

SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 8th, 2025

TO: Emily F. Cutrer, Interim President, Sonoma State University

FR: Karen Moranski, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs and Chair of University Budget Advisory Committee;

M. Monir Ahmed, Chief Financial Officer and Vice President of Administration and Finance and Vice Chair of University Budget Advisory Committee

RE: UBAC Proposal Review and Recommendations Update

At the request of the President, the University Budget Advisory Committee (UBAC) recently issued a **Call for Proposals** to gather ideas from the campus community regarding the potential addition or reinstatement of departments or programs. These proposals were intended for potential funding, contingent upon the University receiving additional resources through the state legislative budget process or other means.

UBAC received a total of **47 proposals** from a diverse range of campus stakeholders. Over the course of two months, the committee met regularly to thoroughly review, evaluate, and rank each submission using the rubric and rating scale previously shared with the campus community (rubric attached for reference).

Through extensive discussions and careful deliberation, the committee worked to ensure that each proposal was thoughtfully considered. While there were differing viewpoints and not all decisions were unanimous, the process was collaborative and grounded in the shared goal of advancing the University's mission.

Ultimately, UBAC identified 22 proposals to recommend for the President's review, should additional funding become available. The committee would like to highlight that its top priority is the proposal focused on reassigning tenure-track faculty, in order to preserve existing tenure-track positions. The committee acknowledges that the scope of any reassignment—whether involving one faculty member or several—is at the discretion of the

President and Cabinet, based on institutional needs and strategic priorities. All other proposals are unranked and are listed alphabetically within their respective funding categories:

- Immediate Funding Need
- Future Funding Need

The UBAC sincerely thanks all members of the campus community who participated in this process. The breadth, thoughtfulness, and creativity of the proposals received were truly impressive. The strong response underscores a deep and shared commitment to the University's continued growth and success.

The working group membership is outlined below:

Working Group Members:

Karen Moranski (Chair)	Provost, Vice President of Academic Affairs (non-voting)
M. Monir Ahmed (Vice-Chair)	CFO & VP of Administration and Finance (non-voting)
Troi Carleton	Dean, College of Humanities, Social Sciences, and the Arts
Emily Acosta Lewis	Chair of the Faculty; Communications Studies
Suzanne Rivoire	Vice-Chair of the Faculty; Computer Science
Wandling	CFA Representative; English
Lauren Morimoto	APARC Representative; Kinesiology
Laura Lupei	AVP for University Budget and Planning
Nicole Annaloro	Athletics Representative, Director of Athletics
John Lynch	Staff Representative, CTET
Vanessa Sanchez	President, Associated Students
Jonathan Duran	Vice President of Finance, Associated Students

Staff to the Committee:

Hayley Avery	Budget Manager, University Budget and Planning
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Ex-Officio:

Edward Mills	Vice President of Strategic Enrollment Management
Mike Ogg	Associate Vice President for Academic Resources

Final Proposal Recommendations

* Indicates the committee's highest-priority recommendation

** Indicates the proposed academic program has been approved through the Academic Senate

Immediate Funding Need:

Funding Reassignment Requests (Tenured-Tenure Track Faculty)*

Biomedical Engineering, Minor (Approved by EPC)

Critical Literacies and English Education, Minor**

Data Science - Major & Minor Degrees

Health, Culture, and Social Justice, Minor**

Health Professional Studies, BA**

Health Sciences, BS**

High School Dual Enrollment

Human Rights Studies, Minor**

Reinstate Department of Geology

Save WGS: A Profitable Path Forward for Sonoma State

SB108 Funded Hiring in Biology & Kinesiology (to cover on-going personnel costs)

Seawolves F1rst! (Jump Start Program)

Spanish Language from Community to Classroom to Career - Spanish @ SSU

Future Funding Need:

A visible, centralized, and designated space on campus to serve the HSI student population and MESA

Admitted Students Weekend Service

Bachelor of Arts Degree in AI, Humanity, and Business

Building High School Pathways in Healthcare and Education to Community Colleges, SSU, and into the Workforce

Empowering Learning - Advancing Embedded Tutoring and Faculty Collab for Student Success

MESA Summer Undergrad Research Program - Advancing Equity, Innovation, and Student Success in STEM

New Business Marketing BA Degree

The Center for Just Food Systems

As with any complex and collaborative decision-making process, a range of perspectives emerged during our discussions. While the committee used a consistent rubric to evaluate all proposals, it became clear that certain considerations—such as enhancements to campus life, facilities use, or impacts to the student experience—were not explicitly captured in the original rubric. These insights, while not part of the formal evaluation criteria, helped shape the broader conversation.

Included as an appendix to this final recommendation is a statement from a few committee members who have provided a differing perspective. This addition reflects UBAC's commitment to transparency and inclusivity, acknowledging that thoughtful dissent and diverse viewpoints are valuable to the integrity of our process.

A Different Perspective: In Support of Campus Life

Dear Colleagues and President Cutrer,

We are putting forward this minority report in support of proposals that did not fare well in the UBAC ranking process. The rubric we were given did not address three criteria that would have elevated these programs.

1. How do the proposals contribute to the student experience on campus?
2. How do the proposals contribute to the mission statement of Sonoma State, which emphasizes breadth of experience and discovery?
3. How do the proposals fit with the existing buildings and facilities on our campus?

While no rubric is perfect, and it is likely that many on the committee included consideration of these factors, we feel it is nonetheless important to highlight Athletics, Theater Arts and Dance, and Art History. It is surely important for us to consider that we have athletics fields and facilities, several fantastic performing spaces in Ives, Warren and GMC, and an Art Gallery that is important to our community.

Additionally, one rubric that was on the ranking process is relevant here: 3. Will this proposal improve equity, inclusion, and belonging of current and potential students at SSU?

Because of the nature of reviewing so many proposals, and due to the fact that the proposals themselves did not necessarily address the criteria we wound up using, it is important to emphasize how important Athletics is to our diverse student body. Theater also plays an important role in this area.

We will highlight how these programs address the above concerns.

Athletics:

Campus Life. Athletics is an important part of what students consider a collegiate experience. Whether or not they actually end up attending an athletic contest, the idea of being able to go

to a game is important. Eliminating Athletics will drive away not just the athletes themselves, but the students who feel that having Division II teams is part of a campus experience.

Mission. Athletics is not an academic program, so their proposal would not address that so much. But the nature of team sports is to support at least two key aspects of our mission: “have a broad cultural perspective” and “are concerned with contributing to the health and well-being of the world at large.” Higher education has lasting importance on an individual's future success. As such, Division II supports the educational mission of college athletics by fostering a balanced approach in which student-athletes learn and develop through their desired academic pursuits, in civic engagement with their communities and in athletics competition.

Buildings and facilities. Sonoma State is a residential campus, with many spaces developed and devoted to high-level athletics performance space. This should be an important factor when considering its potential elimination.

Diversity and inclusion: As their proposal shows, the composition of Athletics programs is highly diverse, especially with respect to African-American students. The program is an important asset to student life and adds to the identity of the university. Athletics significantly adds to diversity of the student body by bringing students of color and international students to the campus. The athletics program also is a unifying and positive link to alumni and donors.

Other notes. Athletics is a high-profile case for us to consider. In addition to a pending court case, the elimination of Athletics (and Theater) has led SSU into a complicated and potentially controversial “alternate consultation” model for fees that students have previously voted to use in support of Athletics and theater. It might be best to honor those prior votes and restore these programs.

Additionally, Athletics should be used as an aid to recruitment. An example is the old Ticket to Success Program where we brought students to campus to see part of a game, meet the student athletes, tour campus, etc. It was one of the best programs in terms of bringing kids to campus - and their parents.

Theater Arts and Dance:

Campus Life. Sonoma State is a residential university, and students rightfully expect to attend performances. It is not clear in current plans how performances will continue if Theater Arts and Dance are to be discontinued. The advertisement of performing arts events gets the name of our campus out into the community.

Mission. Theater Arts and Dance are important to all aspect of the SSU mission, but in particular the idea that students will “have a keen appreciation of intellectual and aesthetic achievements.” When evaluating the merits of such programs, the number of majors they have is not the key factor. ALL Sonoma State Students benefit from the way the arts contributes to their growth.

Buildings and facilities. Warren and Ives are specific buildings here on campus that historically invite students and the community to see our performing students. Any good plan should surely take note of our current strengths, which include these buildings.

Diversity and inclusion: THAR/Dance is particularly suited to address issues of contemporary concern, including issues such as immigration and police violence. Last year, they collaborated on the amazing production of Lin Manuel Miranda’s *In the Heights*, bringing important attention to issues of assimilation, college life, and immigration. A few years ago, Theater developed some of the most substantial and demanding anti-racist work on campus we’ve seen via the West Coast Premiere of *Facing Our Truth* (about Trayvon Martin), which had a sold out run and included post performance conversations. The program was a great example of bringing Interdisciplinary scholars together from across the campus. The Arts is where Academics engage culture, and Theater Arts and Dance have been at the forefront of that work on our campus, working on decolonizing dance. The faculty have also done intensive work to examine their teaching and service and modify it after going through a program led by Black scholars.

Other notes. As noted above, the elimination of Athletics (and Theater) has led SSU into a complicated and potentially controversial “alternate consultation” model for fees that students have previously voted to use in support of Athletics and Theater. It might be best to honor those prior votes and restore these programs.

Art History

Campus Life. Art may be a discipline that appeals to our alums and community members more so than current students. However, through the Arts Integration program, many students are exposed to interesting art installations via classroom visits, led by art historians in the Gallery.

Mission. Art History is one of the core disciplines of traditional liberal arts and sciences programs. Certainly, Art History relates to key aspects of our mission statement such as “have a broad cultural perspective” and “have a keen appreciation of intellectual and aesthetic achievements.”

Buildings and facilities. One of the main reasons we have for highlighting Art History in this report is that the campus boasts an amazing Art Gallery. As with Theater Arts and Dance, and Athletics, we should be maintaining programs that use our great facilities. If we eliminate all of these programs, we have a ghost town. That will not attract students.

Diversity and inclusion: Art History courses cover art production from around the world, touching on culture, religion, politics, economics among other topics. One of the strengths of Art History is that it doesn't limit the questions that can be asked but allows for study from different angles. Students can propose questions that inspire them while they learn about different places, traditions, and ideas. Information literacy forms a large part of the Art History programs students learn to gather sources and evaluate their claims within a lively and often raucous debate. Curriculum innovation has kept course material fresh and relevant. Critical issues of race, gender, sexuality, political power, religious expression, repatriation, and eco-criticism are front and center in Art History courses.

Other notes. It seems the decision to eliminate programs was primarily based upon the number of majors. Art History is a great example of a program that serves our mission, has a great physical location to center around, and yet has few majors. Rather than eliminating this program, it might be best to plan a way for it to be supported in line with the number of its majors. The campus certainly needs Art Historians, and so does the continued Art Studio program.

University Budget Advisory Committee Proposal Review Framework (For reference)

Guiding Principles

As a campus committed to stewardship of place and the liberal arts and sciences, Sonoma State commits to the following guiding principles:

- *Student Success*
- *Equity, Inclusion and Belonging*
- *Innovative and Sustainable Future*
- *Engagement with our North Bay Community*

Proposal Eligibility Criteria

1. Submitted by a current Sonoma State student, faculty or staff
2. Signed off by a Vice-President
3. Related to one or more of the following
 - a. a new or existing academic program
 - b. a new or existing co-curricular program
 - c. an existing campus unit or department

Ranking Rubric

1. Will this proposal meet a current or future student need or demand?
2. Will this proposal contribute to student success?
3. Will this proposal improve equity, inclusion, and belonging of current and potential students at SSU?
4. Will this proposal increase or improve our engagement with our North Bay community?
5. Will this proposal improve our long-term financial sustainability? For example, increased enrollment or more efficient business operations or structure?
6. Will this proposal contribute to innovation on our campus?

Scoring Scale

A: Recommend

B: Needs Discussion

C: Do Not Recommend