

Report from the UO Senate Task Force on Budget Reductions

Prepared September 2025 for the UO Senate

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Introduction

In May of 2025, the [UO Administration announced](#) that they were facing a budget deficit which could impact university programs, faculty and staff. They presented a plan that would include an average of 2.5% cuts for academic units and a 4% cut for administrative units. Following one round of layoffs in June, 2025, it was made clear that additional employment actions were expected in September, 2025 before the UO Board of Trustees Meeting on September 15-16.

Formed under time constraints, at a point when most faculty, staff, and Senate members were not available to participate in the summertime planning on budget reductions, the goal of the UO Senate Task Force on Budget Reductions was to promote transparency, accountability, and feedback to UO administration as potential budget cuts were being considered. It became clear during the course of the Task Force meetings, that we (Task Force members) had entered the conversation near the end of the process, which limited the impact our insights could provide, especially regarding our significant concerns about layoffs of career instructional faculty without cause in June and potential layoffs of TTF and additional career faculty in September. Nonetheless, Task Force members also agreed that faculty and Senate voices were crucially needed in this planning process.

This final report has three purposes: 1) to summarize the key themes and findings that emerged from the conversations held by the Task Force with university leadership, 2) to advocate for process changes designed to strengthen our shared governance during these and future potential decisions that may impact our academic mission and, 3) to educate the University Community about the Senate response and activities during the spring and summer of 2025 at all levels of the Senate.

Summary of Task Force Findings

At no point during the Task Force meetings did we discuss specific faculty (classified or tenure-line) whose programs were facing reductions or closures. In addition, during the timeframe in which we met, we were informed that initial proposals were being updated based on feedback at the unit levels. We were not privy to any final plans and we were not asked to take any votes, or affirm any plans. The final plans announced by President Scholz and Provost Long on September 8 were a significant departure from the initial proposals reviewed by the Task Force. During the process of our meetings, however, we offered candid, often critical feedback on the initial plans provided from a small number of colleges. The key themes discussed with the Provost surrounding those plans are as follows.

- **The decision-making processes implemented in pursuit of UO budget reductions were significantly lacking in both shared governance and timely consultation.** We discerned three areas of top-down decision-making that largely excluded faculty, staff, and students from the process:
 - 1) The June layoffs were made a mere two days after commencement when most UO community members were away from campus. This rapid announcement foreclosed careful discussion and wider deliberations among UO community members most affected by these layoffs. Moreover, layoffs of career instructional faculty without cause hurts the UO student experience by terminating high-performing instructors and mentors. These layoffs without cause also undermine a merit-based system for career instructional faculty based on strong performance

reviews and seniority. Many of the terminated career instructors during the June actions were laid off despite receiving strong performance reviews, regular promotions, and notable seniority.

- 2) The timing and pace of the proposals for September layoffs meant all decisions would be made over the summer, when deep consultation with most UO stakeholders (faculty, staff, and students) would be difficult or impossible. During the summer, tenure-line faculty are generally “off contract” and many are not on campus – engaging in research or family breaks. Few students remain on campus, as summer course offerings are limited and often online. The UO Senate is often not fully seated and prepared to begin work, and most Senate committees are not scheduled to meet over the summer. As such, the administration’s timeline required that momentous decisions be made without engaging in active collaboration with these campus stakeholders or providing timely information.
- 3) The Task Force observed considerable divergence in how well the Deans of UO Colleges and Schools engaged important stakeholders in their units regarding budget reductions. In addition, in conversations with faculty across campus, there seemed to be wide variance in the level of college and unit level transparency and collaboration.

Ultimately, the Task Force was established in August, near the end of an internal process that had been going on for at least two months. Under these circumstances, we were unable to consider and evaluate alternative plans to reduce the budget — we believed that the key decisions, especially the decision to lay off tenured faculty, had already been made. We are pleased to discover that our belief in this regard was wrong, and while we find it plausible that faculty input was important in changing what we thought was a firm decision, we remain concerned that the final outcome remained top-down, with little evidence that it was created via collaboration beyond higher-level administrators. In an important sense, the September 8 announcement bought us the time that we asked for — with the decisions apparently finalized for this Academic Year, we now have the chance to establish more collaborative procedures through a strengthened shared governance process. We return to this issue in our recommendations.

- **Need for strengthened shared governance.** Members of the Task Force questioned how meaningful the process was in engaging those stakeholders who ostensibly were more deeply involved in the process, such as unit heads and other internal college advisory networks. The variance in the college collaboration has had the unfortunate consequence of a loss of trust between faculty and staff, on the one hand, and their administrative leadership, on the other, and it has also fueled widespread rumors across campus about possible program reductions. We will also return to this issue in our recommendations.

Recommendations

1) Resolution on program closures/reductions

The UO Senate has a significant role in the approval or changes to courses, and the creation of new programs. This includes being evaluated by our undergraduate or graduate councils, and/or the Senate Committee on Courses, before being presented for discussion and vote by the full Senate. This ensures a level of rigor as faculty and staff evaluate proposals,

make recommendations, and consider impacts on the student experience. Yet, we have no defined role in the reduction or closure of programs.

We recommend that the UO Senate develop recommendations for a process which more clearly defines its role in the sunseting or cancellations of programs and academic units when they are proposed.

2) Resolution on tenure protections

The possibility of the termination of tenure protections at the University of Oregon should be viewed with alarm. It is a drastic decision that violates the very promises we make to our faculty when they join our community. Tenure and promotion policies are clearly defined, and voted on, by each individual unit. We believe that scholars in individual scholarly fields are experts in that field and are best placed to understand what meets or exceeds expectations for promotion at the University of Oregon. Similar to our programs and courses, the UO Senate plays an important role in reviewing all applications for tenure and promotions among tenure-line faculty. Faculty undergo both internal and external evaluations from peers and colleagues around the world, and the Senate Faculty Personnel Committee reviews the final dossier and makes a final recommendation on promotion to the Office of the Provost.

We believe that the University should not consider violating tenure commitments if there are any alternative means to meet budget shortfalls. If, in fact, the administration determines that violation of tenure is necessary for financial reasons, then we recommend that the UO Senate pass a resolution that defines a clear role for the Senate or Senate committees in evaluating tenure line faculty for potential contract termination. Finally, we recommend that the Senate pursue a role in clarifying post tenure expectations and evaluations.

3) Increased Senate Engagement with the UO Budget Development Process

Any organization's budget is not just balancing revenues and expenses, but is a statement of the organization's priorities. There are always tradeoffs in the creation of any budget, which means any budget is ultimately an expression of the university's values and priorities.

We recommend that the administration work with the Senate on the creation of future budgets. We particularly seek participation in the creation of the budget model, sharing and receiving feedback on potential tradeoffs inherent in budget decisions, and better outreach and engagement by administration officials with stakeholder groups about the budget throughout the year.

It is important to understand how the current budget shortfall developed, and why more effective monitoring and controls were not in place to prevent this situation. To help safeguard against similar challenges in the future, we recommend establishing clearer mechanisms of accountability, transparency and collaboration in the Senate and its committees.

4) A call to broad participation in shared governance

These last few weeks have served as something of a stress test for shared governance at the University of Oregon, an opportunity to identify our priorities as individuals and as a university. One of the most important priorities this task force requested was more time for consultation on what seemed like potentially cataclysmic changes in the nature of the university. The announcement on September 8, while protecting tenure-line faculty, will deeply impact classified staff, Officers of Administration, and career faculty who have received layoff notices.

We also know we need to strengthen our shared governance structures to better meet future financial or other crises.

We call for extended broad participation in more transparent consideration of future budgets, such that faculty participation becomes central to the process by which the university (i) determines that budget reductions are necessary and (ii) develops solutions to address these reductions.

The time we wanted begins now. The emergency Senate executive committee meeting on August 29 with over 200 participants, and the over 800 signatures from members of the university community shows that our community is deeply invested in the future of our institution. We now need to do the hard work to envision what we want our larger decision-making role to look like and to negotiate the new structures that will make that new role a reality.

UO Senate Actions Taken – Timeline

In this section, we provide an overview of other Senate actions taken this summer.

- **Senate Budget Committee**

In the Spring of 2025, the Senate [passed a motion](#) to re-form the Senate Budget Committee and revise its charge. This group, initially made up of those appointed by the Senate President (elected members will be seated starting Spring 2026), held their first meeting in the Spring and agreed to meet monthly over the summer with the Provost and other appropriate administration officials to discuss the scope and impact of the proposed cuts, as well as develop an agenda for providing Senate oversight and feedback to UO's fiscal stewardship long-term. This work will continue into the 25-26 academic year with reports provided to the full Senate as needed.

- **Senate Communication with Provost and Deans**

In June, 2025, the Senate President and Vice-President co-authored a letter to the Provost and UO's six deans, strongly encouraging collaboration and transparency as Deans developed their proposals for unit cuts or closures. That letter can be seen in the appendix of this report.

- **Senate Task Force on Budget Reductions**

Recognizing an urgent (and exceptional) need for a smaller group of faculty leaders to meet more frequently with the Office of the Provost, the Senate President appointed the Task Force on Senate Budget Reductions in early August, 2025. This group consisted of the Senate President, two members of the Senate Budget Committee, three of the four past Senate presidents and invited members of the administration. The Task Force also met with deans as requested. The Task Force did not see the final plans for any school, college, or department, it did not receive the names of any specific faculty members whose positions might be cut, it did not take any votes at any point during its work, and while it strongly encouraged consideration of alternatives to cutting programs and tenured faculty, it was not aware what alternatives were being seriously considered until the announcement of the final plan. What the Task Force did do was engage in honest and frank conversation with university leaders, ask questions, raise concerns regarding tenure and student impact, and discuss the themes mentioned above.

- **Emergency Senate Executive Committee Meeting**

On Friday, August 29, Senate President Mason convened a special session of the Senate Executive Committee and opened this meeting up to all members of the UO community. President Scholz and Provost Long agreed to be in attendance and hear the concerns of faculty, staff and students regarding potential budget cuts. Over 200 people attended at short notice, reflecting significant engagement for an off-calendar Senate gathering and an indication of wide concern about budget reductions plans across the UO community.

- **Open Letter to University Leadership**

On Wednesday, September 3, President Mason submitted a letter, signed by over 800 members of the UO community, to President Scholz, Provost Long and Board of Trustees Chair Holwerda. That letter can also be seen appended at the end of this report.

A time of shared governance

From Senate President <senatepres@uoregon.edu>

Date Thu 6/12/2025 12:07 PM

To

Cc Edward Davis <edavis@uoregon.edu>; Senate Vice President <senatevp@uoregon.edu>; Dyana Mason

<dmason@uoregon.edu>

Dear Dean ,

As we are entering a time of uncertainty and a structural budget deficit that must be overcome, we want to communicate the Senate and our partners' interest and ability in supporting the administration's efforts to reduce the budget deficit, which may potentially impact individual programs and services at the UO.

The role of the UO Senate in our commitment to shared governance is to provide oversight of the university's academic mission. The Senate and its committees review and support new and modified degree programs, and new and modified individual courses. Our committees, particularly the Undergraduate Council, Graduate Council and Committee on Courses, work with Colleges, units, and faculty members side by side with the Provost's office to review proposals and offer an opportunity to provide feedback on those proposals before they are approved. This process assists units and faculty in ensuring that their proposals discuss the impact of additions or changes on faculty and students, evaluate the financial benefits of any changes, and ensures that our programs are aligned with the university's mission and student interests, demands, and needs.

We agree that during this time of stated budget cuts that any reductions of courses, staff, faculty, or programs be strategic and not "across the board" or arbitrary reductions. The UO Senate and its constituents have an interest and ability to engage in discussion, feedback and collaboration regarding faculty or program cuts that have an impact on the unit's or university's academic mission. Many have expressed a willingness to meet over the summer, as needed, due to the urgency of the call for changes. To this end, we'd like to encourage you to engage meaningfully with your College's internal senate caucus, unit heads and other faculty and staff constituencies as decisions are being made. This collaborative engagement, particularly as it relates to program changes, may also take the form of a short presentation or discussion with the Senate Undergraduate or Graduate Councils, Budget Committee, or Executive Committee during the academic year.

The elimination of even a single program or tenure or career faculty line can impact student success, including student recruitment, retention, and timely graduation in unanticipated ways. Depending on the nature of a recommended cut or reduction, engaging with stakeholders early in the process may enable unforeseen issues or cascading implications to be explored and

discussed. In this way, we can work together in fulfilling our commitment to shared governance related to the UO's academic mission, and also ensure any programmatic changes align with any short- or long -term strategies articulated by the administration, Deans or unit heads.

Thank you for your time, and we look forward to discussing these issues with you

soon. Thank you,

Dyana Mason

Senate President

Edward Davis

Senate Vice President and President-Elect

Open Letter to Senate Leadership – Sent on 9/8 with over 800 signatures

President Scholz, Provost Long and University of Oregon Board of Trustees,

We, the undersigned constituents of the Senate — faculty, Officers of Administration, classified staff and students — are deeply concerned about the impact of prospective budget cuts on our curriculum, on our community, on the principle of shared governance, and on the university's credibility and sustainability as an R1 university. We ask the University Administration and the Board of Trustees to suspend these measures and allow for a more collaborative and transparent process.

The University of Oregon Senate derives its authority as enshrined in the University of Oregon's constitution. We represent the diverse stakeholders of the institution and are charged with preserving the integrity of the academic mission in a manner that ensures continuing service of our mission to the State of Oregon.

In light of this responsibility, we must take issue with the threats to our academic mission embodied in reported plans for program closures and reductions through the firing of tenured teaching faculty, research and career faculty (now known as Teaching Professors), officers of administration, librarians, student workers and classified staff. We are told only that on September 8th faculty and staff will be notified of their firing and the community will be informed of "specific plans of action." This is an unacceptable violation of our shared governance responsibilities. Acting within this information vacuum we vigorously protest the details of the plan, as we understand them. This understanding is necessarily incomplete as it is based only on the details that have escaped the veil of secrecy through some mixture of official and unofficial channels.

If the plans, as understood, are executed, it will cause untold damage to our university and its students.

Our specific concerns include:

- **The timeline.** It has been stated that the timeline is not one of the Administration's choosing and is not flexible. We reject this extremely short timeline, which is being used to push forward previously unthinkable changes to our University.

We call on the Board of Trustees to allow the university community an appropriate amount of time to support an intentional, transparent and strategic process where shared governance contributes to a future for all those that compose the university and its programs.

- **The damage to tenure.** The termination of tenured faculty will diminish the institution of tenure at our research university. The institution of tenure not only protects academic freedom but also assists in developing deep expertise in scholarly inquiry and excellence in teaching. Violation of tenure risks our standing as an R1 university and will damage our ability to recruit and retain world-class scholars.

We call on the administration and Board of Trustees to cease efforts to cancel contracts of tenured faculty without rigorous consultation and review. Before removing tenured faculty, the UO administration should openly review alternatives to employment termination in consultation with the faculty of units or programs that may face closure and provide opportunities for potentially impacted faculty to respond.

- **Performance Criteria.** Relatedly, there has been no effort to articulate any performance criteria that may be used to lay-off tenure-line or teaching professors. The processes for tenure and promotion are clearly articulated in each unit's tenure and promotion policies. A rigorous process of internal and/or external evaluation and review is conducted at the university before any faculty members are granted a promotion. However, no such deliberative and comprehensive process has been shared for the termination of tenure and/or teaching contracts. The result is that individuals who have been working to meet the expectations stated in their unit's policies may not be adequate in preventing a contract termination.

We call on Deans and the Office of the Provost to make clear the standards that will be used in employment terminations.

- **Impact on Teaching Professors.** It is not uncommon for teaching faculty to be the first positions eliminated with budget cuts. Yet, these faculty members are critical to the university and its students. Teaching faculty, often excellent instructors and mentors to both graduate and undergraduate students, are critical to our academic mission and student success.

We call on university leadership to ensure that teaching professors are not made more vulnerable, or take on a disproportionate burden, of any budget cuts.

- **Program closures.** The UO Senate and its committees have an important role in supporting the development of and updates to courses and programs. This process is rigorous, receives input from across campus, and sometimes requires approval of the Higher Education Coordinating Committee (for new programs). The established review process evaluates the budget, staffing, faculty need and potential student interest of proposed new or changed programs. However, no similar process exists for the elimination of programs.

We call for an update to university policies that formally enshrines the role of the Senate in the sunseting or cancellation of a program.

- **Impacts on Staff.** Our officers of administration, student employees, and classified staff are the glue that holds the university together, ensuring that our programs operate efficiently and in a timely manner. They advise students, provide mentorship and professional development for all members of the university community, assist in crafting and implementing academic policy, support research efforts, and provide direct services to students. In short, they provide the infrastructure for our academic mission. Yet, there has been no process shared with the university community on how specific positions may be eliminated, or the impact of those cuts on those that remain.

We call on the university administration to make clear the criteria and rationale for the elimination of staff positions, and their plan to ensure student and faculty success.

- **Impact on the student experience.** Faculty and staff cuts will be felt across campus, in our classrooms, in departmental advising offices, and in student services. No information on the way university leadership will mitigate these impacts has been shared with the university community, and student leaders at the UO have not been consulted. Planning to mitigate student impacts should include student leadership as well as students impacted by any proposed program closures.

We call on the university administration to engage in meaningful consultation with the UO student body, as represented by their elected Senate and President.

- **Opacity of the university budget.** Underscoring all of these concerns is a deep mistrust of the nature of the stated budget deficit and the need for cuts. While the University administration presents budget reports at quarterly meetings of the Board of Trustees, it is rare that other members of the university community have a chance to review and comment on the budget or are provided an opportunity to ask questions or seek clarity.

While the new Senate Budget Committee is an important first step, we call on the University's financial officers to present formally to the full Senate when requested to do so.

In short, we object to the corrosive effect that this plan will have on our students, our faculty and our staff at the University of Oregon. We call on University leadership to cease the current announced layoffs and engage in comprehensive collaboration across academic and administrative units before any budget cuts are finalized. The UO Senate, the UO Senate Leadership, students and other leadership groups on campus look forward to ongoing collaboration and consultation in our shared governance mission.