

Deficit grows at Okanagan College

By RON SEYMOUR *Sep 29/21*
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A pandemic-induced drop in student enrolment has increased the deficit at Okanagan College.

The institution's projected year-end deficit has climbed to \$3.9 million currently from the \$2.6 million that was estimated in March.

A key reason is lower-than-expected numbers of foreign students, who pay substantially more tuition than Canadian students, college governors heard Tuesday.

But the number of domestic students at Okanagan College also remains below what they were two years ago, 2019 levels, governors heard.

"I don't think we're back to 2019 pre-pandemic levels yet. We're somewhere in-between, which is what we expected," said Andrew Hay, a college vice-president.

The number of international students remains down significantly from 2019 because of ongoing pandemic-related travel restrictions and issues around student visas, Hay said.

Exact enrolment numbers won't be known until November, after the final deadline for students to withdraw from classes, governors heard.

In his report to governors, college president Neil Fassina said that "efforts are underway to curb the inflated deficit to a value more in line with the approved deficit before year-end".

Like all B.C. post-secondary institutions, Okanagan College is normally required to balance revenues with expenses. But the government has granted permission to run a deficit, in Okanagan College's case of up to \$5.3 million, because of challenges associated with COVID-19.