

Hiring Freeze Exception Process

Purpose

During the hiring freeze, vacant positions will generally remain unfilled unless an exception is approved. Exceptions will be limited to positions that are necessary to protect health and safety, maintain legal or regulatory compliance, preserve essential College operations, support critical student services, or prevent significant financial or operational harm.

Internal recruitments may be approved by the appropriate Vice President. If an internal recruitment is unsuccessful, the recruitment will be paused. The hiring freeze exception process must then be completed and approved by the component administrator before the position may be opened for external recruitment.

General Review Standard

A position may be approved to move forward when the requesting area demonstrates that:

1. The work is essential and cannot reasonably be delayed.
2. The duties cannot be absorbed, reassigned, automated, reduced, or performed through another available staffing arrangement.
3. Leaving the position vacant would create a significant and documented risk to the District, its students, employees, facilities, finances, or operations.
4. Funding is available and filling the position is consistent with the District's fiscal sustainability goals.
5. The position remains necessary after considering potential organizational changes, service reductions, and alternative methods of delivering the work.

Approval may be granted to fill the position as currently structured or may be conditioned on modifying the position, staffing level, work schedule, funding source, classification, or recruitment timeline.

Exception Categories

1. Health, Safety, and Emergency Response

Priority consideration may be given to positions necessary to:

1. Protect the immediate health, safety, and security of students, employees, or the public, including a documented risk that could result in injury, loss of life, property damage, or interruption of essential services.

2. Maintain emergency response, law enforcement, workplace safety, or crisis response services.
3. Operate, inspect, repair, or secure facilities, equipment, or infrastructure when a vacancy would create an unacceptable safety risk.
4. Meet minimum staffing requirements for safety sensitive operations.

The request should identify the specific risk, its likelihood and potential impact, and any temporary measures currently being used.

2. Legal, Regulatory, Accreditation, and Contractual Compliance

Priority consideration may be given to positions necessary to:

1. Meet federal, state, or local legal and regulatory requirements.
2. Maintain institutional or programmatic accreditation.
3. Satisfy audit, licensing, certification, financial aid, payroll, or other compliance related obligations.
4. Meet grant requirements, or binding contractual obligations.

The request should identify the applicable requirement, the deadline, and the consequence of noncompliance. A general statement that a position supports compliance is not sufficient.

3. Essential Student Services and Instructional Support

Priority consideration may be given to positions when the vacancy would materially impair:

1. Student access or other essential student services.
2. Required instructional, laboratory, clinical, library, technology, or program support.
3. The College's ability to offer an approved instructional program or maintain minimum staffing required for program operation.
4. Services for students with legally protected access or accommodation needs.

The request should include available workload, enrollment, service demand, wait time, or other data demonstrating the effect of the vacancy.

4. Critical Business and Institutional Operations

Priority consideration may be given to positions necessary to maintain functions such as:

1. Payroll, accounts payable, purchasing, budgeting, financial reporting, cash management, or other essential fiscal operations.
2. Human resources, employee benefits, recruitment for approved critical positions, or legally required personnel processes.
3. Information technology infrastructure, cybersecurity, identity and access management, enterprise systems, data protection, and critical system support.
4. Facilities operations, maintenance, custodial services, or other functions necessary to keep the College open and operational.
5. Business continuity, disaster recovery, insurance, risk management, and emergency preparedness.

The request should explain why the function cannot operate at an acceptable level during the vacancy and identify any deadlines, service disruptions, backlogs, or operational risks.

5. Revenue Protection or Financial Impact

Priority consideration may be given when filling a position is expected to:

1. Protect or generate revenue that materially exceeds the total cost of the position.
2. Preserve apportionment, grants, contracts, reimbursements, donations, or other significant funding.
3. Prevent substantial overtime, temporary staffing, consultant, penalty, or outsourcing costs.
4. Avoid a material loss of enrollment or student participation.
5. Provide a demonstrable financial benefit that cannot reasonably be achieved through existing staff.

The request should include a reasonable financial analysis comparing the cost of filling the position with the expected revenue, savings, or financial risk.

6. Grant Funded or Restricted Fund Positions

Grant funded or restricted fund positions may be considered when:

1. The funding is confirmed and may only be used for the proposed purpose.
2. The position is required to carry out the funded activity.
3. Salary and benefit costs are fully supported for the anticipated appointment period.
4. The funding source does not create an unfunded obligation for the unrestricted general fund.
5. There is a clear plan for the position when the funding ends.

Restricted funding alone does not guarantee approval. The position must still support a current institutional priority and be evaluated for operational necessity.

7. Positions Necessary to Complete an Approved Reorganization

A position may be considered when it is an essential component of an approved reorganization that:

1. Produces documented ongoing savings.
2. Consolidates or eliminates other positions or functions.
3. Reduces reliance on temporary staffing, overtime, or consultants.
4. Improves span of control, accountability, service delivery, or operational efficiency.
5. Supports the District's long term fiscal sustainability efforts.

The request should include the complete organizational and fiscal impact rather than evaluating the position in isolation.

8. Difficult to Recruit or Highly Specialized Positions

A position may be considered when it requires specialized expertise that is critical to College operations and:

1. The work cannot be performed by existing employees.
2. The vacancy creates a significant operational, compliance, safety, or financial risk.
3. Delaying recruitment is likely to make the position substantially more difficult or costly to fill.

4. The District would otherwise need to obtain the services through a more costly or less effective arrangement.

Difficulty recruiting, by itself, is not sufficient. The request must also demonstrate critical institutional need.

Factors That Generally Do Not Support an Exception

The following considerations, standing alone, will generally not justify an exception:

1. The position was previously authorized or included in the adopted budget.
2. The department has historically maintained the position.
3. The position is funded by salary savings from another vacancy.
4. Filling the vacancy would improve convenience, workload distribution, responsiveness, or morale without evidence of a critical operational impact.
5. The hiring process had already begun but no binding employment commitment has been made.
6. The position supports desirable growth, expansion, or enhancement rather than an essential existing service.
7. The vacancy creates challenges that can reasonably be addressed through prioritization, cross training, reassignment, process improvement, or temporary service adjustments.

Alternatives That Must Be Considered

Before requesting an exception, the area must evaluate:

1. Redistributing duties within the department or component area.
2. Reassigning available employees consistent with applicable collective bargaining agreements.
3. Reducing, suspending, consolidating, or redesigning services.
4. Using technology, automation, or process improvements.
5. Sharing staff or services across departments or component areas.
6. Filling the position at a reduced level, reduced schedule, or limited duration.
7. Using a temporary, interim, substitute, or acting assignment when appropriate.

8. Delaying recruitment until a later date.
9. Eliminating or repurposing another vacant position.
10. Reorganizing the work to produce ongoing savings.

The request should explain which alternatives were considered and why they are not sufficient.

Prioritization Considerations

When multiple exception requests are under consideration, priority should generally be given in the following order:

1. Immediate health and safety needs.
2. Legal, regulatory, and accreditation requirements.
3. Functions necessary to prevent a significant interruption of essential operations.
4. Positions necessary to protect students' access to essential services.
5. Positions that protect significant revenue or prevent greater costs.
6. Positions funded by restricted resources without creating an unrestricted general fund obligation.
7. Positions supporting an approved reorganization or producing ongoing savings.
8. Other positions demonstrating a compelling institutional need.

The order above is intended as guidance. The severity, timing, and institutional impact of each vacancy must also be considered.

Approval Options

Following review, the request may be:

1. Approved as submitted.
2. Approved with modifications.
3. Approved as a temporary or interim assignment.
4. Deferred pending additional information, organizational review, or availability of funding.
5. Denied.