

# KSU Arts and Sciences faces budget shortfall

Layoffs could be on the horizon

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TOPEKA — The Kansas State University College of Arts and Sciences faces a \$2.6 million annual budget shortfall in addition to millions owed for loans from the administration, a situation that may eliminate academic programs and cause faculty layoffs.

K-State officials presented a plan to address \$13.5 million the college owes to the school's administration, as well as the projected annual shortfall, at a September town hall, the campus newspaper, the Collegian, reported.

The reverberations from that meeting, where employees were told about likely layoffs and an assessment process that will occur to determine a reorganization plan, worried professors.

"The college has held two all-college meetings to discuss these challenges and has been transparent that potential options may include departmental mergers, discontinuation of academic programs and workforce reductions," said an unattributed statement from K-State in response to Kansas Reflector questions. "No decisions have been made yet."

The budget announcement came as state universities struggle to make up state funding shortfalls — some tied to requiring proof the universities eliminated diversity, equity and inclusion education. Fort Hays State University announced last month it was closing the Sternberg Museum of Natural History because of



Kansas State University College of Arts and Sciences is undergoing an assessment process to determine how to save money as its budget sits in the red, according to university officials. (PHOTO BY K-STATE DIVISION OF COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING)

state budget cuts.

### ONGOING BUDGET ISSUES

The College of Arts and Sciences budget problems aren't new, said English professor Dan Hoyt.

"If we're going to make these drastic budget cuts, healthy programs might be lost," he said. "There is lots of talk from administration about us losing departments and maybe even the college, and forming schools. That will mean, though, fewer choices for students and less autonomy for programs, and it also will mean lots of job losses for staff."

In university organizational structures, colleges are broader with multiple subjects while schools are smaller and more specialized.

Jesse Perez Mendez, K-State provost and executive vice president, announced a new organizational process at the town hall, which involves input from faculty. Hoyt and other professors said it will require significant time

and paperwork from faculty.

Hoyt and Philip Nel, an English professor, said they are concerned about the speed with which the university is tackling the organizational process.

"The A and S budget has been in deficit for years, so it's not actually news," Nel said. "What is new is that it's now being treated as if it's a crisis. Arts and Sciences serves the entire university in terms of the courses that we teach, and it doesn't bring in the same kind of grant money that perhaps other colleges do."

Faculty in Arts and Sciences teach 40% of all the credit hours at the university, Hoyt said.

Nel, Hoyt and David DeFries, an associate history professor, all question the budgeting process used in the past and the assessment process being proposed.

"The budget model we were presented last year was built on assumptions that are hard to verify," Nel said. "For

example, it was built on the sustained increase of students at the time that we're facing a demographic cliff. That's a great narrative to promote, and even an aspiration to have, but it's not something on which I would build the math of the budget."

The "cliff" Nel referred to is the decrease of college-age students in the next decades because of lower birth rates.

The College of Arts and Sciences decreased freshman enrollment from 713 in fall 2025 to 624 in fall 2026, according to a university dashboard.

Nel said decisions are being made without consulting faculty.

"There is an attempt to move power away from the faculty into central administration in order to serve what I perceive as a different mission than the one that I signed up for," Nel said. "I see a university as a public good that encourages people, students, faculty, to pursue truth wherever it may lead, and it may lead to

disagreement."

DeFries said the assessment process asks questions such as what can be done to bring more students into Arts and Sciences.

He offered an answer: "Not much."

"I mean, they are the ones who have been engineering the curriculum and public relations to drive people away from our programs," he said. "They're the ones who have given the engineering school and the business school and the grain science all these shiny new buildings, and left the humanities and the College of Arts and Sciences in the old buildings that need renovation."

A slide at the town hall shared with Kansas Reflector said one-third of the college's 22 buildings need 50% of replacement value in deferred maintenance. The example given said if it would cost \$10 million to replace the building, and \$5 million was needed in maintenance.

Jean Folkerts is a retired professor, former interim dean of the K-State journalism school, and a member of the Kansas Press Association Hall of Fame. News of proposed cuts to the college's budget didn't surprise her because financial challenges were ongoing.

"For starters, Arts and Sciences has always been a stepchild at K-State," she said. "It's dominated by agriculture, business, architecture and engineering. Arts and Sciences has always existed as something that they never really, I think, put a lot of effort into."

Folkerts said past budgeting processes weren't appropriately designed for a college like Arts and Sciences that offered prerequisites that students in other colleges needed. In 2017-18, "big budget cuts" were needed and the school cut across the board without trying to reinforce strong programs, she said.

Other changes affected Arts and Sciences, such as students beginning to take prerequisite courses like Composition I and Speech at community colleges.

Folkerts would like to see K-State officials work through the assessment process of what's next for Arts and Sciences by talking to former deans and associate deans to gather insights. Arts and Sciences is a "very large college," which was challenging in many ways, and there could be ways to split it up effectively.

"My absolute clear statement that I want to make is: No university is a decent university if it does not have a strong college or collection of colleges of Arts and Sciences," she said. "It's an underpinning of the university."

# Rare T. rex cousin heads to auction

NEW YORK (AP) — On quick glance, the fossil unveiled Tuesday at a Manhattan auction house looks like an undersized Tyrannosaurus rex, with its signature gaping jaw filled with razor sharp teeth. But the proportions are off, as its arms and legs are much too long.

That's because the dinosaur skeleton isn't actually a T. rex but a recently confirmed distant cousin. The Nanotyrannus, as this smaller, nimbler predator is known, is on view in the lobby of Sotheby's headquarters ahead of its Oct. 27 auction.

Standing 6.5 feet tall and stretching nearly 20 feet long, the rare fossil is one of only three such skeletons known to exist.

"What's really exciting is that until they proved this genus existed, we thought that T. rex was the only apex predator of the Cretaceous," said Cassandra Hatton, a vice chair at Sotheby's. "We now know that they coexisted. They lived alongside each other, occupying distinct niches in the ecological system."

**SCIENTISTS LONG WONDERED WHETHER NANOTYRANNUS WAS A YOUNG T. REX**  
A decades-long sci-



Jodi, a mounted Nanotyrannus skeleton, of the Cretaceous Period, approximately 67 million years ago, is estimated to be worth \$6 - 9 million. (AP PHOTO/YUKI IWAMURA)

entific debate kicked off with the 1942 discovery of what's now considered the first Nanotyrannus head, the so-called "Cleveland Skull" housed at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

Fast forward to October 2025, when new research concluded that the Nanotyrannus was in fact a distinct genus of dinosaur that coexisted with T. rex.

Scientists examining the growth rings within preserved bones found the dinosaurs were fully formed adults, not

juveniles. The research challenged long-held assumptions that the mighty "King of the Tyrant Lizards" was the sole large predator of the Cretaceous period, some 67 million years ago.

"It's like a lion and a cheetah," Hatton explains. "They hunted different prey. They were around at the same time. It's possible T. rex ate these."

Indeed, there are more than 150 key differences between the Nanotyrannus and T. rex, the most noticeable

being their sizes.

At about 18 feet long, an adult Nanotyrannus was about half the length of an adult T. rex. Instead of the T. rex's famously stubby arms, its forelimbs were longer and its hand claws were larger.

Nanotyrannus also boasted more and different-looking teeth. Whereas the T. rex's were bond-crushingly thick and almost banana-shaped, the Nanotyrannus' were more slender and almost bladelike.

"Those teeth would

slash the meat off of the animal it was hunting. It went after faster prey," Hatton explained of the Nanotyrannus. "You look at a T. rex, it's big, lumbering. It went after slower prey, and it would eat the whole thing."

Sotheby's bills "Jodi," as the dinosaur fossil is nicknamed, as the "finest and most complete" Nanotyrannus skeleton currently available. Hatton said it's almost 70% complete, with a virtually complete skull and a jaw that has roughly 35 teeth.

The fossil is named after Jodi Pierson, the Montana rancher who discovered it on her land in 2019. Its discovery and excavation were the focus of the Discovery Channel documentary series "Dino Hunters" in 2020.

"Jodi" was found some 8 miles from where the so-called Dueling Dinosaurs fossil -- which depicts a Nanotyrannus and a Triceratops -- was unearthed in 2006.

That famous specimen, nicknamed "Bloody Mary," is considered nearly 100% complete, but it's housed at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences and is not for sale. The third Nanotyrannus skeleton is located at the Burpee

Museum of Natural History in Rockford, Illinois.

### SOME SCIENTISTS OPPOSE SUCH SALES

The Society of Vertebrate Paleontology, an advocacy group of scientists, scholars and students, has called for significant fossils like "Jodi" to be publicly displayed in museums and other research institutions rather than sold privately.

But Hatton argued that if it wasn't for the professional dinosaur hunters, the world might not have known that Nanotyrannus existed.

"These people are crucial in the preservation of science," she said. "We don't have enough universities and museums out there digging and doing field programs. We absolutely need private diggers who invest their own money to go do this."

Stuart Sumida, the society's president and a biology professor at California State University San Bernardino, rejected the notion as a "blatant lie." The latest auction comes after Sotheby's sold a T. rex fossil for a record \$50.1 million this summer.