



**Memorandum of Understanding
for the Strategic Partnership
between Sonoma State University,
the city of Rohnert Park, and the city of Cotati**

Sonoma State University (SSU), the City of Rohnert Park (RP) and the City of Cotati, hereinafter called the Key Stakeholders, have been working collaboratively to develop a common understanding of one another's organizations and to establish areas where there is mutual benefit in working together, supporting each other's strategic aims, and optimally leveraging their combined activities.

The Key Stakeholders have interacted on many levels for years, but these activities had not previously been fully coordinated to align the respective strategic plans of the three entities for maximum impact. With an increased emphasis on the importance of place and the role of these organizations as civic institutions, this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) formalizes the strategic relationship between the university and the cities.

The Key Stakeholders do not intend this MOU to be legally binding and do not intend that any agency or partnership relationship be created between the Key Stakeholders by this MOU. The purpose of this MOU is to embody a spirit of cooperation between the Key Stakeholders, based on a set of principles, to work together to raise the regional, national, and international profile of the parties and the Key Stakeholders with governments, businesses, and other key stakeholders to attract talent, money, and business and to positively impact the parties and benefit their common communities. Nothing in this MOU will seek to constrain broader activity that might evolve and expand during implementation.

The MOU embodies the overarching principles of diversity and inclusive growth, particularly in the context of economic recovery post-COVID-19 and a mutual leveling-up agenda, both of which are further described in this MOU by the following six objectives:

Objective 1: Economic Development

Identify opportunities for closer collaboration to encourage economic development.

How we will do this:

- Support the development of a wider innovation landscape.
- Examples of activities may include -

- **Education and Training:** Coding bootcamps and tech workshops for residents. Collaborate to offer courses on emerging technologies and innovation management that may help city staff, local business, and community members.
 - **Community Engagement:** Organize periodic events focused on collective challenges like improving public safety or enhancing public transportation. Host public workshops to gather community input on upcoming projects and innovations.
 - **Public-Private Partnerships:** Partner with tech companies to pilot new technologies such as autonomous public transportation or smart grids. Collaborate with local businesses to support innovation through grants or tax incentives.
- Work together to catalyze the realization of key economic development.
 - Work together to propel and support grassroots startups and entrepreneurship.
 - Raise an enterprising and entrepreneurial culture supporting the development of incubator space for university student and staff spinouts.
 - Build sustainable mechanisms to foster stronger relationships between the University and local businesses to improve productivity through close working by the University Partnerships and Engagement Team with local chambers of commerce and the business community.
 - Support inward investment activity through the use of existing strategic partnerships and demonstration of research excellence.
 - Where possible, harness the purchasing power of the partner organizations to generate social value and local supply chain opportunities to assist with economic recovery.

Objective 2: Research

Leverage research expertise to improve the quality of life for the communities and people of the region through research that is collaborative, participative, and with a particular focus on:

- Transition to Sustainable Energy
- Anti-poverty
- Educational attainment
- Sports, physical activity, and well-being
- Inclusive growth
- Economic growth
- Data analysis and modeling to inform policymaking and delivery
- Public health and inequalities

Objective 3: Culture and Heritage

Work together to be a focal point in the North Bay for culture and heritage, working closely with a wide range of partner organizations to develop and promote the region.

How we will do this:

- Jointly commit to an inclusive cultural offering for the benefit of the communities we serve.
- Develop and support a tourism strategy that positively impacts the region.
- Work together to support a coherent strategic provision of cultural facilities in the area.
- Align cultural and heritage offerings to research themes including, energy, educational attainment, digital technology, and well-being.
- Jointly develop and support festivals and cultural events aligned with mutual research and collection areas.
- Promote sports, well-being, and physical activity

Objective 4: Place

Work together to build sustainable communities for residents and all users in the region and maximize the opportunities for the University's activities to bring mutual benefits to our neighbors.

How we will do this:

- Place
 - Work in partnership to develop sustainable communities that are complementary to the cities and their capacities .
- Community
 - Wherever possible, local communities will have access to the University.
 - We will continue to support and develop volunteering in the wider community.
 - Work with communities to support the green environment, creating safe, sustainable, enjoyable spaces.
 - Provide greater opportunities for local young people to gain a place at SSU.
 - Work to build considerate and safe neighborhoods.
 - Continue to ensure a safe community for all.

Objective 5: Education and Skills

Work in collaboration with regional educational providers to ensure the needs of existing and prospective employers are clearly articulated to improve the ability for the learning and skills provision to meet this demand.

How we will do this:

- Work with our communities and education providers to widen participation and diversity with respect to key educational qualifications that support regional skills demand and assist in pre-university admission.
- Prepare highly engaged, work-ready and creative-thinking graduates capable of fulfilling the opportunities that exist with regional employers, thereby supporting employment opportunities that retain our graduates in the region.
- Share values and access knowledge and innovation through partnerships with employers, sector bodies, and other educational providers to identify the workforce skills needed to realize development of the economy and society in our region.
- Work collaboratively with partners to create educational offerings that support lifelong and multigenerational learning needs across our communities.

Objective 6: Public Relations

Work together through strategic communications to raise the regional, national, and international profiles of Sonoma State University, the City of Rohnert Park, and the City of Cotati in the interests of and to the benefit of the region.

How we will do this:

- Work collaboratively with key stakeholders on the promotion of activities on a regional, national, and international footing, building on key messages and joint approaches. Examples might include city personnel and university staff working together to identify suitable location and placement of banners creating a welcoming atmosphere for the current students, incoming prospects, and their families.
- Where appropriate and in the interests of the region, agree to a shared approach and key messages, noting that positions will not always be aligned.

Management of MOU Activity

This collaboration will be coordinated through a strategic management working group. The following representative from each agency will serve on the working group:

1. Cotati City Manager
2. Cotati City Manager Designee
3. Rohnert Park City Manager
4. Rohnert Park City Manager Designee
5. Vice President for Administration & Finance at Sonoma State University
6. Associate Vice President for Government Relations and Strategic Communications at Sonoma State University

The Key Stakeholders also agree that:

- This MOU will run for a recurring three-year term. Any of the participants may decide to not continue.
- Nothing in this MOU will be interpreted as a commitment of funds from any Key Stakeholder; and
- This MOU does not restrict, in any way, other arrangements that a Key Stakeholder might wish to develop independently.

Signed by:

Mayor, City of Rohnert Park

Mayor, City of Cotati

President, Sonoma State University

Date: