

# 10 Difficult (BUT CRITICAL) Decisions for Achieving Academic Cost Savings Goals

Given financial pressures, every campus unit is being asked to reduce costs. Labor is a major component of Academic Affairs budgets, so leaders are unlikely to find substantial savings without looking at instructional efficiency, faculty capacity, and faculty headcount. While making decisions in these areas can be particularly difficult, the costs of inaction are too high to ignore. **Avoiding tough decisions today can result in leadership teams having to make even more controversial or damaging decisions later**, such as cutting academic programs.

This infographic outlines 10 savings avenues that academic leaders must decide whether to pursue, along with key questions to answer before implementation. Academic leaders can use this resource to educate stakeholders on short-term savings options, assess what their institution is (and is not) willing to do to increase efficiency within the academy, and develop a more realistic savings strategy.



### 1 Reduce or eliminate small class sizes

Key questions to jump-start progress

- Will we enforce a **blanket class size policy** or tailor it based on context and opportunity size?
- Which courses will we **prioritize eliminating** versus offering less frequently? How will we decide this?

### 2 Consolidate underfilled course sections

Key questions to jump-start progress

- Will we enforce a **blanket course section policy** or tailor it based on context and opportunity size?
- How will we decide which sections to **prioritize consolidating**?

### 3 Reduce curricular complexity

Key questions to jump-start progress

- Will we focus on **specific bottlenecks, credit requirements, or both**?
- What **internal structures** (e.g., curriculum or accreditation committee) will we need to update?

### 4 Enforce faculty workload expectations

Key questions to jump-start progress

- When we bring faculty up to load, **how will we deploy them** if their expertise does not align with current needs and demand?
- What **exceptions** will we make, and how will we decide on these?

### 5 Reduce and/or retract unfunded faculty releases

Key questions to jump-start progress

- Will we implement a **standardized process** for submitting, approving, and tracking releases?
- What **exceptions** will we make, and how will we decide on these?

### 6 Reduce and/or retract unfunded faculty overloads

Key questions to jump-start progress

- Will we enforce a **blanket overload policy** or are there certain circumstances where overloads may be more cost-effective?
- How will we **meet the demand** the overload was addressing, especially in a cost-effective way?

### 7 Implement a hiring freeze

Key questions to jump-start progress

- Will we implement an **across-the-board or targeted freeze**? How will we decide?
- How will we **adjust workloads given reduced capacity**? What will we de-prioritize and/or stop doing?

### 8 Incentivize early retirement

Key questions to jump-start progress

- Will we **offer incentives broadly** to eligible faculty or **only in priority areas**? How will we decide?
- What will we do **if critical or high-performing faculty opt in** to the incentive program?

### 9 Reduce non-tenure track faculty contracts

Key questions to jump-start progress

- How will we **meet the demand** that non-tenure track faculty contracts were addressing, especially in a cost-effective way?
- What other **unintended consequences** should we anticipate and mitigate (e.g., reduced advising capacity)?

### 10 Centralize position control

Key questions to jump-start progress

- How will we **guard against auto-filling vacancies** so we can generate meaningful savings?
- How will we decide whether to **reallocate versus eliminate a faculty line**? What criteria will we use to ensure consistency and equity?