



As we enter the sixth week of classes, I am reminded that we are nearing midterm season. I was not the best student during my first two years as an undergraduate and I remember how stressful these exams would be in my classes where our grade was based on one midterm and one final exam.

The terrain of higher education has certainly changed since the 1990s, and I am proud to be part of a faculty body who profoundly believe in creating a classroom that cultivates engagement and thinking as we also embrace the reality that we must meet students where they are, particularly after the learning loss the pandemic brought to a generation of young people. In the College of Science and Engineering, [the Student Enrichment Opportunities](#) program includes all incoming majors in Biology in activities that boost retention and particularly prepares underrepresented groups to work in STEM fields. Comprehensive services within the [Guardian Scholars Program](#) as well, results in a 70% graduation rate among our students who arrive through the foster care system.

I say all this to remind our community that we continue to do important work, working towards student success as we face a second reality, a demographic shift in college-age students. Even in the College of Science Engineering, a college that we think has had stable if not increasing enrollments, we have seen a reduction from 7,558 students in Fall 2022 to 7,155 students in Fall 2024. University-wide we have been experiencing about a 5% loss in students each year for the last three years. Currently we are at 22,311 students or 18,736 full time equivalent students (FTES). Yet even with this enrollment decline, we continue to be a large thriving university that simultaneously upholds transformative education as our core purpose.

We have in fact successfully undertaken the painful process of meeting the goals of the original multi-year budget realignment plan. Over the past two years we have reduced low-enrolled seminar and lecture courses by 41%, while lowering the number of high demand courses so that we offer the course that students need. The College of Liberal and Creative Arts too has been increasing the size of small classes where appropriate. We have also steadily been reducing the number of MPPs and consolidating services to a single location in areas such as advising and IT services.

Yes, we have also made mistakes along the way. Most recently, you may have heard that in one college we canceled a number of classes the weekend before instruction began on Monday. As we all know canceling classes is bad practice for both students and faculty. Creating a schedule that appropriately matches student enrollment, and later adjusting that schedule months before classes start so as not to cancel classes, is clearly the better practice. We will continue to guide departments to do so, with deeper engagement and conversation.

As we plan ahead for 2025-2026, we are facing another 5% reduction from the Chancellor's Office due to the continued decline in our enrollment. We may also face an additional 7.95% budget reduction to the CSU system from the California state legislature. We must work together to advocate for the CSU and demonstrate to the state that a cut of this magnitude will damage our ability to meet students' needs. We are currently detailing the potential impact of an additional 7.95% reduction to inform our advocacy. We will know more when the Governor releases the preliminary budget in January.

Our current planning strategy is to reduce spending again by 5%. All six colleges are working diligently to plan a responsible spring schedule and streamline curriculum to both serve the students and meet our continued enrollment decline. In one college, all but one Bachelor's degree programs are reducing their required units by 9 to 12 units. In another college a Master's program is merging into another due to low enrollments. In that same college, a director is proposing upper division undergraduate elective classes to be cross-listed as graduate seminars to ensure their availability with robust enrollments across multiple degree programs. In a third college, all the tenured or tenure track faculty are teaching at least one lower division GE course. In a fourth college, faculty in a school with decreasing numbers of majors have been voluntarily teaching GE courses in other departments.

This tremendous engagement from all will continue to hold us together as we weather great pain and heartache. We must continue to resize while still holding student achievement and success central to our purpose. Change is always difficult, but I have no doubt that through shared governance and shared ownership we will make it through, smaller but mightier.