



**Board of Trustees  
Special Meeting  
April 28, 2026**



OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

## Public Meeting Notice

April 24, 2026

TO: Southern Oregon University Board of Trustees  
FROM: Sabrina Prud'homme, University Board Secretary  
RE: Notice of Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees

The Southern Oregon University Board of Trustees will hold a special meeting on the date and at the location set forth below.

There are no action items on the agenda for this meeting.

Information and discussion items on the agenda include a preview of themes and findings of the SOU Financial Sustainability Plan. The board will also discuss the working decision timeline and next steps regarding the plan.

The meeting will occur as follows:

Tuesday, April 28, 2026

5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. (or until business concludes)

SOU Ashland Campus, Hannon Library, Meese Room

1290 Ashland Street, Ashland, OR, 97520

Visit [governance.sou.edu](https://governance.sou.edu) for the meeting materials.

To view the proceedings remotely, visit <https://sou.zoom.us/j/83265398126> at the time of the meeting.

**\* Due to room capacity, members of the public are encouraged to attend the meeting remotely.**

If accommodations for persons with disabilities are required, please contact Holly Frazier at (541) 552-8055 or email [trustees@sou.edu](mailto:trustees@sou.edu). Accommodation requests should be made 48 hours in advance.

# **Call to Order / Roll / Declaration of a Quorum**



**Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees**

**Tuesday, April 28, 2026**

**5:00 – 7:00 p.m. (or until business concludes)**

**Meese Room, Hannon Library, SOU Campus**

**Zoom: <https://sou.zoom.us/j/83265398126>**

**\* Due to room capacity, members of the public are encouraged to attend the meeting remotely**

**AGENDA**

5:00 p.m.	<b>1</b>	<b>Call to Order/Roll/Declaration of a Quorum</b>	Chair Sheila Clough
	1.1	Welcome and Opening Remarks	
	1.2	Roll Call and Declaration of a Quorum	Sabrina Prud'homme, SOU, Board Secretary
	1.3	Agenda Review	Chair Sheila Clough
	<b>2</b>	<b>Information and Discussion Items</b>	
5:10	2.1	Preview of SOU Financial Sustainability Plan: Themes and Findings	Megan Cluver, Deloitte Consulting, Principal
6:50		2.1.1 Next Steps: Working Decision Timeline	President Rick Bailey
7:00 p.m.	<b>3</b>	<b>Adjournment</b>	Chair Sheila Clough

# Preview of SOU Financial Sustainability Plan: Themes and Findings

# Financial and Strategic Assessment

Interim Update to the SOU  
Board | Sustainability  
Blueprint

April 28, 2026






# Table of Contents

- 03** SOU's Foundation
- 05** Current Position
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- 20** Implementation Risks
- 21** Next Steps


# SOU's Core Strengths

Southern Oregon University is focused on the success of its students; promoting intellectual growth, continuous improvement, excellence, innovation, and creativity. As a four-year comprehensive institution in the Rogue Valley, SOU provides core learning experiences in a rural setting. Looking ahead, SOU has an opportunity to reimagine how it further advances the priorities of its students, workforce, and region.



**Strong Sense of Mission and Place**

SOU is deeply embedded in its region and community, with strong ties to the local community




**Deep Faculty and Staff Care**

Faculty and staff establish and maintain strong relationships with students



**Inclusive Culture**

Nationally recognized sense of belonging for ALL students



**Education for All**

Pride in serving students who may not have attended college if not for SOU




**Philanthropic Support**

SOU benefits from generous community support from donors who believe in the institution



**Experiential Learning**

Opportunities for students to participate in experiential and community-based learning



**Reciprocal Community Benefits**

SOU serves populations from preschoolers to seniors and SOU is cited as a reason for residents to move to the area

# Higher Ed is Experiencing Unprecedented Change & Emerging Threats

Recent years have brought unforeseen challenges that not only threaten the financial and operational efficiency of institutions, but likely the very existence of many colleges and universities.

DEEP DIVE

## 'We can't cut anymore': Can colleges recover from the gut-punch of inflation?

Cost growth in higher ed is easing after big spikes in recent years. But institutions remain under steep financial pressure.

Published July 1, 2024



ADMINISTRATION

### Princeton Braces for Budget Cuts, Possible Layoffs

Permanent cuts of 5% to 10% will be implemented over the next three years, according to a memo sent to faculty and staff




Government grants and contracts accounts  
Jensie Applewhite / Princeton University

August 22, 2024

The Mercury News · 12d

### California higher education layoffs: UC, Stanford and Cal State universities cut, freeze jobs

Stanford University will lay off at least 363 employees this fall as part of \$140 million in budget cuts due to rising costs ...



NEWS & CULTURE > EDUCATION

## A Looming 'Demographic Cliff': Fewer College Students and Ultimately Fewer Graduates

### Report Finds Higher Ed Sector Shrank by 2%

Data from the National Center for Education Statistics shows that nearly 100 institutions closed between the 2022–23 and 2023–24 academic years.

By Josh Moody

February 22, 2024

## More Than Half of Recent 4-Year College Grads Underemployed

A new report found that many recent graduates don't land jobs that require a degree.

LEADERSHIP > CAREERS

## 3 Reasons Degree-Free Jobs Are On The Rise— And How To Land One

By Mark C. Perna, Contributor. © Mark C. Perna is a generational expert who c...

Follow Author

Published Feb 06, 2024, 06:00pm EST

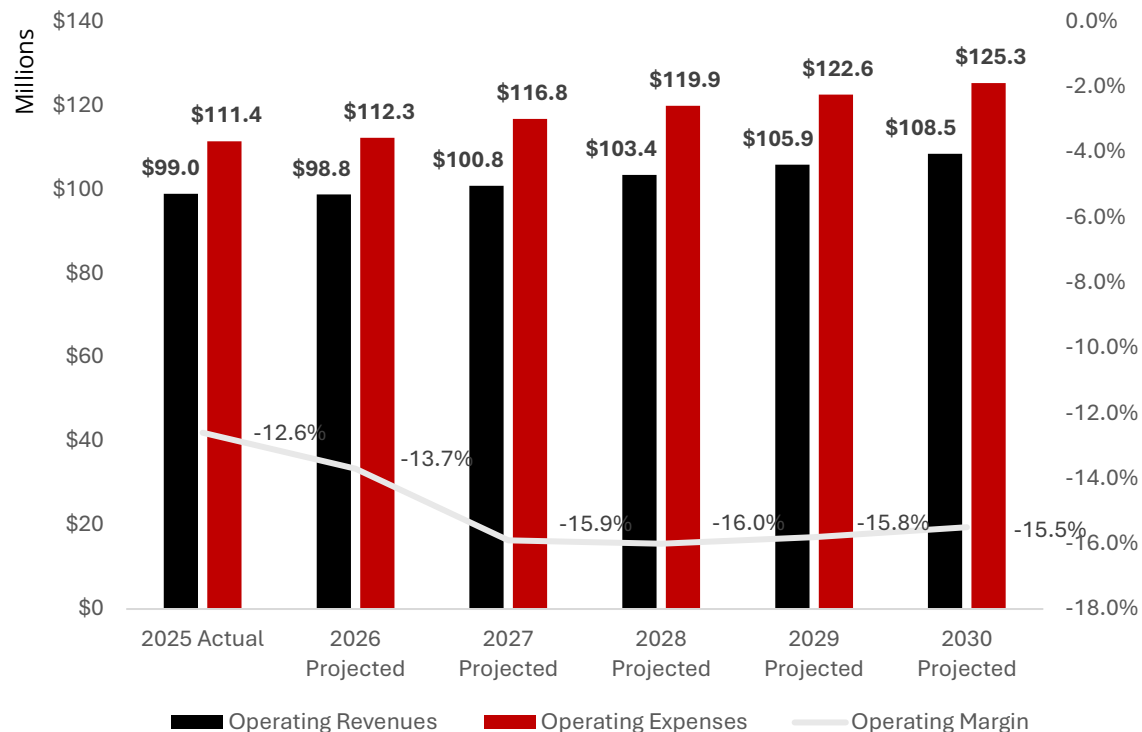
**Persistent higher education challenges have deepened and now intersect with a new wave of risks, pressuring institutions to respond to shifting expectations and navigate a landscape marked by both ongoing challenges and rapid change.**

# SOU's Financial Position is Distressed and Without Action Will Persist

The university has a structural deficit that exists due to pressures on tuition and fees revenue from losses in enrollment yet continued expense growth across campus.

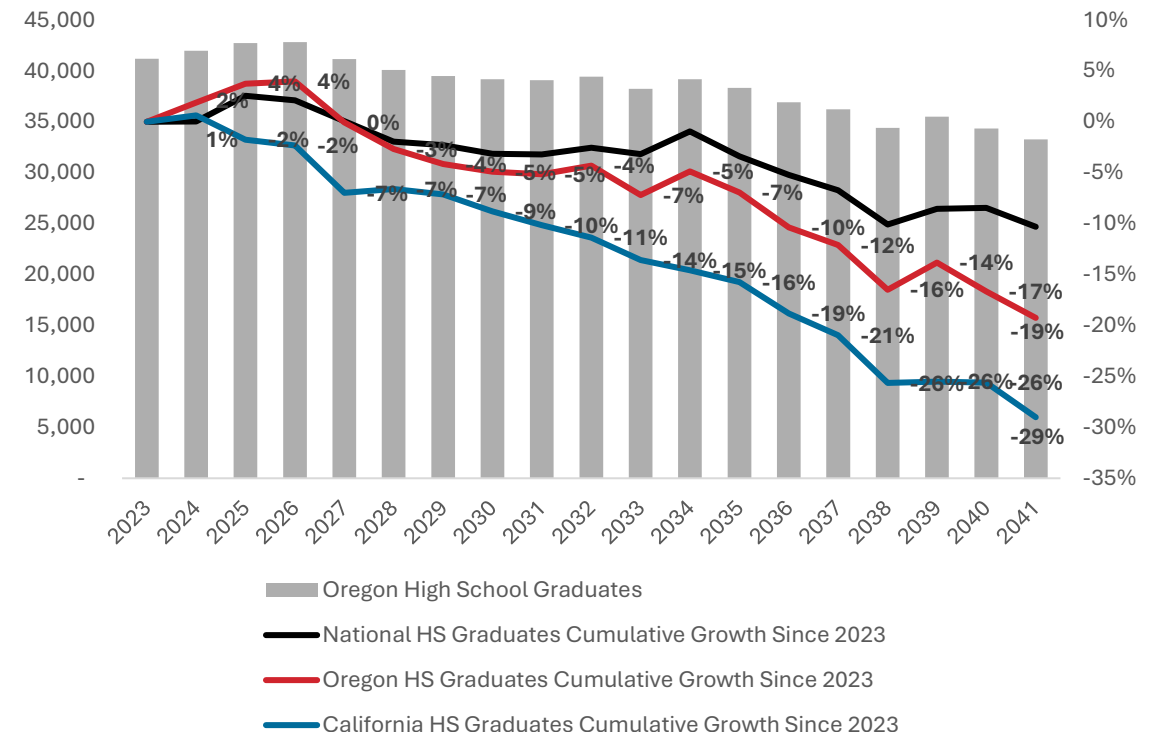
## SOU Operating Revenue and Expense Forecast (All Funds)

SOU currently operates at a deficit of \$12.5M and over the coming years that deficit grows to \$16.9M in FY30.



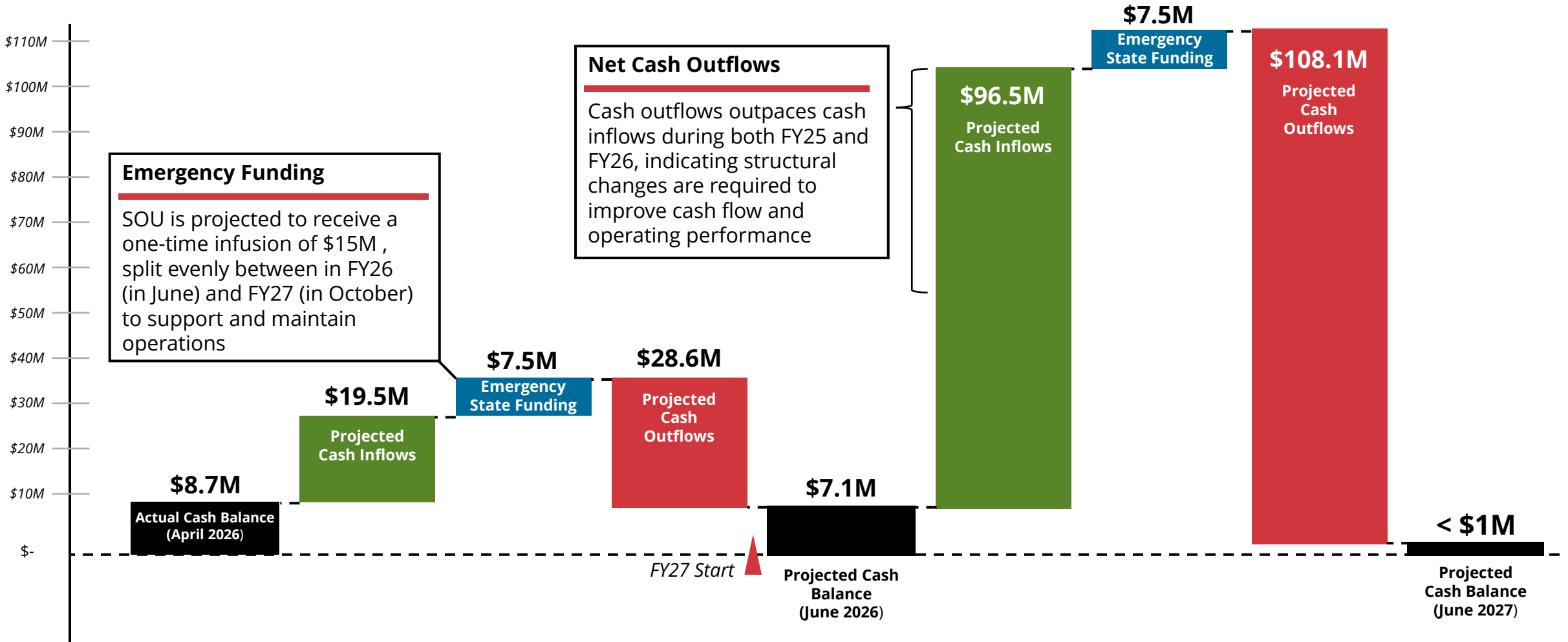
## Cumulative % Change in High School Graduates through 2041

This problem will not resolve itself as the pipeline of traditional high school graduates in Oregon (and California) will shrink precipitously over the next 15 years.



# SOU Must Act Decisively in the Near Term to Preserve the Future

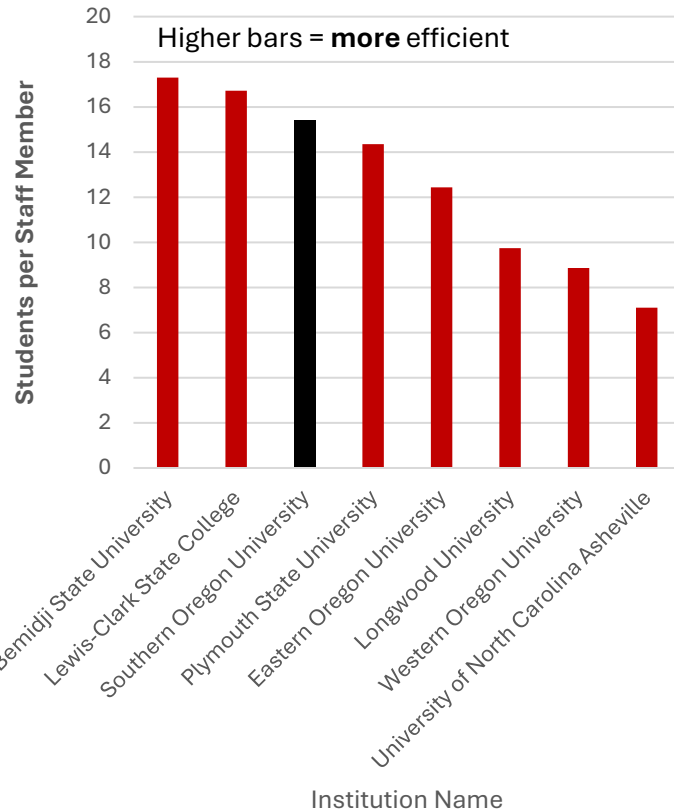
The emergency funding will help SOU maintain operations through FY27. However, to address the structural operational and financial challenges that are driving negative net cash outflows, **SOU will need to achieve \$20M in expense savings and new revenues to continue to meet obligations.**



# Benchmarking SOU Peer Universities

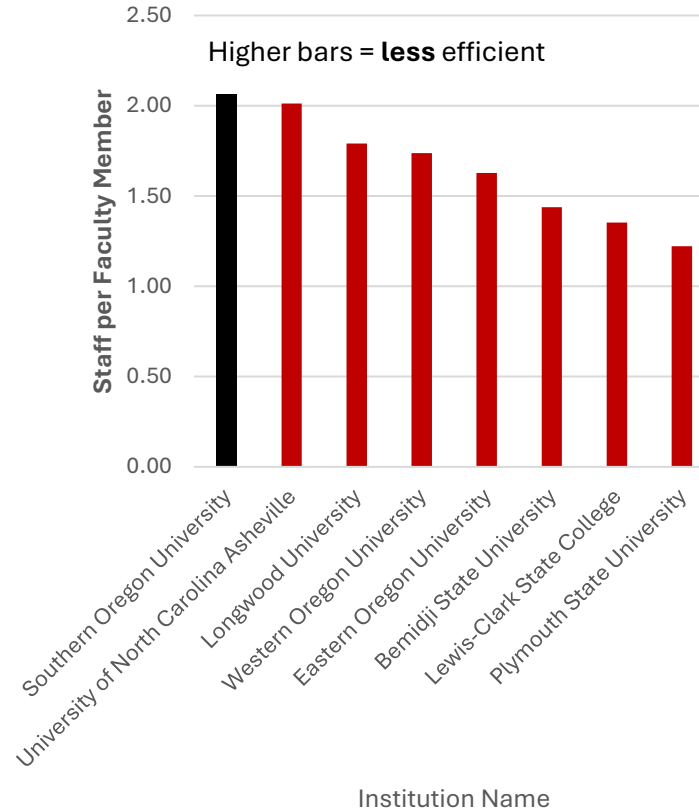
## 2024 Staff to Student Ratio by Institution\*

Each SOU staff member supports just over 15 students, compared to a peer range of 7 to 17 per staff member.



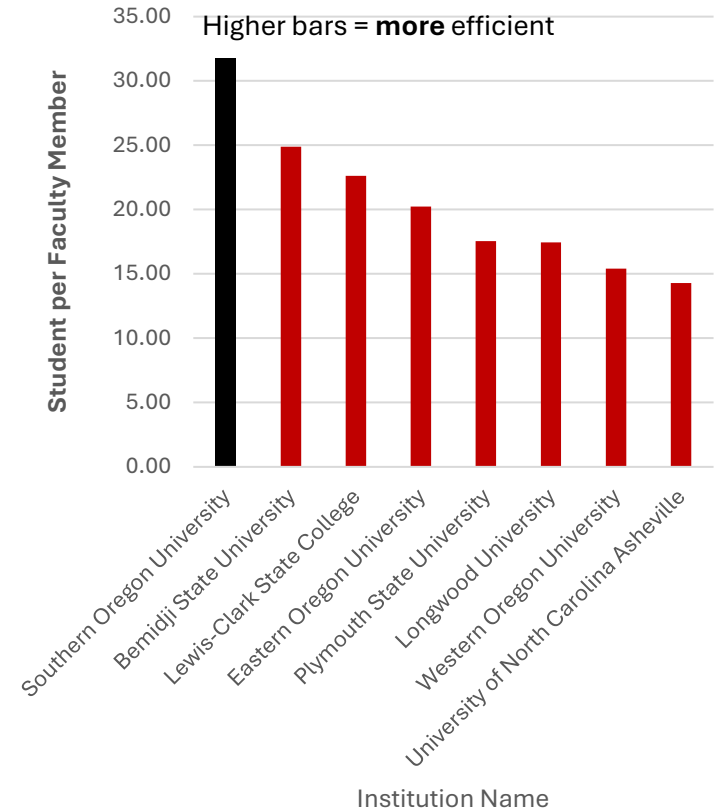
## 2024 Staff to Faculty Ratio by Institution\*

For each SOU faculty member, SOU has just over 2 staff members, the high end of the range, compared to a peer range of 1.2 to 2 per faculty member.



## 2024 Faculty to Student Ratio by Institution\*

Each SOU faculty member supports just over 31 students, compared to a peer range of 14 to 24 per faculty member.



\*Data from Fall 2024  
Source: [IPEDS Data Center](#)

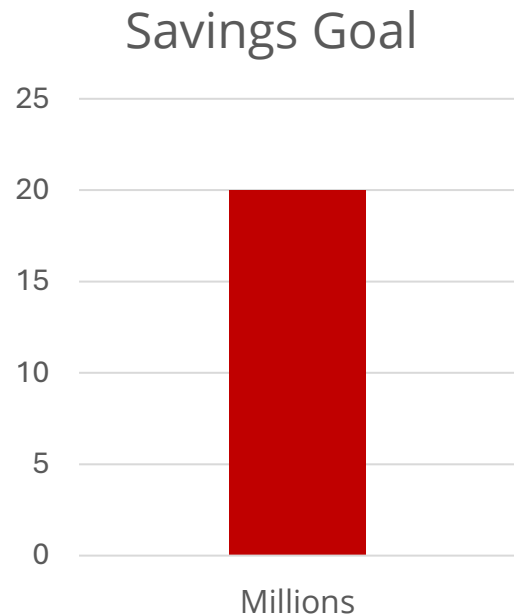
# Opportunities to Address SOU's Financial Gap

Facing a significant financial gap year over year, SOU will need to achieve savings targets across the enterprise and build structures to enable new growth.

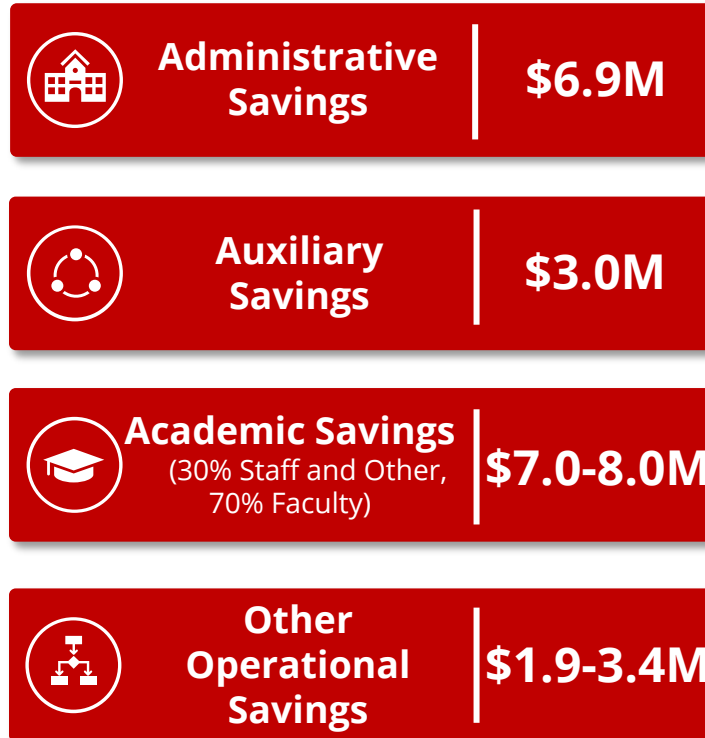
## Total Forecast Impact of Cost Savings Current Opportunities = \$18.8-21.3M

*Does not include long-term growth and revenue opportunities*

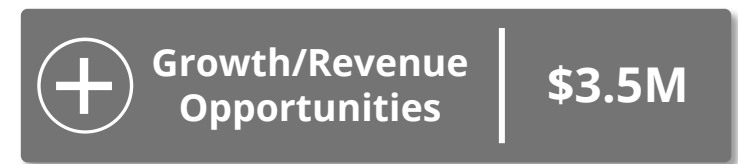
**Starting Point:**  
**\$18.0-20.0M Target**



### Estimated Impact



### Additional Revenue Generation



# SOU's Future Enrollment Strategy | Dual Focus

	COLLEGE EXPERIENCE STUDENT <i>Traditional Students</i>	ADULT LEARNERS <i>Career Switchers, Some Credit/No Degree, and Today's Modern Learner</i>
LEVERS FOR ENGAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic readiness supports</li> <li>• Retention-first enrollment management</li> <li>• Mental health and wellness services</li> <li>• Program relevance</li> <li>• Technology-enabled personalization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible course delivery</li> <li>• Credit for prior learning</li> <li>• Stackable credentials</li> <li>• Employer-aligned program design</li> <li>• Adult-ready services</li> </ul>
INITIAL OPPORTUNITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boost high school participation rates by articulating the <b>value proposition of a SOU degree</b>, reducing barriers to entry and providing clear pathways to a degree.</li> <li>• Implement <b>early-commitment "pre-admit + plan" programs</b> with milestones and predictable cost/time-to-degree.</li> <li>• <b>Re-enroll stop-outs</b> through targeted comeback campaigns, credit audits, short on-ramps, and reinstatement pathways.</li> <li>• Grow transfers by <b>strengthening community college and inter-campus pipelines</b> with consistent credit crosswalks and robust articulation agreements.</li> <li>• Focus growth on <b>prioritized segments</b>, with a carefully managed approach to tuition discounting, with annual targets set and tracked.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build a <b>noncredit-to-credit conversion engine</b> using end-of-program assessments that award transcribed credit.</li> <li>• Offer "finish what you started" completion degrees with <b>generous credit for prior learning (CPL)</b> and tight degree maps.</li> <li>• Pilot <b>predictable pricing bundles</b> (where allowed) to reduce sticker shock for part-time adults.</li> <li>• Partner with regional workforce boards and major employers to <b>drive steady cohorts in high-need sectors</b>.</li> <li>• Stand up <b>rapid-response micro-credentials</b> that can be launched and refreshed quickly as skills demand shifts.</li> <li>• Rethink <b>time-to-degree options</b> by offering select 3-year/90-credit pathways with quality safeguards.</li> </ul>

# Principles of Future State Design

As SOU reestablishes itself for the future, the university will need to reimagine how it delivers academics, administrative services, and auxiliary services.



## Academics

- ✓ Driven by student demand and workforce need
- ✓ Courses aren't static but reflect a constant 2-way dialogue with employers to shape curricula
- ✓ Narrow set of general education requirements
- ✓ Part of an ecosystem of programming supplemented by other institutions
- ✓ Stackable and flexible credentials



## Admin Services

- ✓ Admin services are delivered at scale through partners for operational commodity services (payroll, AR/AP)
- ✓ Admin services are delivered locally where proximity, relationships and context matter
- ✓ Technology is scaled where appropriate and/or outsourced to reduce technical dept



## Auxiliaries

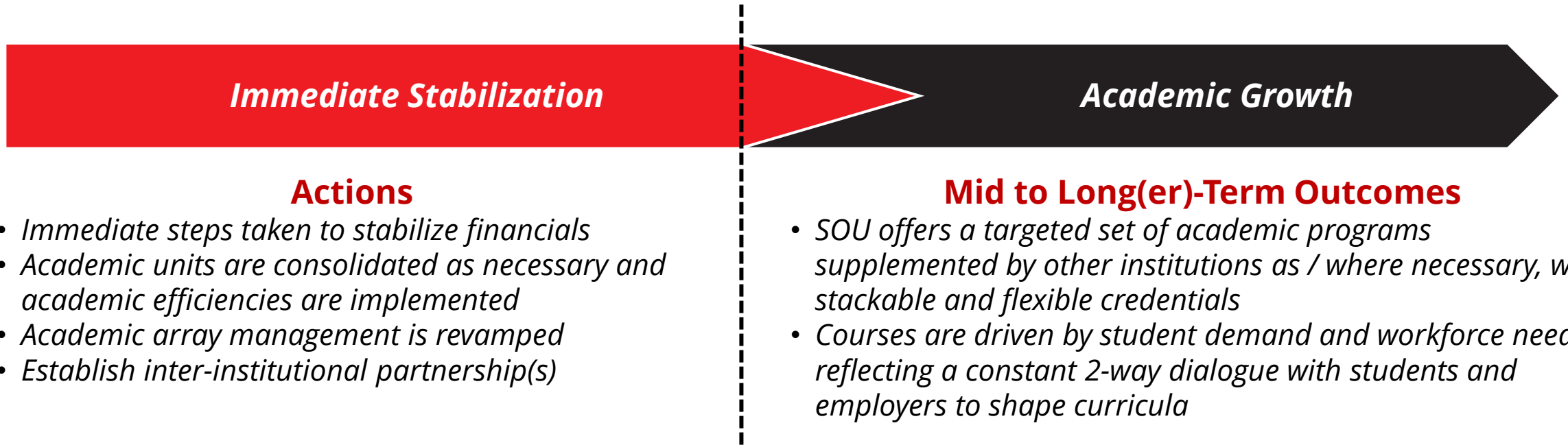
- ✓ Auxiliaries cover operating costs through sales and services and philanthropy
- ✓ Subsidization through E&G funds is not accepted as the norm or commonplace

*Across all functions, healthcare benefits are baselined to be competitive.*

# Academic Transformation Will Require a Two-Stage Approach

While the near-term requires decisive action to align academic delivery expenses with tuition revenues, the future offers opportunities for program growth and development in areas that meet student and local employer needs.

June 2028



***Changes may require approval by accreditors or statutory changes.***

# Multifactor Analyses of Academics Highlight Potential Opportunities

Through a four-part multifactor assessment of the existing academic offerings, SOU can identify areas where the efficiency of academic delivery can be improved to achieve cost savings, as well as areas where it will be necessary to close academic units and associated programs. This will create the foundation for growth.

## Financial Considerations

Given resource constraints, financial considerations will be critical when evaluating the academic array



## Context Considerations

Beyond purely financial considerations, it is critical to evaluate market trends and organizational 'fit'

### Operational Efficiency and Outputs

What is the cost of academic programming?

### Financial Contributions to the Institution

What impact do the academic units have on the institution's overall financial performance?

### Alignment to Local Needs and Labor Trends

How do SOU's academic trends align to local market demands?

### Alignment to Organizational Mission

How do academic programs align to SOU's future?

***Holistic analysis across the above factors will enable SOU to ascertain, by academic unit, where to implement operational efficiencies, and where academic units need to be closed.***

# Analysis of Academics Highlights a Need for Transformation

## Analysis Highlights

Academic Unit <sup>1</sup>	AY2024 – 2025 Total UG & GR SCH <sup>2</sup>	# Students Majoring in Degree Programs <sup>3</sup>	Faculty Salary, Wages & Benefits per SCH <sup>4</sup>	Estimated Total OpEx per SCH <sup>5</sup>	Operating Revenues per SCH <sup>6</sup>	Gross Income (loss) per SCH <sup>7</sup>
Business Administration	15,750	696	\$153	\$256	\$364	\$108
Education	12,412	482	\$194	\$388	\$448	\$60
Psychology	9,572	355	\$149	\$245	\$265	\$20
Theatre	6,644	187	\$195	\$292	\$268	-\$24
Health & Exercise Science	5,490	184	\$146	\$242	\$285	\$42
Biology	4,808	168	\$152	\$248	\$299	\$51
Comms., Media & Cinema	8,355	164	\$133	\$229	\$294	\$65
Criminology & Criminal Justice	4,741	160	\$158	\$254	\$236	-\$19
Emerging Media & Digital Arts	2,772	132	\$200	\$297	\$269	-\$28
Env. Sci., Policy & Sustrn.	3,400	91	\$208	\$304	\$302	-\$2
Art & Art History	5,061	83	\$148	\$245	\$203	-\$42
Outdoor Adventure Leadership	2,326	82	\$242	\$338	\$219	-\$119
Computer Science	2,556	76	\$264	\$360	\$310	-\$50
History & Political Science	2,049	74	\$215	\$311	\$442	\$131
English Studies	1,794	66	\$310	\$407	\$416	\$9
Music	3,292	61	\$326	\$423	\$224	-\$199
Creative Writing	1,331	50	\$287	\$383	\$278	-\$105
Sociology & Anthropology	2,401	49	\$245	\$342	\$242	-\$99
Clinical Mental Hlth. Couns.	2,096	48	\$307	\$403	\$439	\$36
Mathematics	4,480	37	\$181	\$277	\$268	-\$9
Chemistry & Physics	3,037	36	\$214	\$310	\$323	\$13
Spanish & Amer. Sign Lang.	3,002	33	\$231	\$328	\$259	-\$69
Economics	2,096	20	\$138	\$234	\$189	-\$45

- Analysis of academic production and financials for the 23 academic units indicate that **10 units operate at positive margins (excluding overhead)**, the remaining **13 academic units operate at a loss**
- **These figures represent *only* the operating expenses directly charged to the colleges/schools** – ergo, the units shown as operating at a loss are in the red before any consideration of central university costs (e.g., student success staff, faculties cost)
- Ultimately these gross income (losses) by academic unit suggest a **need to transform both the academic offerings and delivery thereof**

# Future SOU | Degrees & Credentials Evolve to Meet Learner Needs



## *Rethink Credentials of Value*

Rethink **time-to-degree options** by offering select 3-year/90-credit pathways with quality safeguards.

Offer “finish what you started” completion degrees with **generous credit for prior learning (CPL)** and tight degree maps.



## *Focus on Workforce Needs*

Partner with regional workforce boards and major employers to **drive steady cohorts in high-need sectors.**

Stand up **rapid-response micro-credentials** that can be launched and refreshed quickly as skills demand shifts.



## *Focus on Flexible Learning*







Build a **noncredit-to-credit conversion engine** using end-of-program assessments that awards transcript credit.

Leverage **credit for prior learning (CPL)** so that students earn credits for relevant work experience.

Pilot **predictable pricing bundles** to reduce sticker shock for part-time adults.

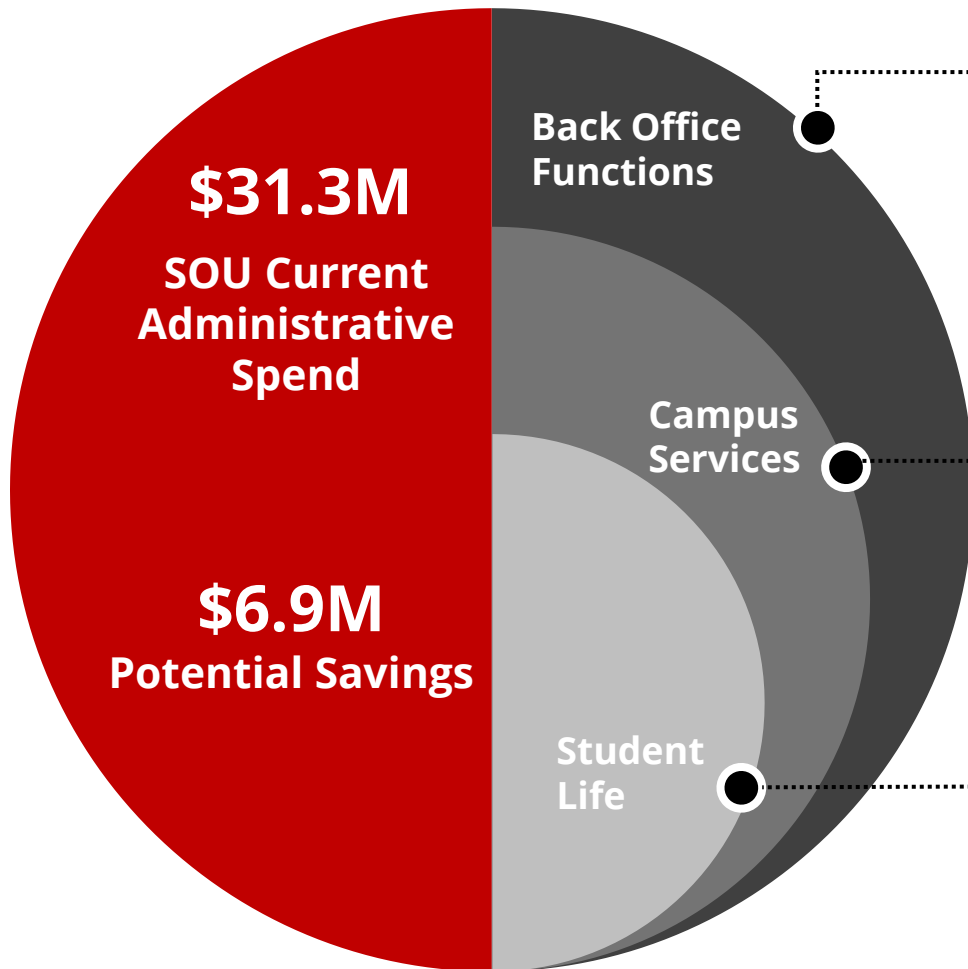
# Future SOU | Administrative Operating Models

A preliminary set of potential opportunities to facilitate discussion on what may be preserved, consolidated, restructured, or discontinued regarding administrative operations at SOU.

	Model Description	Higher Education Case Studies
<p><b>01</b>  <b>Outsourced Delivery Model</b></p>	<p>Administrative services are outsourced and delivered by a third-party provider</p>	
<p><b>02</b>  <b>Anchor University Delivery Model</b></p>	<p>A separate Oregon-based university provides administrative services for SOU</p>	
<p><b>03</b>  <b>Regional Network Delivery Model</b></p>	<p>Comprehensive universities are organized into a “network,” and administrative functions are consolidated at one service unit within that network</p>	

# New Administrative Operating Model

SOU's administrative review indicates meaningful gains from shared services spanning back-office, campus services, and select student life, delivering a projected 10–30% savings, especially in standardized, high-volume processes.



## 25% Savings in Back Office Functions

*Transaction-heavy, rules-based functions represent the clearest opportunity for scale efficiencies and technology rationalization.*

- Comp, Benefits, and Non-Comp Expense Total: \$14.0M  
Savings Range: \$3.5M
- Business Services; IT; VP, Finance & Administration; Human Resources; General Counsel; Budget Office; Risk & Insurance Management

## 10% Savings in Campus Services

*Select services may benefit from shared delivery where scale can be achieved without compromising responsiveness or campus experience.*

- Comp, Benefits, and Non-Comp Expense Total: \$6.5M  
Savings Range: \$650K
- Campus Public Safety; Facilities Management & Planning; Sustainability

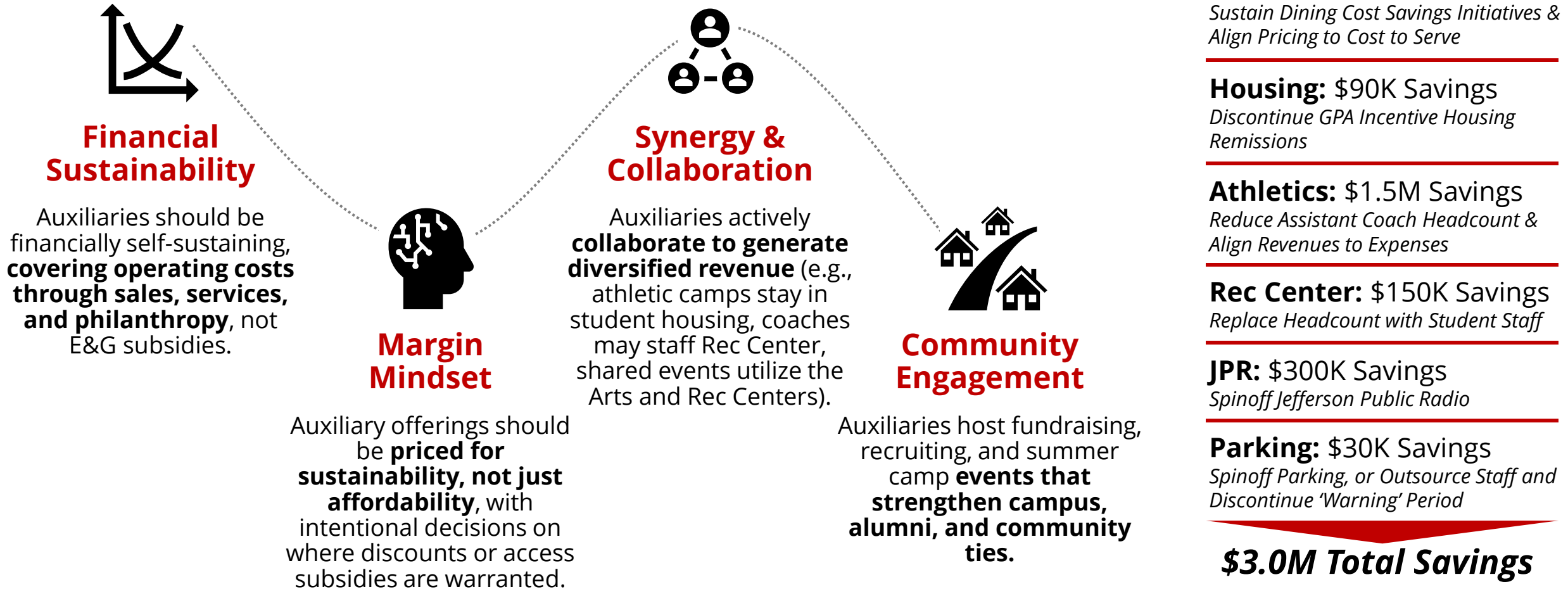
## 20-30% Savings in Student Life

*Opportunities are concentrated in administrative and transactional activities, while high-touch, campus-specific services are retained locally.*

- Comp, Benefits, and Non-Comp Expense Total: \$10.8M  
Savings Range: \$2.8M
- Library; Enrollment Management; Admissions & Recruitment; Student Success

# Revitalize Auxiliaries: From Cost Centers to Growth Engines

By improving auxiliary self-sufficiency, SOU can reduce recurring losses while limiting impact on the core academic mission.



**Designed to operate as a self-supporting portfolio of services, programs, and assets.**

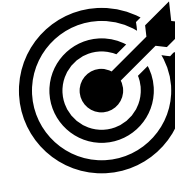
# Revenue Opportunities to Improve Institutional Sustainability

With enrollment and financial pressures continuing, SOU can unlock revenue through a mix of net tuition improvements and new revenue streams from underutilized campus space.



## Monetize Underutilized Space

- Lease select campus assets for community use, external events, rentals, camps, and conferences
- Consider selling underutilized assets to generate one-time revenue and reduce upkeep costs



## Net Tuition Optimization

- Align financial aid, packaging, and discounting strategy to improve yield and net tuition revenue
- Evaluate scholarship guidelines, exception-based awards, and targeting to increase discipline over time

..... **Estimated Potential Impact** .....

**~\$1.9M**

Annual Revenue Opportunity

**~\$1.4M – 1.8M**

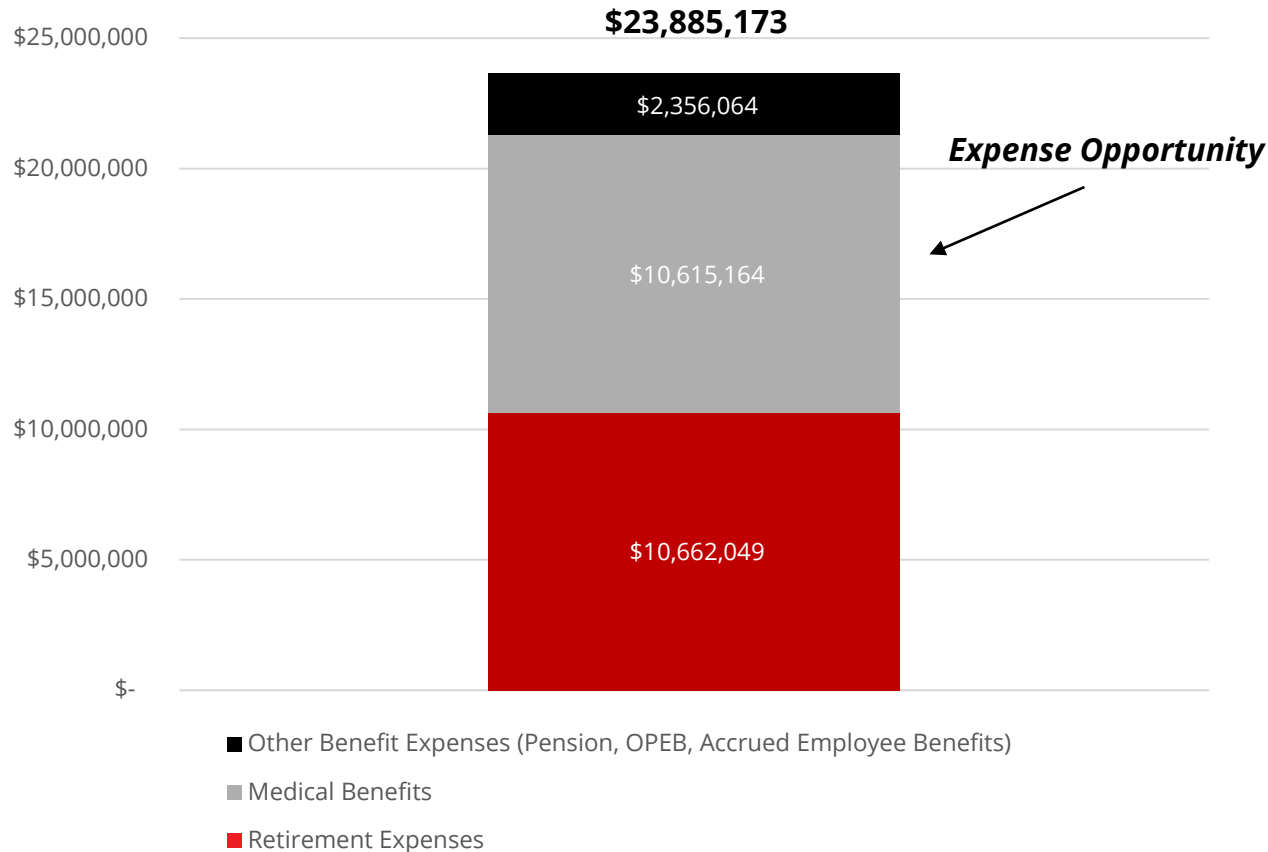
Tuition Revenue Improvement

***SOU has multiple pathways to improve revenue through a combination of net tuition optimization and better monetization of campus assets.***

# Other Operational Savings

With a total benefits expense of \$23M, the **effective fringe rate in FY25 was 56%**, comparatively high to industry standards. There exist significant opportunities if SOU can identify strategies and pathways to reduce benefits expenses. Freezing salaries, benefits, and wages in the short term will reduce operational expenses, but is not sustainable over time.

## Benefits Expenses in FY25



### Pathway to Reducing Benefits Expense

The current benefit expenses are SOU contribute significantly to operating expenses, costing SOU \$42,232 per employee. Per State of Oregon Legislation, a public university must provide group insurance to employees. However, there may exist opportunities for SOU to provide group health and wellness insurance outside of the Public Employee Benefits Board (PEBB), per Oregon Statute 352.237.

#### Healthcare Expense Opportunity


Reducing healthcare expenses by 10-20% utilizing alternative healthcare models (e.g., Oregon Educators Benefit Board (OEBB), which is utilized by community colleges, could save SOU \$1.1M to \$2.1M annually.


#### Salaries, Wages, and Benefits Opportunity


Introduce a hiring freeze, merit freeze, and COLA freeze to reduce projected increases to salaries, wages, and benefits in FY27 can save \$845k (salary/wages only)-\$1.3M.


# Implementation Risk




- 
**Execution Risks**

Effectively carrying out the implementation plan to achieve financial stability will require meeting a series of critical milestones with a staff that will have limited capacity to handle the magnitude of work needed.
- 
**No Margin for Error**

With \$15M in emergency funding, SOU still will be unable to meet its cash obligations by the fall of 2027 (less than 18 months from now). Missing enrollment targets, unexpected expenses, weather or cybersecurity incidents (etc.) could cause irreparable damage.
- 
**Lack of Partnership Options**

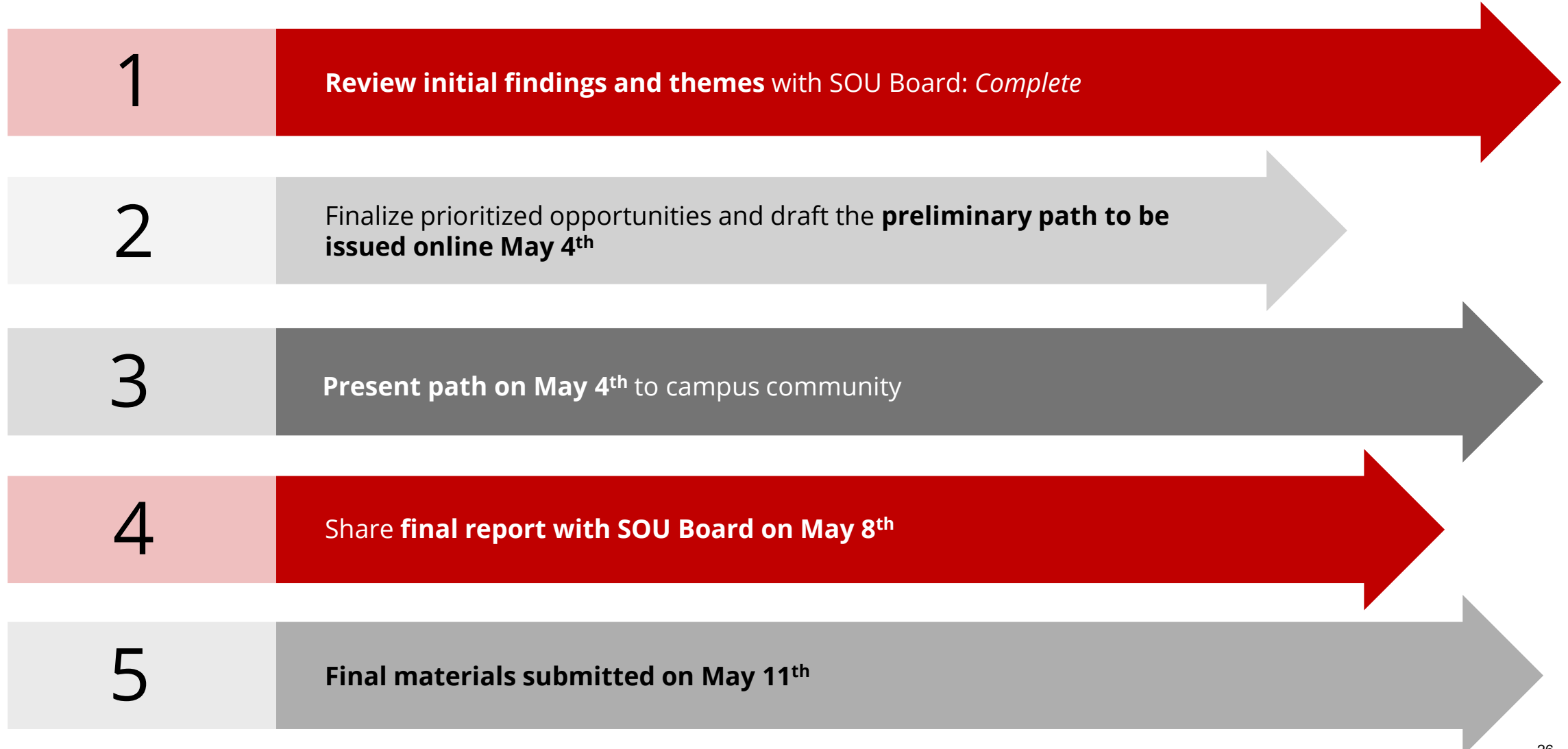
Higher education challenges are plaguing nearly all institutions and potential partners may see partnering with SOU as a drain on resources and time. Partners will need incentives to come to the table.
- 
**Alumni and Philanthropic Support**

The SOU Foundation raised nearly \$16M in philanthropy, which is critical to supporting operating expenses at the University. Program reductions and other changes could result in losses of donor support.
- 
**Academic Calendar and Other Dependencies**

SOU will need to navigate program cuts in line with the academic calendar and savings may need to be delayed to the spring of AY 2027 to avoid student confusion.

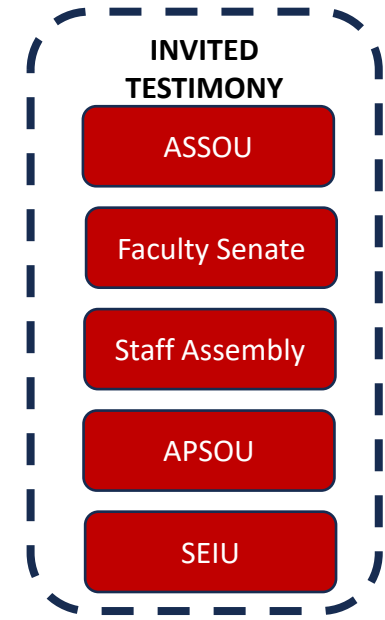
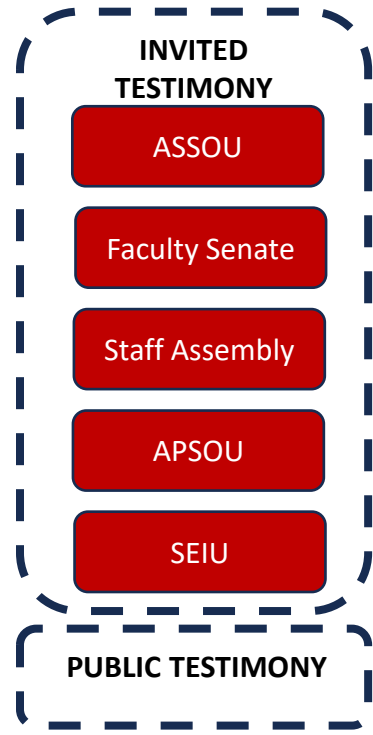
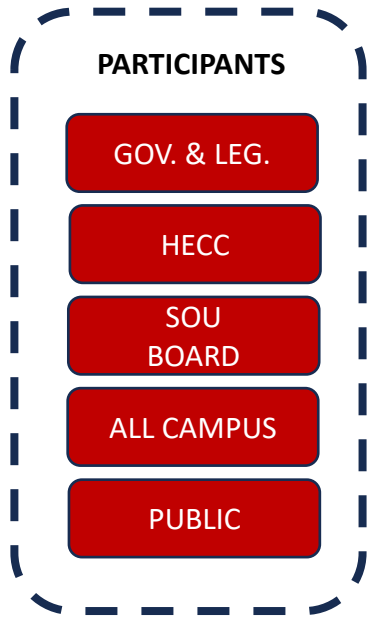
***Given the magnitude of risks that exist given SOU's current financial status, alternative plans, including a controlled winddown, should be planned for if milestones are not hit.***

# Path Forward



# Next Steps: Working Decision Timeline

# Working Decision Timeline



# Adjournment