

Fresno State will reject 5,000 applicants for fall semester

By Hannah
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The Fresno State gateway sign is seen on the corner of the main campus at Cedar and Shaw avenues in Fresno on Thursday, Oct. 9, 2014.

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Fresno State will turn away at least 5,000 qualified applicants next school year, continuing a trend fueled by recession-era budget cuts that have kept the university from enrolling most applicants who come from outside the central San Joaquin Valley.

The university is restricting admissions for the third year in a row, said associate vice president for enrollment Bernard Vinovrski, a move driven mostly by limited increases in state funding for California State University campuses. Those denied admission come from outside Fresno State's four-county service area — Fresno, Kings, Madera and Tulare counties.

Vinovrski said the number of first-time freshman applicants continues to surge — up 5.2% over last year's numbers, he said — while the university's retention rate is also steadily rising.

Those circumstances have created a conundrum for school officials, who say improved student retention means they can't afford to bring in as many new students each year. The university expects to get a 1.48% funding increase this year, which will largely be offset by growing numbers of students who stay at Fresno State instead of transferring or dropping out.

“That’s the dilemma we’re faced with,” Vinovrski said. “We want to retain more people, we want to graduate more people, but in a sense, the more successful you are there, it means eventually you turn away more people.”

Fresno State received about 19,320 first-time freshman applications this year and plans to admit about 9,000. Around 3,300 will choose to enroll, officials say. Of the 8,000 or so applicants from outside the region, about 6,000 will be qualified but only 1,000 will be accepted, Vinovrski said.

In all, the university will enroll about 23,475 students, or 375 more than the current school year.

Applications are up in record numbers across the California State University system. About 3.9% more, or 30,000 students, applied across the 23-campus system this year than fall 2013.

The financial challenges in Fresno are mirrored systemwide, said CSU spokesman Michael Uhlenkamp, which means CSU schools routinely turn away at least 20,000 qualified students each year. That won’t change this year, he said.

“We are receiving \$2.65 billion from the state of California, which is \$350 million less than prior to the recession,” he said. “We have improved efficiencies, we’re graduating more students, but the bottom line is, we’re not receiving the amount of money we need” to enroll more students.

Uhlenkamp said CSU trustees have proposed a budget that would accommodate about 12,000 more students next year — about 9,000 more than the budget proposal being floated by Gov. Jerry Brown.

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