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PRESS RELEASE

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Prior Chico State Embezzler Charged with New Embezzlement

A Chico man, previously convicted of embezzlement from Chico State, was in court today facing new charges of embezzlement from a Chico optometry business.

Daniel Hicks, 47, of Chico, appeared in Butte County Superior Court and was arraigned on a grand theft by embezzlement charge.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said Hicks is accused of embezzling \$39,941 while he worked as an accounting and benefits coordinator at a local Chico optometry business from January 2019 through July 2025.

Ramsey said the theft was discovered after the business received an anonymous letter in July 2025 urging them to conduct a more thorough background check on Hicks. This revealed Hicks had sustained a prior embezzlement conviction from Chico State in 2018.

The business then conducted a forensic audit, which uncovered a significant discrepancy between the cash collected by the business and the amounts Hicks reported as deposited into company accounts on an ongoing, systemic basis. Hicks was terminated from the business, and the Chico Police Department conducted a criminal investigation.

In 2018, Hicks was convicted of grand theft by embezzlement from his previous employer, Chico State. In the Chico State case, Hicks used debit card transactions to fraudulently transfer funds into his personal bank accounts. Hicks was placed on three years of felony probation and, as conditions of his probation, was ordered to serve 90 days in jail, pay a \$2250 fine, and pay \$54,374 in restitution to Chico State.

Hicks did not make significant payments towards the restitution owed to Chico State before the end of his probation in 2021, and the debt has since been referred to Central Collections with the Butte County Treasurer. The amount owed has increased to \$86,256, with statutorily required interest.

Ramsey cautioned employers to conduct thorough background checks on all employees entrusted with their companies' finances.

After his arraignment today, Hicks was remanded to Butte County Jail on \$100,000 bail, with an order that any money posted for bail be first examined by the judge to determine whether it is from a legitimate source prior to his release.

Hicks' next appearance will be on December 31, 2025 for further arraignment.

