '25	Fall '25 – Fall '26	Fall '26 – Fall '27	Fall '27 – Fall '28	Fall '28 – Fall '29
New First-Time	15.4%	6.7%	6.3%	2.9%	2.9%
New Transfer	4.5%	8.7%	8.0%	7.4%	6.9%
New Graduate	4.2%	6.7%	3.1%	6.1%	4.3%