

SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

December 18, 2025

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

FR: Stacey Bosick, Interim Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs and Chair of University Budget Advisory Committee;

Jeff Wilson, Interim Chief Financial Officer and Vice President of Administration and Finance and Vice Chair of University Budget Advisory Committee

RE: UBAC's SSU Commitment Discretionary Funding Recommendations – Final Report

The University Budget Advisory Committee (UBAC) received a formal charge in Fall 2025 from Interim President Emily F. Cutrer to develop funding recommendations related to the Sonoma State Commitment funds allocated to Sonoma State University. As described in the charge, the State of California provided \$9 million in the 2025–26 budget to support increased enrollment, restore prior funding reductions, and invest in new academic programs addressing regional and statewide workforce needs. Of this amount, \$6 million was designated for enrollment management and marketing strategies to be determined by the Division of Enrollment Management, and UBAC was invited, though not required, to offer advice regarding those strategies. UBAC's primary responsibility was to develop an inclusive, transparent, and well-documented framework for determining how the remaining \$3 million in one-time funds, available for use over a three-year period ending June 30, 2028, should be allocated, and then produce a set of prioritized recommendations with funding amounts and rankings by December 1, 2025. The charge also required UBAC to expand its membership temporarily by adding two non-CSU/SSU community stakeholders in accordance with legislative language calling for consultation with faculty, students, and community members.

To accomplish this work, UBAC formed a task force composed of most of the regular committee members. The task force met multiple times throughout the Fall 2025 semester. The task force membership and meeting dates are below:

Membership:

Stacey Bosick (Chair)	Interim Provost, Vice President of Academic Affairs (non-voting)
Jeff Wilson (Vice Chair)	Interim Vice President of Admin and Finance, CFO (non-voting)
Troi Carleton	Dean, College of Humanities, Social Sciences, and the Arts
Ajay Gehlawat	Chair of the Faculty; Hutchins School of Liberal Studies
Anastasia Tosouni	Vice Chair of the Faculty; Sociology, Criminology and Criminal Justice Studies
Emily Vieira Asencio	CFA Representative; Sociology, Criminology and Criminal Justice Studies
Diana Grant	Chair of APARC; Sociology, Criminology and Criminal Justice Studies
Laura Lupei	AVP for University Budget and Resource Planning
Aidan Humrich	Staff Representative, Office of the Dean, College of Education, Counseling & Ethnic Studies
Madelyn Boyd	President, Associated Students
Micah Reyes	Vice President of Finance, Associated Students
Herman Hernandez	Community Stakeholder Seat (Fall 2025)
John Laughlin	Community Stakeholder Seat (Fall 2025)
Mike Ogg	AVP for Academic Resources (Ex-Officio, non-voting)

Meeting dates:

Friday, September 19th	Thursday, November 13th
Friday, October 10th	Friday, November 14th
Friday, October 24th	Friday, December 5th
Monday, November 3rd	Thursday, December 11th

These meetings were used to interpret the scope of the Interim President's charge, discuss expectations set forth in the state legislation, and establish a method for gathering and synthesizing broad stakeholder input. The group committed to building a process that was both participatory and transparent, ensuring that the final recommendations would reflect the voices and needs of the campus and surrounding community. During these conversations, some committee members expressed strong views that the entirety of the remaining discretionary funding should be directed toward academic areas and the restoration of programs. However, the committee as a whole reaffirmed its commitment to shared governance by ensuring that all voices, students, staff, faculty, and community members, were heard and meaningfully incorporated. In doing so, UBAC remained guided by the principle that funding

recommendations must represent the full breadth of stakeholder perspectives across the campus community.

The task force determined that a multi-method approach was necessary to gather comprehensive feedback. A campus- and community-wide survey was designed and distributed broadly to students, faculty, staff, and external stakeholders, yielding 394 completed responses. Survey participation included 103 faculty, 77 staff, 171 students, and 43 community members, demonstrating broad engagement across campus groups and the surrounding community. The survey asked participants to rank, in order of importance, how they believed discretionary funding should be used, specifically whether the funds should prioritize restoring some funding reductions, increasing enrollment, or investing in new academic programs. Respondents were also invited to offer specific one-time funding ideas within those categories. The survey results indicated that restoring some funding reductions was the highest priority among respondents, followed closely by increasing enrollment, with investing in new programs that supported workforce alignment and professional pathways emerging as the third priority. The qualitative feedback reflected a mixture of actionable one-time funding ideas and more general comments about campus needs and priorities. Task force members categorized all responses into thematic areas, and these themes served as the foundation for the development of potential funding recommendations.

In addition to survey findings, focus groups, listening sessions, and other inclusive feedback methods offered space for deeper exploration of community needs and aspirations. These conversations provided nuance, allowing participants to explain their priorities and offer insight into the challenges and opportunities facing the institution. The task force integrated both quantitative and qualitative input during the theme-development and recommendation drafting stages.

Once themes were identified, small working groups composed of task force members drafted specific funding recommendations aligned with the themes and the Interim President's charge. To ensure consistency, fairness, and transparency, the task force applied a formal evaluation rubric to each proposed recommendation. This rubric rated each item on its potential to restore funding reductions or invest in new academic programming using a scale of one to fifteen; its ability to address regional and statewide workforce needs using a scale of one to nine; its opportunity to increase student enrollment using a scale of one to nine; its sustainability or impact beyond the funding period using a scale of one to four; and its ability to improve the academic experience and/or student retention using a scale of one to four. Each task force member independently scored every funding recommendation using this rubric, and the resulting scores were compiled to determine prioritization. This structured scoring process ensured that final recommendations reflected both stakeholder input and an objective evaluation of strategic value.

At the final UBAC meeting of the Fall semester, the committee engaged in a collective review and reflection on the full semester-long process. Faculty, staff, students, and community members in attendance shared candid feedback on both the strengths of the process and

opportunities for improvement. Across stakeholder groups, there was strong appreciation for the inclusive and transparent approach taken throughout the semester. Students and staff noted that additional time to review and discuss collected feedback would have been beneficial, and students specifically reflected on the challenge of ensuring that the broader student population was sufficiently informed about the funding context prior to providing input within the limited timeframe. Faculty members expressed interest in having greater visibility into the feedback gathered from staff and students outside of the survey instrument. In response, students and staff shared that this additional feedback had been incorporated into the discussions within the task force's small working groups and directly informed the development of funding recommendations. The community stakeholder expressed deep appreciation for the committee's work and process, noting that while their initial focus was on amplifying and supporting the student voice, the process ultimately fostered a strong understanding of the perspectives and priorities of all stakeholder groups represented

Final Funding Recommendations

Once all merit-based scores were submitted, point totals for each funding recommendation were aggregated and sorted from highest to lowest to identify which proposals received the strongest overall support. In addition to total point values, a median score was calculated for each recommendation by determining the median rating across all raters, which helped reduce the influence of extreme ratings. This approach did not involve rescaling individual responses, and the resulting prioritization was consistent with the aggregate point totals. The recommendations were then also sorted by median score for comparison. Both methods yielded consistent results, with the highest-ranked recommendations remaining the same under total point and median score analyses. Following the scoring process, the task force conducted a final review of all proposed funding recommendations to identify areas of overlap or similarity. Where recommendations shared common or complementary components, the language and scope were clarified to ensure that funding would not be redundantly committed and that each recommendation represented a distinct investment. Below is the list of funding recommendations with assigned dollar amounts. Items are listed according to committee priority, from highest to lowest.

Funding Recommendation	Estimated Amount (not to exceed)
The Center for Ethics, Leadership, and Society (CELS) as Sonoma State's public service & civic engagement hub, supporting pre-law outreach, including guaranteed admissions to local Law Schools, AI ethics and digital citizenship workshops, K-12 pipelines, dual-enrollment partnerships, community-based internships, and collaborations with courts, county agencies, and nonprofits. Develop a pre-law minor (in the Department of Sociology and CCJS) to build	\$ 275,000

public-sector and civic leadership pathways; developing a cross-disciplinary AI & Society micro-credential or badge and coordinate faculty-led recruitment and community partnerships. Funding to support faculty assignment time, lecturers, and instructional budget for new courses, where necessary and in collaboration with efforts in the Center for Ethics, Law, and Society.	
Develop an Environmental & Wildfire Resilience Community Collaborative (to include environmental science and geology, and related regional agencies). The Collaborative would bring community workshops, citizen-science events, climate literacy programming, and wildfire preparedness training to the North Bay.	\$ 75,000
Implement an Arts Integration Workforce Skills Initiative connecting arts-based communication and performance training to employer-identified skills such as teamwork, adaptability, creative problem-solving, and public communication through GE courses.	\$ 48,000
Strengthen foundational transferable academic skills such as civic reasoning, critical thinking, environmental literacy, communication, and analytical skills as essential workforce competencies that are supported by courses in theater, philosophy/ethics, women's and gender studies, physics, and geology/environmental studies. Funding toward supporting these courses-not as stand-alone departments or programs, but in expanded GE options and as targeted, 2-year pilot's appointments that restore teaching and community-facing functions necessary for enrollment, outreach, and workforce-aligned education.	\$ 90,000
Pilot the Simulated Patient Lab as a community-engaged resource offering health communication workshops, behavioral health simulations, public health outreach events, and high school engagement tied to CTE health pathways.	\$ 100,000
Develop a new Women & Gender Studies focused minor (housed in the Ethnic Studies, Psychology and/or Sociology Department). Costs to include funding assigned time for faculty, marketing costs, and other associated expenses.	\$ 75,000
Create a 2-year Arts Integration & Community Engagement Pilot through the GMC, youth festivals, community performances, and GMC-based recruitment events intended to demonstrate overlap between the academic curriculum and the arts. Provide funding for well-known artists to not only perform for the public but also through targeted lectures for students. Create a student advisory panel to identify impactful artists.	\$ 100,000
Restore Physics program by providing instructional budget in each of two years, which would allow a restructured, more efficient and sustainable major to return.	\$ 48,000
Support and resources for teacher education and curriculum related to California Proposition 28.	\$ 24,000

Rebuild capacity in targeted liberal arts areas, prioritizing faculty on one-year teach-out appointments, and evaluating whether demand supports permanent roles. Costs to include one-time instructional support (e.g., buyouts, temporary lecturer allocations, course sections) in each of two years.	\$ 120,000
Extend contracts for five faculty for two years to develop interdisciplinary tracks (e.g., ethics across the curriculum, communication in STEM), teach GE, develop liberal arts minors. This includes a specific recommendation to develop a Simulated Patient & Communication Lab that integrates Applied Theater / performing arts with Nursing, Health Science, Psychology, and Education to strengthen workforce readiness in communication, teamwork, de-escalation, interviewing, and behavioral health, which was independently ranked higher.	\$ 2,000,000
Fund public-facing academic work that supports faculty-led learning and community engagement beyond the classroom. Eligible activities include K–12 and dual enrollment pathways, public lectures or performances, community-engaged courses, and short, stackable micro-credentials delivered through existing courses. Examples include GE studio courses with public showcases, data storytelling projects for local agencies, community theater, or focused credentials such as Bioethics, Law and AI, or Environmental Justice.	\$ 45,000

In addition to the prioritized funding recommendations presented in this report, the appendices include the full list of recommendations compiled by the committee during the Fall 2025 process. These additional recommendations were developed directly from campus and community input and are included for reference should the university identify alternative funding sources to support future investment. While these recommendations did not align fully with the specific parameters of the Interim President's charge or the legislative guidelines governing the Sonoma State Commitment funds, the committee determined that they nonetheless reflect important priorities expressed by the campus community. UBAC includes these recommendations to ensure transparency, preserve institutional knowledge, and support ongoing planning and decision-making efforts beyond the scope of the current funding allocation.

Enrollment Management and Recruitment Recommendations

In addition to its work on the remaining \$3 million in discretionary funding, UBAC was also charged with providing recommendations related to the \$6 million allocated for enrollment management and recruitment efforts. In response, the committee compiled feedback and recommendations collected from students, faculty, staff, and community members throughout the engagement process. These recommendations are presented separately and are intended to inform, but not direct, the decisions of the Division of Enrollment Management, which retains responsibility for determining the specific use of these funds. The committee noted that many of the ideas and strategies identified through campus input extend beyond a single division and reflect the shared responsibility of the entire university in supporting enrollment

and recruitment. UBAC therefore recommends that these enrollment-related insights be shared with all members of the Interim (and future) President's Cabinet, as effective enrollment growth depends on coordinated efforts across academic, student support, administrative, and community-facing units.

1. Stronger Marketing & Brand Refresh

- Modern, professional marketing staff
- Add support staff to Welcome Center
- Consistent social media presence (Instagram, TikTok, YouTube)
- Video storytelling with students/faculty
- Build in-house capacity
- Invest in strategic communication
- Better search engine optimization, bilingual outreach, digital campaigns
- Clearer brand identity and value proposition

2. Expanded Recruitment Efforts (Especially Southern California & Local Region)

- More recruiters in SoCal, Central Valley, Sacramento, and far Northern CA
- Mobile recruitment teams
- More participation in high school visits, college fairs, and community events
- Outreach to counselors, PSAT takers, and parents

3. Strengthening Local Pipelines (High Schools & Community Colleges)

- Guaranteed admission for local districts
- Dual enrollment with high schools
- Articulation with JC CTE pathways
- Faculty presence and partnerships with schools
- More agreements and direct pathways into majors (education, healthcare, STEM)

4. Improve Student Experience & Campus Life

- More student activities and events
- Better dining options and more open facilities
- Reopening gathering spaces (e.g., Charlie Brown's)
- Investments in student clubs, recreation, and community-building
- Beautification and maintenance of campus to attract and retain students (ex: mural program for increased belonging)

5. Financial Incentives: Housing, Scholarships, Completion Grants

- Housing scholarships/discounts—the most common financial suggestion

- More need-based, program-specific, or local-student scholarships
- Completion grants for near-graduates
- More funds for returning/graduate students

6. Restore & Expand Student Support Services

- Advising
- Tutoring and academic support
- Mental health services
- Career services
- Children's School/childcare
- High-impact retention programs (McNair, MESA, FAST, TRIO, Project Rebound)

7. Develop New Academic Programs (Especially Online)

- New majors aligned with workforce needs
- More fully online degrees
- Hybrid options for working students
- Programs in trades, sustainability, construction, EV/renewable energy, data science, health sciences
- Highlighting strong existing programs (Geography, Physics, Teaching Credentials, etc.)

8. Strengthen Community Engagement

- Events with local cities, nonprofits, schools
- Partnerships with industry (healthcare, education, sustainability)
- Alumni involvement in recruitment
- Greater visibility at community festivals and fairs (more sponsorships so that our name is publicized)
- See campus as an integral part of the community (free parking for community)

9. Improve Internal Organization, Systems, and Technology

- The SSU portal is outdated
- Departments feel disconnected
- Procedures are inconsistent
- Need for better campus coordination and communication
- Clearer application processes (CalState Apply pain points); and need Dual Enrollment software

Appendix A: Additional Funding Recommendations Identified Through Campus Input

Appendix A includes the full set of recommendations gathered during the Fall 2025 campus and community engagement process. These recommendations reflect ideas and priorities shared by students, faculty, staff, and community stakeholders through surveys, focus groups, listening sessions, and written feedback.

The recommendations presented in this appendix represent the breadth of input received and may include overlapping or closely related ideas, as well as proposals that extend beyond the scope or constraints of the Sonoma State Commitment funding. While not all items align with the parameters of the Interim President's charge or the legislative guidelines governing the current funding allocation, they reflect priorities expressed by the campus community and are included for transparency and future consideration.

The recommendations listed in Appendix A comprise the full set evaluated by the committee, with total and median scoring provided to support transparency. The final recommendations provided above incorporate the consolidation of overlapping budget items to avoid duplication.

#	Funding Recommendation	Estimated Cost (not to exceed)	Total Score	Median
26	Fund CELS as SSU's Public Service & Civic Engagement Hub, supporting pre-law outreach, including guaranteed admissions to local Law Schools, AI ethics and digital citizenship workshops, K-12 pipelines, dual-enrollment partnerships, community-based internships, and collaborations with courts, county agencies, and nonprofits.	\$200,000	332	7

15	Launch a Pre-Law minor to build public-sector and civic leadership pathways, develop a cross-disciplinary AI & Society micro-credential or badge and coordinate faculty-led recruitment and community partnerships. Fund CELS (Center for Ethics, Leadership, and Society) as SSU's Public Service & Civic Engagement Hub, supporting pre-law outreach, including guaranteed admissions to local Law Schools, AI ethics and digital citizenship workshops, K-12 pipelines, dual-enrollment partnerships, community-based internships, and collaborations with courts, county agencies, and nonprofits	\$30,000	331	7
29	Fund an Environmental & Wildfire Resilience Community Collaborative (ES/Geology + regional agencies) that brings community workshops, citizen-science events, climate literacy programming, and wildfire preparedness training to the North Bay.	\$75,000	328	7
17	Implement an Arts Integration Workforce Skills Initiative connecting arts-based communication and performance training to employer-identified skills such as teamwork, adaptability, creative problem-solving, and public communication through GE courses.	\$48,000	326	6
1	Funding for pre-law minor (housed in Sociology and CCJS Department) (with the possibility of bringing back philosophy lecturers if the program is popular and supporting the presence of philosophy in the department) - need faculty assigned time to develop minor and funds to offer any new courses to get it off the ground (connected to Center for Ethics, Law, and Society)	\$75,000	318	8
16	Strengthen foundational transferable academic skills such as civic reasoning, critical thinking, environmental literacy, communication, and analytical skills, identified throughout Theme #4 responses as essential workforce competencies that are supported in Theater, Philosophy/Ethics, WGS, Physics, and Geology/ES-not as stand alone departments or programs but in expanded GE options and <u>as targeted, 2-year pilot</u>	\$90,000	318	7

	<u>appointments that restore teaching and community-facing functions necessary for enrollment, outreach, and workforce-aligned education.</u>			
19	Develop a Simulated Patient & Communication Lab that integrates Applied Theater with Nursing, Health Science, Psychology, and Education to strengthen workforce readiness in communication, teamwork, de-escalation, interviewing, and behavioral health. Cost: two year temporary contract for one full-time faculty	\$425,000	317	7
28	Pilot the Simulated Patient Lab as a community-engaged resource offering health communication workshops, behavioral health simulations, public health outreach events, and high school engagement tied to CTE health pathways.	\$100,000	301	6
2	Funding for a new Women & Gender Studies focused minor (housed in the Ethnic Studies, Psychology and/or Sociology Department) funding to cover assigned time for faculty to get minor through Curriculog and get off the ground - some potential marketing costs as well	\$75,000	295	6
5	Funding for faculty salary for two years to integrate performing arts into other programs	\$400,000	294	5
27	Create a 2-year Arts Integration & Community Engagement Pilot through the GMC, youth festivals, community performances, and GMC-based recruitment events intended to demonstrate overlap between the academic curriculum and the arts. Provide funding for well-known artists to not only perform for the public but also through targeted lectures for students. Create a student advisory panel to identify impactful artists.	\$100,000	291	5
4	Two additional Physics classes for each of two years, which would allow a restructured, more efficient and sustainable major to return.	\$48,000	290	5

18	Provide resources that support teacher education for curriculum related to Prop 28.	\$24,000	267	4
21	Provide one-time instructional support (e.g., buyouts, temporary lecturer allocations) to rebuild capacity in targeted liberal arts areas, prioritizing faculty on one-year teach-out appointments, and evaluating whether demand supports permanent roles. Five buyouts (or course sections) in each of two years	\$120,000	257	4
24	Extend contracts for five faculty for two years (to develop interdisciplinary (e.g., ethics across the curriculum, communication in STEM).	\$2,000,000	250	4
25	<p>Fund public facing academic work (faculty-led learning and outreach that engages the community, such as K-12 outreach, GMC events, public lectures and performances, environmental partnerships, or workshops that bring SSU's academic mission beyond the classroom).</p> <p>These could be community-engaged courses or/and stackable micro-credentials linked to outside agencies (NGOs, employers etc). Examples: a. GE studios hosted in Music/Art that end in a free public showcase either on campus or other venue (community center); b. Data Storytelling for Local Agencies: COMS/DS studios producing explainers for county departments/NGOs; c. Community Theater where students study and create theater performance based on stories, issues, and experiences of a specific community, often involving community members as actors and creators; d. Bioethics credential; Law and AI credential; Environmental Justice credential</p> <p>HS/ Dual Enrollment Path- public-facing academic work combo (example: HS courses: Drama and Stats or Math plus Psych lead to dual enrollment in SSU courses: community theater; data science (3-6 units); culminates in public performance preceded by brief</p>	\$100,000	248	4

	faculty lecture, followed by talk-back session on the subject/social issue; record and upload recording on HS and SSU website. Something similar with HS debate/Gov courses leading to Law and Ethics micro credential through dual enrollment culminating in mock trial or agency briefing, that can be stacked t/w a pre-law minor)			
20	Extend contracts for five faculty for two years (to teach GE and develop liberal arts minors).	\$2,000,000	247	4
22	Establish a competitive "Program Restoration & Innovation" grant for departments to pilot reinstated or re-designed programs—with participating departments encouraged to employ faculty from cut programs whose appointments can be extended through the pilot period. Grants to cover five buyouts (or course sections) in each of two years	\$120,000	240	4
3	Funding for Feminist Center (3rd floor of Stevenson Hall)	\$10,000	238	4
23	Provide one-time support for faculty-led outreach and transfer pathway development, such as partnering with community college faculty on curricular alignment, discipline-based advising sessions, and collaborative academic events that strengthen enrollment pipelines without relying on marketing budgets.	\$200,000	215	3
30	Program-level marketing and outreach by faculty (meetings with community college professors, guest lectures at high schools, meetings with high school counselors, materials for tabling, etc.	\$120,000	197	3
32	Provide one-time funding for temporary analyst support or faculty fellowships to collect and analyze data on student demand, program growth, and enrollment impacts of restored offerings—ensuring planning capacity is strengthened by people rather than new systems.	\$24,000	195	3

31	Establish a short-term Program Restoration Working Group (Academic Affairs, Finance, CFA, Senate) to evaluate pilot outcomes and recommend which restored academic offerings merit long-term investment.	\$6,000	178	3
13	Fund department-based community-building programming (major welcome events, skill workshops, interdisciplinary meet-ups) to strengthen academic home identity and major retention.	\$95,000	168	3
12	Fund a Faculty-in-Residence for Belonging program where faculty design and lead academic engagement events (pop-up lectures, research nights, reading groups, workshops).	\$100,000	151	3
10	Pilot academically integrated learning communities (more first year as well as transfer, re-entry, and other relevant groups) combining GE courses with faculty-led belonging seminars and/or peer-mentored academic success pods.	\$60,000	150	2.5
11	Fund a faculty–student mentorship & advising initiative that compensates faculty for mentoring cohorts of students and strengthens academic belonging and persistence. - tied to enrollment & retention	\$100,000	127	2
9	Increased funding for Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)- tied to enrollment & retention	\$100,000	122	1
7	Increased funding for Associated Students to support clubs & childcare – tied to enrollment & retention	\$450,000	119	1

14	Create a Student Academic Success Hub in Academic Affairs consolidating tutoring, writing support, peer mentoring, and academic pathways programming (marketing, infrastructure, redesign).	\$200,000	104	2
6	Increased funding for campus beautification, including murals to increase student belonging and identity (model mural program after Sacramento State) – tied to enrollment & retention	\$300,000	98	1
8	Improved wayfinding, signage and pathways to make campus safer, easier to navigate and more attractive to prospective students - tied to enrollment & retention	\$100,000	90	1

