

Academic Affairs Budgetary Alignment Report

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April 2025

Background

In the Fall of 2022, the Vice President of Academic Affairs communicated to the College community the need to address an approximate \$1.4 million structural deficit in Academic Affairs, as part of the District's [Long Range Plan for Fiscal Stability](#). The budgetary deficit was one of three salient priorities for Academic Affairs, including addressing accreditation [compliance requirements](#) pertaining to Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and implementing a Strategic Enrollment Management Plan ([SEMP](#)) designed to restore District enrollment to 17,500 FTES by 2027/28.

In subsequent academic years, instructional deans and department chairs worked closely together to assess and prioritize vacant management and classified positions, according to those that were most urgent to maintaining area operations and those where operations were less dependent on replacing the positions. Through that process, budgetary reductions were achieved according to the timeline, indicated in the table below.

Year	Starting Deficit	Net Reduction	Notes
2022/2023	\$1.4 million	\$633,000	Reductions already achieved
2023/2024	\$767,000	\$312,563	
2024/2025	\$454,742	\$210,000-\$260,000	Proposed reduction
2025/2026	\$225,000	\$225,000	Final Remaining Deficit

Comprehensive Assessment

At the May 1, 2024, Academic Senate meeting, the VPAA gave an [update](#) to which members of the Senate provided feedback in support of a more comprehensive approach in addressing the budget deficit, as opposed to an apparent, one-dimensional strategy of eliminating vacant positions. In follow up discussions at Academic Affairs Council meetings, instructional deans and directors suggested other areas that could be explored for budgetary savings as part of a comprehensive analysis, including: operational budgets, faculty reassigned time for special assignments, the Schedule of Classes, organizational alignment opportunities, and structured discussions “Frontline Forums” with classified professionals about ways to promote operational efficiencies, effective communication, and community-building. Subsequent sections of this report provide an overview of the information-gathering, analysis, and action steps necessary to resolve the remaining budgetary deficit in Academic Affairs.

It should be noted that members of Academic Affairs Council, instructional deans and directors, have been organized in small groups around these themes and they have provided key insight and recommendations at AAC meetings, Academic Affairs retreats, and other gatherings to inform this more holistic approach to budgetary alignment.

Operational Budgets

Operational budgets that could be reduced to generate cost savings, including department budgets, dean budgets, the VPAA budget, and other program budgets, such as Arts and Lectures, that pertain to Academic Affairs.

A preliminary review of operational budgets has revealed that there are areas within the budget where there is some misalignment of expenditures. For example, the Academic Affairs budget was being charged in instances when a faculty member misses class, and a substitute instructor is assigned to teach the class. Organizationally, that cost should be applied to a budget within Human Resources, as opposed to Academic Affairs. However, restructuring budgets simply shifts the cost and corresponding funds out of Academic Affairs to another component area without eliminating cost to the District, so there is no net reduction.

An analysis of operational budgets has also shown that a number of inactive legacy budgets remain, some of which carry nominal amounts of fund balance. An example of this includes remaining budget lines for Community Education, which is not an active program and should be removed from the budget. Unfortunately, the amount of funds associated with these residual, legacy budgets is small and would not contribute significant amounts toward budgetary reductions.

Furthermore, most of the budgets within Academic Affairs have been subject to previous rounds of budget cuts in prior years and have not been adjusted for inflation. Consequently, the initial assessment is that there is a low probability of capturing significant savings within operational budgets, but there will be continued analysis for consideration as part of the comprehensive budgetary analysis in 2025/26.

Faculty Reassigned Time

Faculty reassigned time, which is assigned to faculty through special assignments, can pertain to the Academic Affairs budget and the District could conceivably avoid assigning these roles as a cost saving measure.

In analyzing this approach, it was observed that many faculty reassigned time positions are categorically funded, thus eliminating those positions would not render budgetary savings to the District. Moreover, faculty reassigned time positions serve critical functions at the College and those key operational priorities—curriculum, accreditation, SLOs, among others—depend on faculty leadership through special assignments.

The current assessment is that it is unlikely for budgetary reductions to come from reducing faculty reassigned time, but this will be revisited in 2025/26 as part of a comprehensive budgetary analysis.

Schedule of Classes

Reducing Full-time Equivalent Faculty (FTEF) from the College's Schedule of Classes would render a budgetary reduction. In fact, this approach has been enacted during previous eras of the College as a cost saving measure. However, current Academic Affairs leadership does not consider reducing FTEF a preferred method for reducing the budget deficit at the present time.

In conducting this analysis, it was observed that Academic Affairs utilizes an annual allotment of 1,074 FTEF to produce the Schedule of Classes. Moreover, the Strategic Enrollment Management Plan (SEMP) relies on this FTEF level to achieve its overarching goal of returning to 17,500 FTES (Full-Time Equivalent Students) by 2027/28, a benchmark that is also central to the District's Long Range Plan for Fiscal Stability.

Encouragingly, District enrollment has shown steady growth in recent semesters, in line with the SEM, as indicated in the table below.

Year	FTES	Notes
2024/2025	15,000	(320 Report, P1 Projection)
2023/2024	14,200	
2022/2023	13,100	
2021/2022	12,400	

In brief, reducing FTEF from the Schedule of Classes as a cost saving measure at a time when continued enrollment growth is central to the District's fiscal stability is not an approach that Academic Affairs leadership is interested in pursuing at this time.

Organizational Alignment

A review of programs and positions for organizational alignment have also provided budget reductions for Academic Affairs. For example, in 2023/24, increased Disabled Student Programs and Services ([DSPS](#)) categorical funding became available to all Districts, providing an opportunity to apply a portion of SRJC's local allotment to support multiple staff positions in Adapted Physical Education (APE). In consultation with executive leadership from other Districts it was noted that other Districts took similar approaches with their program allotments.

While there is no new funding opportunity this year, there is ongoing verification with the Accounting Office, which has been helpful and supportive, of whether the full budgetary alignment was captured in 2023/24 or if it was only partially captured. As a result of this analysis, an additional \$50,000-\$100,000 may be applied this year as a permanent reduction.

Vacant Positions

At Academic Senate and Department Chairs Council and Instructional Managers (DCC-IM) meetings, respectively, in Spring 2025, the VPAA reported that two vacant positions were being

assessed for possible elimination, a classified position in Health Sciences and an administrative position in Public Safety. In both instances, the supervising administrator worked closely with teams from the impacted areas, developing plans for reclassifying adjacent positions and adjusting workflow to maintain operational needs without adversely impacting individual employees' workloads.

These reductions are anticipated to contribute a combined total of approximately \$160,000 toward reducing the Academic Affairs budget deficit.

As in previous years, several other vacant classified and management positions were analyzed and replaced in 2024/25 due to critical need.

Frontline Forums

During regular meetings between SEIU leadership and the VPAA, an idea emerged about bringing together classified professionals who serve on the frontlines of operational implementation, namely administrative assistants, and instructional managers to share perspectives about how to promote open communication, operational efficiency, and build community throughout Academic Affairs.

Monthly meetings were held in person, as 90-minute sessions, with a working lunch provided. Meeting agendas and summary notes, along with other pertinent documents, were archived in a shared Microsoft Teams site.

The full group divided itself into separate smaller workgroups which engaged in discussion, information-gathering, and eventually a set of recommendations to the VPAA regarding the following topics: 1) Personnel Action Forms (PAFs), 2) Evaluation Tracking, 3) Proofs for Schedule Development/Schedule Change Forms, 4) Timesheets and Time and Effort Reports.

Currently, the VPAA is tasked with taking these recommendations to the other component administrators for review and consideration toward implementing changes that can streamline, enhance, or otherwise improve operations.

Frontline Forum participants are interested in continuing monthly meetings into the 2025/26 academic year to maintain momentum toward shared community and collective problem solving.

Implementation Timeline

The budget reductions outlined in this report offer the possibility of a combined reduction of approximately \$50,000-\$100,000 in organizational alignment and another \$160,000 through the elimination of vacant positions, for an estimated \$210,000-\$260,000 total reduction. Actual numbers become available as exact figures are entered or removed during budget development.

Once enacted through budget development in June 2025, the Academic Affairs budget deficit, which stood at \$1.4 million in 2022/23 will be down to \$225,000 at the start of 2025/26.



The goal, then, will be to conduct another budgetary analysis in 2025/26 to identify strategies that fully resolve the remaining deficit, bringing Academic Affairs into solvency.

Questions and Considerations

For questions or considerations pertaining to this report, District employees are encouraged to reach out to their supervising administrators for initial conversation. In addition, the VPAA can be reached directly at rholcomb@santarosa.edu or via Executive Assistant Kelly Ransbottom at kransbottom@santarosa.edu.