What is the Voluntary Separation Incentive Program?
In an effort to help balance our budget, the VSIP is a program designed to reduce payroll costs by creating an incentive for employees to voluntarily separate from their current position at the university.

Am I eligible to participate in the VSIP?
Please review the VSIP Terms and Conditions document for eligibility requirements.

What are the Terms and Conditions of the VSIP?
The terms and conditions of the program may be found here: VSIP Terms and Conditions.

What is the severance package amount?
Please see the severance package section of the VSIP Terms and Conditions.

Is retirement a condition of the VSIP?
No, an employee does not have to retire after separating from SSU through the VSIP.

Will this program be offered in the future?
This is a one-time program, but may be extended at the discretion of the University.

If I am eligible for the program, do I have to participate?
No, this is a strictly voluntary program.

If I participate in the VSIP will I still get my vacation payout?
Your final accumulated vacation accruals will be paid out on your final check. Please consult Payroll and Benefits for further information.

Will employees who choose this voluntary program be eligible for health insurance after separating from the University but retiring at a later date?
Benefits generally end following the month of separation. For example, if separation occurs on December 31, 2022, employee benefits will end on January 31, 2023. If you wish to remain benefits-eligible into retirement, the CalPERS retirement date must be within 120 days of the separation date from the benefits-eligible position. Therefore, if you retire after 120 days, you would be eligible for your pension but no longer eligible for health benefits into retirement. Please contact Payroll and Benefits at payroll@sonoma.edu for further benefit information.
Is the application deadline negotiable?
This timeline is designed to provide an appropriate planning opportunity to both employees and managers and must be applied consistently to ensure that everyone is treated fairly. The program outlines the deadlines that may be adjusted meeting the parameters.

Is there a specific date I need to separate by?
Any date on or before May 31, 2023, unless the position is considered critical or hard to replace by the appropriate administrator and the Division Vice President.

Do I need to sign the First Separation Agreement and Release?
This form must be signed to participate in the VSIP. In exchange for signing this form, participants will receive 80% of their calculated maximum severance benefit within thirty (30) calendar days of separation from the University.

Do I need to sign the Final Separation Agreement and Release?
To receive the final 20% of the calculated severance, VSIP participants are required to sign the Final Release on their last day of employment.

Does my Appropriate Administrator have to approve my participation in this program?
No, should an employee choose to participate in the program the supervisor will be notified of the separation date chosen by the employee.

When will my Appropriate Administrator be notified?
Employees are encouraged to inform their Appropriate Administrator of their intent to participate in the VSIP when submitting their application. Upon receipt of the executed First Separation Agreement and Release, HR will notify your Appropriate Administrator of your intended separation date.

How and when is the incentive going to be paid?
The incentive will be paid in a lump sum with the applicable taxes withheld, within thirty (30) calendar days of the separation date. The full 100% will only be paid if both the First Separation Agreement and Release as well as the Final Separation Agreement and Release are signed and received. If the Final Separation and Release is not signed and received, only 80% of the incentive will be issued.

How is the VSIP lump sum taxed?
The lump sum will be taxed based on the bonus tax rate of 22% for federal withholdings and at least 6.6% for state withholdings. Medicare and social security taxes will also be withheld as applicable.
May I receive additional service credit, as with a Golden Handshake incentive?
No, a Golden Handshake retirement incentive is administered and directed by the Governor’s Office. SSU does not have the authority to make service credit decisions. The VSIP only provides a financial incentive.

If I decide to CalPERS retire in connection with this program, what will my CalPERS retirement package look like?
Please sign into your myCalPERS account and use the Calculate My Retirement Estimate tool to determine an estimate of your retirement benefit package. You can log into your myCalPERS account by following this link to the myCalPERS login page.

How will any recent 7/1/22 compensation increases negotiated as part of the 22/23 Salary Programs be reflected in terms of my final compensation associated with CalPers pension calculations?
CalPERS will use the highest average annual compensation during any 12 or 36-month period of employment depending on the employee's membership date and their formula. Please review the service retirement calculation details provided by CalPers to understand the factors used to calculate future benefits.

If I participate in the VSIP, may I still work for the campus as a retired annuitant?
Employees must retire through CalPERS in order to be considered as a retired annuitant. Rules governing retired annuitants may be found by following the CalPERS Retired Annuitant link. Please note that there is a wait period of 180 days before a retiree can return to a CalPERS employer.

If I participate in the VSIP and do not retire, can I be re-hired by SSU at a later date?
Yes, there is nothing prohibiting an employee from applying to another position at SSU.

May I participate if I already have submitted my intent to retire?
Yes, you may participate in the VSIP if the date of retirement fits into the parameters of the program.

I am currently employed as a Rehired Annuitant or as a FERP, am I eligible for the VSIP?
No, you have CalPERS Service Retired, therefore do not qualify for the program.