



BUTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY



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PRESS RELEASE

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FORMER CHICO STATE ACCOUNTING PROFESSOR SENTENCED IN GRAND THEFT SCHEME

A former Chico State professor and department chair was sentenced in Butte County Superior Court today in a case where he submitted numerous fraudulent expenses to the University.

Butte County Superior Court Judge Michael Deems, however, declined to send **Timothy Kizirian**, 54, of Chico, a former tenured professor, and chair of the Department of Accounting in the School of Business, to county jail despite the recommendations of the prosecution and probation department. The judge instead sentenced Kizirian to 90 days in jail but suspended that time pending the successful completion of a two-year term of probation.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said the case stemmed from an internal University investigation into extensive financial irregularities in the department while under Kizirian's direction. Kizirian's employment at the University was terminated after an independent arbitrator found Kizirian engaged in egregious malfeasance and overall unprofessional conduct in order to satisfy personal goals and desires.

Ramsey said the University's investigation alleged approximately \$1.12 million had been spent over a period of several years on items such as duplicate compensation, gift card purchases, fraudulent mileage claims, improper travel, and personal expenses – including meals, hospitality, gifts, and unreported absences.

In addition to his felony plea entered on March 30, 2023, Kizirian stipulated to criminal restitution in the amount of \$26,627.01. In a victim impact statement presented to the court, Chico State University noted that Kizirian's actions irreparably harmed not only the University, students, taxpayers, and donors but also the community that considers Chico State's credibility and reputation as a source of pride and economic vitality. (See attached.)

This stood in stark contrast to Kizirian's statements to the probation department wherein he took no responsibility for his actions and instead claimed he was the subject of employment discrimination by the University.

Ramsey said the charges in the felony criminal complaint against Kizirian represented a small

subset of the activities revealed by the University's internal auditors. Ramsey said the majority of the activities discovered by the University auditors represented situations where Kizirian exploited lax oversight by the University. Ramsey noted many of these discoveries were not by themselves illegal or were situations where evidence was insufficient to obtain a criminal conviction.

Ramsey said Kizirian had faced up to three years in jail. The probation department recommended a term of ninety days in the Butte County Jail as a condition of a two-year probation. The prosecution noted to the judge that this was a "teaching moment" and jail time would serve to demonstrate there should be consequences for theft.

The judge, however, citing the disgraced professor's lack of a criminal record, decided to sentence him to 90 days in jail, but suspend those days if Kizirian followed conditions of probation to commit no further violations of the law and attend a theft awareness class. Ramsey said Kizirian paid the restitution of \$26,627.01 and a court fine of \$409 on a credit card on his way out of the courthouse.



Timothy Kizirian