

In recent years, many institutions of higher education in the United States have faced challenges related to declining enrollment, leading to financial strain and, in some cases, layoffs and campus closures. The projected “enrollment cliff” combined with other factors will likely contribute to continued challenges. Moreover, the landscape of anti-DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) legislation in the US has led campuses to eliminate DEI-related jobs. It is important for our practitioners (SAPros) who face the unfortunate situation of being laid off, to have access to resources to help you navigate this challenging period and support the next phase of your career journey.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE LAID OFF?

Layoffs happen when positions are eliminated within the organization due to administrative (often financial) reasons. In contrast, a furloughed employee is still employed by the organization but on unpaid leave temporarily due to a work shortage or an economy that cannot support their role for the time being. A fired employee, on the other hand, has been permanently dismissed from their role. Reasons for firing can vary.

CAN YOU PREPARE FOR A LAYOFF?

Yes, you can. If you think that your organization might be preparing for layoffs, you can begin to put things in place to take care of yourself.

- **Create and add to an emergency fund.** While our field may not be a lucrative one, keeping any sort of savings will come in handy. Also consider a plan to pay off debt so reduce potential expenses during a period of lay off.
- **Review your health insurance options and schedule needed medical appointments.** While extended medical care may come with a severance package, it is wise to go ahead and get the care you need while you're covered. Also consider filling prescriptions.
- **Save your important employment documents (e.g. W-2 and paystubs).** Most systems that hold these records are electronic and you will want to have all of your important documents for filing unemployment, etc. without the barriers of log-in access.
- **Clean up personal information/files from your computer.** While many of our campuses allow employees to use their work computer for personal use, we caution against that. If you do, begin to download, transfer, and remove all personal files. Also remove saved login/passwords.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU'RE LAID OFF?

Step 1 - Start With The Logistics

There are certain administrative actions you'll want to take to be sure you are able to transition out of your role with everything that you need.

- **Review your severance package thoroughly and meet with HR.** Specifically ask: what is your severance? When does it run out? (How) will you be compensated for unused vacation and sick time? How long will you be insured? What will happen to your 401(k)? Can you apply for unemployment?

- **Review your insurance options.** Find out when your current insurance ends, and then look into whether COBRA, which allows you to extend your employee health insurance benefits for a certain time, is possible for your circumstances. Also look into the options available via the [Affordable Care Act](#) or consider going on to a spouse or family member's health care plan.
- **Consider filing for unemployment.** As long as you were not fired through fault of your own (such as misconduct), you can apply for unemployment benefits. If you need assistance, there are [resources available](#) to help you navigate the process.

Step 2 - Make Space for Grief

Being laid off is sad, disappointing, frustrating and a lot of other things all on its own. In our field being laid off can feel deeply personal. SAPros choose this work because of our values, convictions, and commitment to education and student development and success, often stemming from our own experiences. Take a few days to destress. Talk with family and friends. Connect with a counselor or therapist. Invest in your physical wellbeing.

Step 3 - Be Intentional With Your Next Career Steps

It's understandable to feel overwhelmed and stressed after being laid off, but it's important to take a step back and reflect on your career goals and aspirations. A layoff can often be an opportunity to reassess your strengths, skills, and passions, and to develop a plan for your future career.

- **Reflect.** The foundation of successful career planning is built on self-awareness. Revisit your values, the vision you have for yourself, your career goals and the skills that you have built competence in.
- **Brag on yourself. Start and/or update your list of accomplishments.** Two methods that may help you include the CARL (Context, Action, Result, Learning) or STAR(T) (Situation, Task, Action, Result + Takeaways) methods of reflection. Taking the time to be intentional about reflecting on your accomplishments can help you calm anxious feelings of being laid off and highlight what you will want to spotlight when you start the job search process.
- **Update your resume and LinkedIn profile.** You've likely developed more skills and reached new accomplishments since the last time you were on the hunt for a job, so make sure your resume reflects that.
 - Think about the new skills you have developed since your last job search, as well as any key accomplishments you have achieved.
 - Tailor your resume to each job you apply for. Read the job description carefully and use keywords and phrases that match the requirements of the job.
 - Use bullet points and action verbs to make your resume more engaging and readable. Keep your resume concise and focused.
 - LinkedIn is a great resource to job search, so make sure your profile is in tip-top shape, following the same pattern of your resume, and that it signals you're looking for new opportunities.
- **Ask yourself what you want, now.** Take some time to reflect on what motivated you in your previous job and what skills you enjoy using the most. Identify what you enjoy doing and what you do best, and try to think of

ways to incorporate those skills and passions into your future career goals. Also, consider factors such as the type of work you want to do, company culture, location, salary, benefits, and opportunities for growth.

- **Strategize your search.** Being strategic with your job search can save you from potential pitfalls and ensure that you make the right career move. So, it is worth investing the time and effort to find the right job rather than settling for a job that may not be the best fit for you.
 - Once you have identified your priorities, research potential employers to see if they align with your values, goals, and career aspirations. Look into the company's mission, values, culture, and reputation to determine if it's a good fit for you.
 - Network strategically by reaching out to colleagues, attend networking events, and leverage online platforms like LinkedIn to connect with people who may have insights or leads on job opportunities.
 - Tailor your resume and cover letter to each job you apply for to highlight your relevant skills and experiences. This shows employers that you have taken the time to understand the job requirements and are genuinely interested in the position.
 - Be prepared for interviews by researching the company, practicing common interview questions, and preparing examples of your accomplishments and experiences that demonstrate your qualifications for the role.
 - Above all else, trust your intuition. If something doesn't feel right about a job opportunity during the interview process, trust your instincts. It's better to pass on a job that doesn't align with your values or goals than to accept a position that may not be the right fit for you.

TPE is here to help you. Search for job opportunities via our [job board](#). Contact us to [sign up](#) for a free coaching and materials review session.

Resources

<https://online.usc.edu/news/laid-off-from-work-what-to-do-next-tips-advice/>

<https://www.ramseysolutions.com/career-advice/what-to-do-if-you-get-laid-off>

<https://www.nerdwallet.com/article/finance/laid-off-steps-to-get-help>