
SUBJECT: Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee Meeting Report for September 24, 2025

The Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee of the Board of Trustees met on Wednesday, September 24, 2025, at 4:18 pm, in accordance with MGLA Chapter 30A, as amended by Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025, which among other things, allows remote participation through June 2027. All votes taken during this meeting were by roll call vote.

Present for the Committee were Trustees, Billings (vice chair), Beckett, Cabral, Lancome; President Keenan (ex-officio); Vice President Galinski; Provost Silva; Senior Associate Vice President and Dean of Students Newton, Associate Vice President Schuetz, Assistant Vice President Cronin, Assistant Director Wigton, Chairperson Moore, and Executive Assistant Putzig.

Vice Chair Billings called the meeting to order at 4:18 pm. The following items were discussed:

Fall 2025 Updates (Attachment A)

Enrollment has declined by approximately 2% compared to Fall 2024, a trend seen across undergraduate day, undergraduate continuing education, and graduate programs. Continuing Education showed the largest growth, with a 17% increase. Credit hours for both Continuing Education and the graduate division are slightly higher than last fall, reflecting a 2% increase. Out-of-state enrollment rose by about 2% and continues to trend upward year over year. At the same time, there is a growing need among students for financial aid.

On-campus housing numbers also show a decline, consistent with the overall enrollment decrease. In response, the university has reinstated the faculty in residence program and is expanding programming to enhance the residential experience and increase occupancy.

Industry research from Encoura indicates that yield rates for both public and private institutions have declined by 49% over the past 20 years. During this period, applications increased by 158% and acceptances rose by 144%, while overall enrollment grew by only 25%. Additionally, melt has risen over the past five years, reflecting the reality that students are applying to more institutions and keeping their options open even after committing.

To address these challenges, Salem State has expanded its communication efforts to include families, with the implementation of the Parent Portal, and has increased opportunities for admitted students to begin building community earlier in the process. The university is also placing greater emphasis on financial literacy. Looking ahead to recruitment for 2026, efforts will focus on strengthening relationships with feeder high schools and community colleges, as well as on retention strategies to ensure that Salem State remains the right fit for students after they enroll.

Update on Regulatory Status of Bachelor Science in Nursing Program

The Board of Registration in Nursing met in early September and, following review of Salem State's reports, continued the program with approval with warning status. Notably, all but three warnings were lifted, signaling significant progress. Three additional reports remain due, and Provost Silva indicated that continued efforts to resolve the remaining deficiencies should lead to the program being moved to unqualified approval status by February 2026.

In addition, the size of the nursing cohort has been increased, and the next incoming class will be the first to complete their studies in the new nursing labs currently under development.

Collaboration in Action – Academic Affairs and Student Success – The Impact of Success Coaching Beyond the First Year: A Mixed Methods Approach to Assessing the Emerging Scholarship Program and the Student Transition & Engagement Program (Attachment B)

A mixed-methods study was conducted through surveys and in-depth interviews with sophomores, juniors, and seniors who had participated in the Emerging Scholars Program (ESP) and the Student Transition & Engagement Program (STEP) during their first year. The project was funded through the School of Graduate Studies and SUCCESS funds, with support from a Master of Social Work student who assisted with the research.

The ESP cohort includes students who entered with a 2.0-3.25 high school GPA, with approximately 150 students targeted. The STEP cohort serves Pell-eligible students, with approximately 75 students included. Results show that ESP participants demonstrated a 9% higher retention rate and an 8% higher graduation rate compared to peers, while STEP participants demonstrated a 10% higher retention rate and a 7% higher graduation rate.

Students reported that success coaching was particularly valuable in helping them connect with campus resources, manage the transition and demands of a college schedule, prepare for advising and course registration, and most importantly, establish a personal connection on campus. During their first year, students noted that success coaches were instrumental in helping them navigate financial aid, develop financial literacy, and build a sense of belonging.

While students indicated they felt equipped with skills to succeed after the first year, one-third of respondents reported they would benefit from continued support into their sophomore year. If extended, students identified that the most beneficial areas of focus would include assistance with course registration, financial literacy, self-care, and opportunities for meaningful peer engagement.

SSU's Participation in NISS (Attachment C)

Salem State is embarking on a partnership with the National Institute for Student Success (NISS) to identify barriers to student completion and implement strategies to remove them. NISS employs data-driven interventions and predictive analytics to develop customized strategies through a tailored playbook

NISS operates on the premise that colleges and universities often create unintentional administrative and bureaucratic barriers that hinder student access, progression, and completion. During the upcoming year, NISS will be collecting and analyzing data with the goal of launching services in the Fall 2026.

Committee Q&A

There being no further business to come before the committee and upon a motion made duly by Trustee Lancome and seconded by Trustee Beckett it was unanimously:

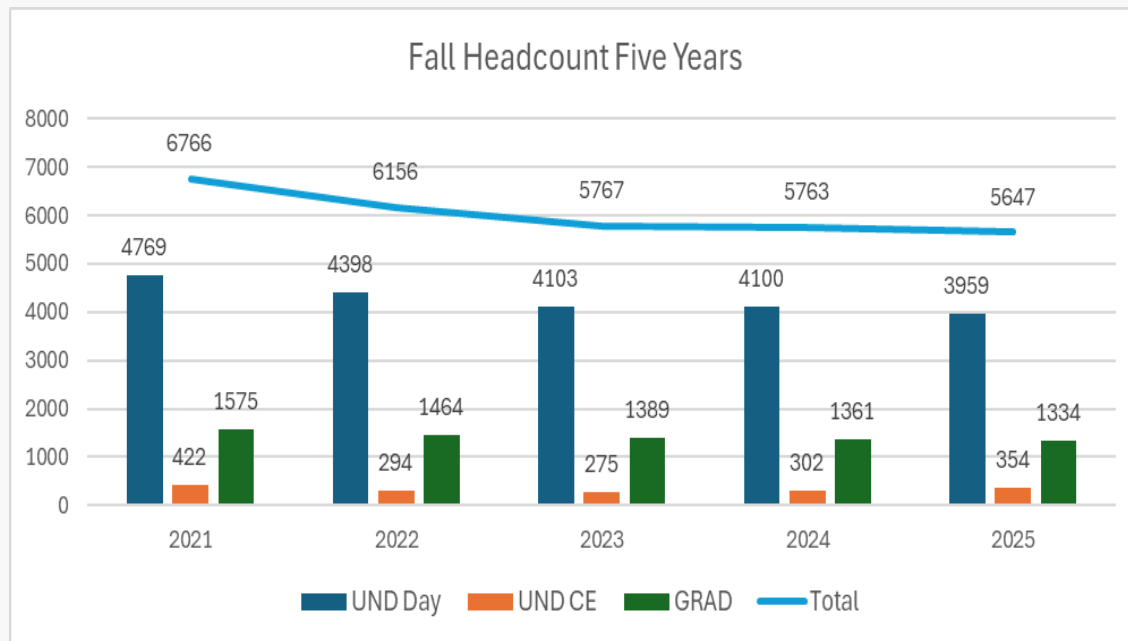
VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 5:27 pm

Voting in the affirmative: Billings, Beckett, Cabral, Lancome

Voting against: None

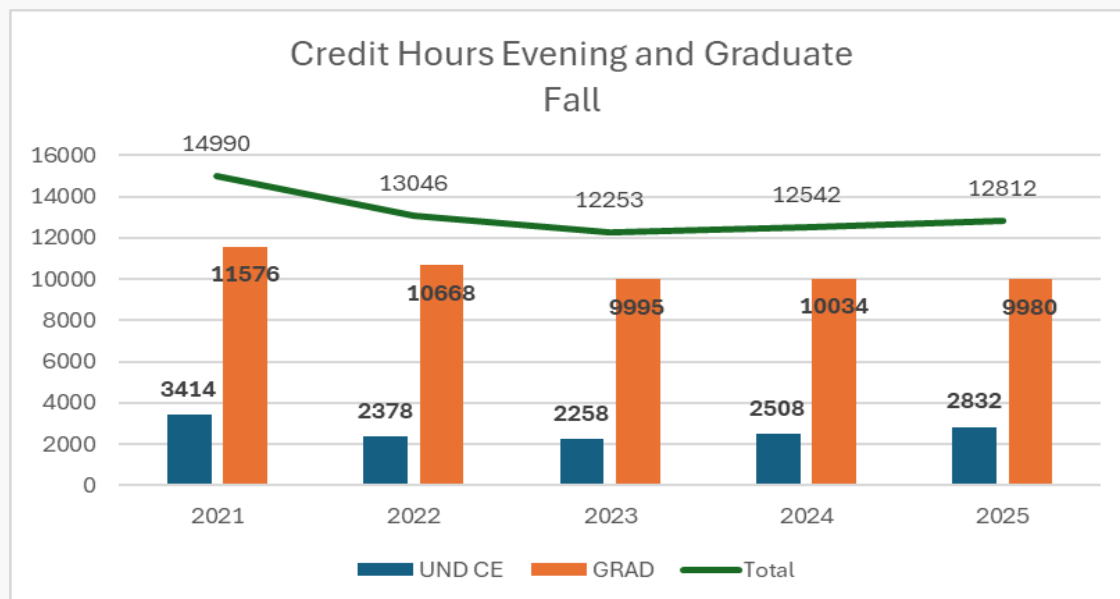
Prepared by: A. Putzig, Executive Assistant, Student Success

a. Enrollment - Headcount



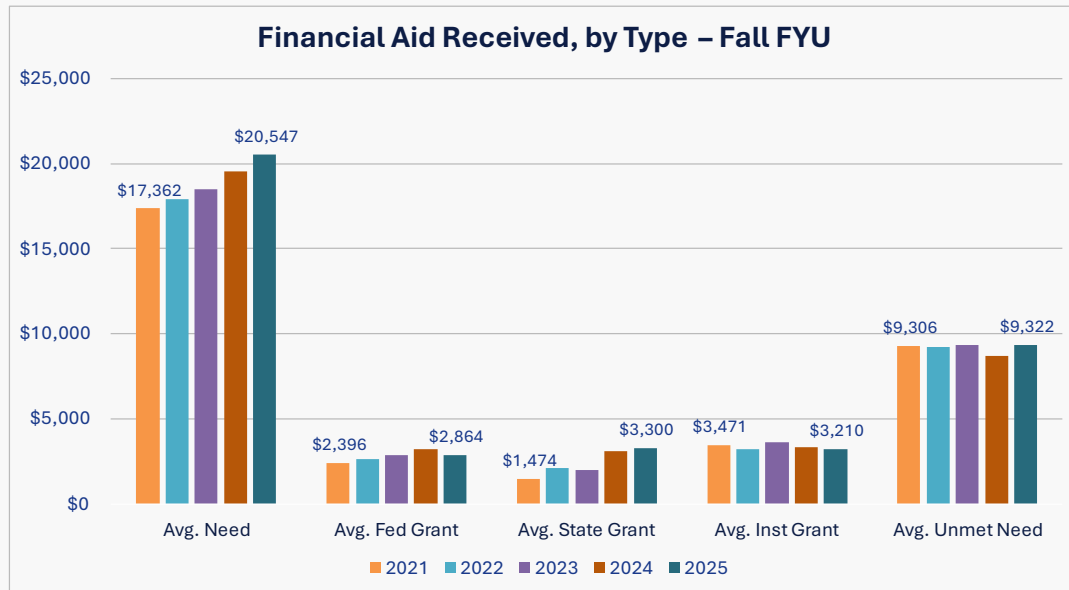
As of 9.16.25 for 2025, as of Census date (10.15) for 2021-2024

a. Enrollment – Credit Hours



As of 9.16.25 for 2025, as of Census date (10.15) for 2021-2024

a. Enrollment – Financial Aid



As of 9.21.25 for 2025, as of Census date (10.15) for 2021-2024



b. Housing

Longitudinal Housing Data: Fall 2017 - 2025

Semester/Year	Fall Occupancy (actual)	Occupancy Goal	% of Goal	MSCBA Design	% Bed occupied per MSCA Design
FA 17	2243	2282	98%	2282	98%
FA 18	2120	2282	93%	2282	93%
FA 19	1881	2282	82%	2282	82%
FA 20	934	1253	75%	2282	41%
FA 21	1511	1586	95%	2282	66%
FA 22	1595	1706	93%	1926	83%
FA 23	1528	1706	90%	1926	79%
FA 24	1573	1585	99%	1926	82%
FA 25	1491	1634	91%	1926	77%



c. Industry Research (Encoura)

- Yield rates are down 49% for public and private institutions (2003-2023)
- Applications increased by 158% and admits by 144%, but enrollment growth over the same 20-year period was only 25%.
- Melt has risen since 2020 for both public and private colleges.
- Students now apply to more schools and stay “open to offers” even after committing.
- Workforce alternatives and skepticism about value of a college degree add pressure on enrollments.

c. How are We Responding

- Empower influencers students trust to reinforce our brand and opportunities by engaging the entire family in the search process.
- Peers influence college choice so we will increase opportunities where admitted students can build community early.
- Bringing financial literacy into the enrollment process early to allow students/parents to better understand their personal costs/affordability.
- Engage early deciders as they are likely to influence others in their high schools.

c. Recruitment Plan for 2026

- Strengthen our relationships with feeder high schools and community colleges.
- Offset student declines in local markets by expanding recruitment footprint.
- Engage target audiences earlier in their educational journey.
- Use multi-channel outreach to connect with students where they spend time.

c. Recruitment Plan for 2026

- Integrate process improvements in admissions, financial aid, and registration.
- Develop an aid strategy that addresses the increasing need of our students.
- Frequently measure and adjust our advertising and digital engagement strategies.

THE IMPACT OF SUCCESS COACHING BEYOND THE FIRST YEAR:



A Mixed Methods Approach to Assessing the Emerging Scholars Program (ESP) and the Student Transition & Engagement Program (STEP)

PI: Megan Wigton, M.A, M.Ed., Assistant Director of FYE

Co-PI: Sara Moore, Ph.D., Sociology Department

Student Investigator: Rachel Hall, MSW Candidate

OVERVIEW OF SUCCESS COACHING PROGRAMS



Emerging Scholars Program – ESP (150)

- Began in 2011 (grant funded)
- Revamped in 2019 (donor funded)
- Includes students with **HS 2.0- 3.25 GPA**
- Bi-weekly meetings with a success coach
- Opportunity to join a local honor society
Alpha Omega Psi

Student Transition & Engagement Program – STEP (75)

- Began in 2012 (grant funded)
- Absorbed by the institution in 2014
- Includes students who are **Pell Eligible**
- Bi-weekly coaching sessions and peer mentor
meetings
- Early registration privileges

STEP COMPARED TO NON-STEP (PELL ELIGIBLE)



Fall Term	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Cohort	73	71	66	66	66	64	382	491	387	348	342	344
Retention Rate												
1 Year Retention Rate	76.71%	74.65%	81.82%	84.85%	86.36%	70.31%	74.35%	71.28%	74.16%	72.99%	72.51%	69.48%
2 Years Retention Rate	68.49%	63.38%	66.67%	74.24%	71.21%		61.78%	58.66%	59.17%	54.31%	59.65%	
3 Years Retention Rate	65.75%	59.15%	56.06%	69.70%			56.81%	55.80%	50.90%	49.43%		
Graduation Rate												
4 Years Graduation Rate	47.95%	40.85%	34.85%				35.34%	32.18%	25.06%			
5 Years Graduation Rate	54.79%	50.70%					46.60%	42.77%				
6 Years Graduation Rate	56.16%						50.79%					

10% higher retention rates **7%** higher graduation rates

ESP COMPARED TO NON-ESP (2.00 -3.20 HS GPA)



	HS GPA >=2.00 & <=3.20 ESP- FT Freshman					HS GPA >=2.00 & <=3.20 Non-ESP- FT Freshman				
Fall Term	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Cohort	60	49	92	79	120	469	438	300	350	266
Retention Rate										
1 Year Retention Rate	70.00%	75.51%	73.91%	77.22%	78.33%	65.67%	69.63%	67.00%	65.14%	66.54%
2 Years Retention Rate	60.00%	59.18%	56.52%	59.49%		52.88%	50.00%	51.00%	48.00%	
3 Years Retention Rate	55.00%	48.98%	53.26%			44.56%	44.52%	47.00%		
Graduation Rate										
4 Years Graduation Rate	26.67%	30.61%				22.17%	21.92%			
5 Years Graduation Rate	43.33%					34.12%				

9% higher retention rates **8%** higher graduation rates

Benefits of Success Coaching

- ✓ Locate and **connect** with campus resources
- ✓ Manage the transition and demands of a college schedule
- ✓ Prepare to meet with advisors and register for classes
- ✓ Provide a **personal connection** on campus

“Sometimes I feel like you just need to vent about things...and it’s so much easier to do that with somebody close to you.”

“He was very much my little cheerleader and I definitely needed that my first year.”

WHAT ELSE ARE STUDENTS LOOKING FOR FROM THEIR SUCCESS COACHES DURING THEIR FIRST YEAR?

➡ **Support Navigating Financial Aid & Literacy**

- “I have two close friends who have had to drop out because they did not fully understand the financial stuff...”

➡ **Opportunities to Connect**

- “Especially with how the world is going right now...just having that sense of belonging in your university is really important.”



DO STUDENTS FEEL SUPPORTED AFTER THEIR FIRST YEAR?



“I’m kind of my own tool.”

“I’ve kept the skills.”

“Being out of the program was kind of a shock.”

“Our school is very much loud about the support we need but...it just doesn’t feel like it’s there.”

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➔ 29% of survey respondents indicated they would have found success coaching helpful during the sophomore, junior, and senior year.

➔ 49% of survey respondents indicated they would have found success coaching helpful during their sophomore year

IS THERE
NEED FOR
SUCCESS
COACHING
BEYOND
THE FIRST
YEAR?



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**“[AS A SENIOR] I'M JUST LIKE
MORE VOCAL, AND I'M LIKE, I
DON'T KNOW, AND I'LL ASK
SOMEONE AND FIGURE IT OUT.
BUT **AS A SOPHOMORE** I
WASN'T REALLY LIKE THAT, SO
IT WAS MORE JUST LIKE, **LET'S
HOPE IT WORKS OUT, AND IF IT
DOESN'T, I DON'T KNOW WHAT
I'LL DO .”****

IN THE WORDS OF FORMER SCHOLARS...

- ➔ **The transitions don't end with the freshman year**
 - “**Sophomore slump**.it's a real thing, I was going through it.”
 - “I have to go into harder classes, more schedules, a lot of people get jobs on campus.”
- ➔ **Responsibility increases as support decreases**
 - “What is adulting?”
 - “Internships start happening, that's when you start thinking about grad school... [You] have to start worrying about the future.”

Support during the class registration process
Study and organizational strategies
Major and minor exploration
Academic tutoring
Opportunities for meaningful engagement with peers
Self-care*
Financial literacy (including navigating financial aid)*

WHAT DO STUDENTS NEED OUT OF SUCCESS COACHES AFTER THE FIRST YEAR?

*STUDENTS INDICATED A NEED FOR SUPPORT ACROSS ALL YEARS OF COLLEGE

GE

Attachment C:



NISS's approach is founded on compelling evidence that colleges and universities inadvertently create administrative and bureaucratic obstacles to college access, progression and completion.

We can do better...NISS helps universities identify barriers to completion and remove them.

The NISS Diagnostic & Playbook



The Diagnostic & Playbook provides a holistic analysis of an institution's operations, policies, and practices as they relate to student-success outcomes.

Diagnostic

Playbook

Tentative Schedule:

- September–November 2025: Diagnostic and Playbook Launch
- February–May 2026: Final Leadership Presentations
- June–July 2026: Campus Site Visits
- September 2026: Launch of Implementation Services

Current Situation

Key Strengths

Key Challenges

Recommendations

Implementation Steps

Links to NISS Accelerator