

2017 Block 5 Project

Staff Service Awards: How to meaningfully recognize staff for their years of service and contributions to the college

In Block 5 of the 2016-17 academic year, 11 members of Colorado College staff convened as a Block Project team to evaluate and reimagine the Tiger Service Awards recognition program for employee service. The mission of the team was twofold: 1) review the current service recognition program; and 2) evaluate and recommend the expansion of employee recognition among all staff across campus. Members of Block 5 Project team included Block Project team leader Cari Hanrahan (Enrollment), Allison Kendrix (Student Life), Karen Britton (Academic Administration), Stella Mainar (Advancement), Jason Stewart (Academic Administration), Karen Tassey (Finance and Administration), Jessica Bridge (Finance and Administration), Stacey Stevens (Student Life), Josh Ortiz (Finance and Administration), Felix Sanchez (Communications), Rick Swan (Athletics).

The current CC Tiger Service Awards is the primary, campus-wide employee recognition program that routinely honors staff members for their years of service at Colorado College. Staff service is celebrated in 5-year increments beginning at 5 years of service, and are recognizing at all-staff events, like Spring/Fall Conferences and In The Loop. Small cash stipends (\$10/year of employment) as well as keepsakes are bestowed upon the recipients.

Programs that provide consistent and positive employee recognition are cornerstones for staff well-being, contribution, productivity, and retention. While the Tiger Service Awards is an established tradition at Colorado College, employee perception and feedback on the program has created the opportunity to evaluate its merits and the level of value that the recognition and associated incentives (cash and keepsakes) provide. The opportunity begs the following questions: if the Block Project team could rebuild the Tiger Service Awards from the ground up, what kind of program would be in place? What kind of remunerations would make an employee feel that their dedication and contributions make an impact on the college, and would help them remain invested in working as a CC employee for many years to come?

Before reimagining a new program(s), the Block Project team delved into research regarding the nature and success of other employee recognition programs. Members of the team studied the following: 1) an inventory of awards/recognition programs currently provided and available to CC staff; 2) a review of recognition programs at our peer institutions; 3) a review of businesses and organizations in the Front Range area that employ similar numbers of employees as CC; 3) large companies that recruit and retain a fair number of employees considered to be “Millennials;” and 4) expert literature on best practices for employee recognition.

Staff Awards at CC: Beyond the Tiger Service Awards, there are not many awards for which general staff are eligible, nor others that honor staff members for their length of service. The newly created President’s Leadership Awards honor staff contributions to diversity, collaboration, and innovation efforts, with a commemorative plaque and cash awards of \$2,500 given to one staff member or team for each award. Individual offices that present an award to any staff member include the Butler Center, the Office of Campus Safety, and the Office of

Alumni and Parent Relations. In addition, staff members are eligible for recognition at Honors Convocation through several awards, for which faculty members are also eligible.

Overall, most offices provide peer-to-peer recognition programs for staff in the form of “shout-outs,” birthday celebrations, gift cards, or verbal acknowledgement. One department, Facilities Services, has created a very robust recognition program by bestowing up to 6 awards each year to employees in their own division.

Peer Institutions: Out of CC’s 15 peer institutions, only 5 responded to our request for information about their employee service recognition programs. The institutions that responded also recognize employee service in 5-year increments, and most provided a catalog from which staff could purchase items of their choice with a gift card of a certain amount. Examples of distinction include a program at Oberlin College where staff employed 25 years or longer are invited to a special dinner at the president’s house; and at Occidental College, a special recognition program was created to celebrate exemplary contributions of staff employed 3 years or less.

Local Colorado Businesses: We researched business from Colorado Springs to Fort Collins. These included: Entegris, New Belgium, Otterbox, Jr. Achievement, Colorado Springs Utilities, Memorial Hospital, Penrose Hospital, Progressive Auto insurance, World Area, Olympic Training Center, Gazette. We found these businesses to utilize everything from tiered recognition programs, to gift cards, to all-expenses-paid trips for longevity.

Large Companies that Employ Millennials: Reports show that Millennials in the workforce crave recognition often, to be praised by peers, and for their rewards to be personalized — no one-size-fits-all options. Large companies like Google, AirBnB, Apple, Nike, and Netflix attempt to meet these expectations by creating innovative recognition programs. Google has a multi-tiered employee recognition solution where peers and managers reward on-the-spot behavior with bonuses, and work teams receive free trips for successful projects. Apple and Netflix reward staff based on performance and effort, not for years served; so much, in fact, that the culture of Apple asks the question, “How many projects have you worked on?” versus “How many years have you worked here?” Nike provides generous paid sabbaticals and encourages employees to fulfill a goal, build a skill, or do research while on leave.

Expert literature: A literature review of 12 different studies noted that companies with the best staff retention also had recognition programs that set aside 1-3% of their Payroll Budget for recognition alone. Two studies summarized many of the points found. A Forbes report in 2012 indicated these five best practices for employee recognition: 1) Make recognition easy and frequent; 2) Recognize people based on specific results and behaviors; 3) Implement peer to peer recognition - not top down (less political, more social); 4) Share recognition stories (recognize someone more publicly, regularly); and 5) Tie recognition to your own company values or goals.

In addition, a 2015 Globeforce study found that “values-based employee recognition is seen as significantly contributing to bottom-line organizational metrics.”

- Values-based recognition programs are helping employers create a stronger culture and a more likeable workplace.
- Companies are able to point to recognition as an initiative or program that is yielding important, measurable results for them in areas such as employee happiness, retention and Return On Investment.
- Organizations that invest in employee recognition and years of service programs experience better results.

In light of its findings, the Block Project team acknowledges the opportunity to expand the Tiger Service Awards and employee recognition beyond this one program, as well as the need to implement other innovative initiatives. Our recommendations are based on three key drivers: 1) **increase the value of recognition**; 2) **strengthen the culture of value-based recognition**; and 3) **personalize the recognition experience**.

The following report outlines these recommendations in fuller detail. In summary, they include a three-tiered recognition program that is outlined below:

- 1) **Prowler Props**
 - Create a staff-staff recognition program called **Prowler Props**
- 2) **Divisional Awards**
 - Provide the ability for offices/divisions to create their own rewards program, modeled after the Facilities Services awards called **Divisional Awards**
- 3) **Tiger Service Awards**
 - Add awards for staff at 1 and 3 year markers
 - Increase the monetary value of Tiger Service anniversary stipends
 - Offer personalized rewards, including mini-vacations

From here, we'll jump right into Tier 1 of our award system, Prowler Props (aka, Staff-to-Staff recognition).

PROWLER PROPS

Purpose: To foster a sense of team and camaraderie, we see a need for a new campus-wide staff recognition that we are calling Prowler Props. (Please view “Final Comments” for breakdown of finances.)

- Each year staff are allotted 3 gift cards in the amount of \$25 that they may award to another staff member in appreciation for the work they’ve done
- Supervisors would be given an additional 3 \$25 allotment (6 total)

Process:

- Staff submit their Prowler Prop via an online form
 - Name and department of person submitting the Prowler Prop
 - Name and department of person receiving the Prowler Prop
 - Give a brief summary of why you are recognizing the individual
 - An email is sent to the person receiving the Prowler Prop and their supervisor is copied
 - The email will include
 - The name of the person giving the Prowler Prop
 - The reason why they are being recognized
 - A link for the recipient to choose their \$25 gift card or “Gold Card Plus” dollars (money that can be loaded to the recipient’s gold card and spent where the Gold Card Plus is accepted)

Example of a Prowler Prop:

Name and department of person submitting the Prowler Prop: Jason Stewart, Academic Administration

Name and department of person receiving the Prowler Prop: Josh Ortiz, Finance & Administration

Brief Summary: The recent hurricane winds knocked down 6 full-grown trees in the quad; and without hesitation Josh Ortiz led his crew in quickly clearing those trees from walkways without harm to staff, faculty, or students. Additionally their quick thinking of how to dispose of the trees allowed members of the CC community to take the downed trees home to use as firewood free of charge. These quick efforts of Josh Ortiz contributed to the safe and beautiful grounds that CC strives for as well as being mindful of CC’s sustainability efforts.

\$25 Gift Card Selection ideas:

Downtown Partnership	Red Robin	Subway	Loyal Coffee	Barnes & Noble
King Sooper’s	Olive Garden	Red Lobster	Wild Goose Meeting House	JC Penney
AMC Movies	Regal Movies	Carrabba’s	Urban Steam	Macy’s
Starbucks	Nordstrom	Home Depot	Iron Bird Brewing Co	Bed Bath & Beyond

Sears	Shell	Marshalls	Fieldhouse Brewery	Old Chicago
T.J. Maxx	P.F. Chang	Amazon	Bingo Burger	Applebee's
Kohl's	Target	McDonalds	Skirted Heifer	Meinenger's

\$25 "Gold Card Plus" Dollars Good for:

Rastall's Cafe
CC Bookstore
Benjamin's and Colorado Coffee are located on the main floor of Worner
Preserve is located in the heart of the Western Ridge complex.
The C-Store offers a variety of snacks, frozen dinners, and other grocery store items is located on the lower level of Mathias Hall.
Wooglin's Deli and Cafe , located on Tejon street across from Spencer.
7-Eleven at 310 W. Uintah and 825 N. Nevada Avenue
Chipotle Mexican Grill at 17 S. Tejon Street
Dale Street Bistro Cafe at 115 E. Dale Street
Domino's Pizza at 330 N. Wahsatch Avenue
Hunan Springs at 24 E. Kiowa Street
Laaus Taco Shop at 830 N. Tejon Street
Bingo Burgers 123 N. Tejon Street
Poor Richard's Restaurant at 324 1/2 N. Tejon Street
Roadrunner Pizza and Pasta at 3113 N. Hancock Avenue
Josh & John's 111 E. Pikes Peak Avenue

If a staff member wishes to recognize a member of Bon Appetit:

Their program is called "Be A Star" in which employees can be nominated. If a staff member would like to submit a nomination for the "Be A Star" program, they can write up a nomination note and submit it to Randy Kruse. (Note: Employees are also recognized at the unit level for a job well done.)

DIVISIONAL AWARDS

Purpose: Staff recognition at the divisional level is desired and necessary to create an environment that fosters workplace excellence. Guided under that premise, we propose a recognition/rewards program that is encouraged and financed at the institutional level, with funding distributed based on the number of staff in each division (please view “Final Comments” for breakdown of finances).

Process: Each division is responsible for developing and administering their own recognition program that correlates with their division’s goal and reinforces their core values. While each division has the flexibility to structure their recognition program as they see fit, we recommend the following 4 criteria:

- 1) Individual performance is recognized, and/or team project successes
- 2) Awards are representative of the division’s mission and core values
- 3) Formal recognition occurs at least twice per year
- 4) One of the awards recognizes an employee that has been at the college for less than 3 years

The actual award could be anything including cash, trophies, lunches, hours/days off, etc. Yet, it is important to note that our research found that rewards of \$1,000.00 or more have the greatest impact on employee retention.

Example of a current divisional award program on-campus:

Semi-Annual Excellence Award

Description:

This award recognizes a division team member, who, for the past six months has demonstrated and embraced the division’s mission to provide excellent customer service to all members of the college community as well as our off-campus customers.

Nominations:

It is recommended that all employees of the Division nominate a team member. We ask that you submit an email with a brief paragraph supporting your nomination, to include examples as appropriate. Here are a few criteria, not all-inclusive, to consider when making a nomination:

- Continuously provides excellent customer service
- Listens well and communicates in a fair, straightforward, open, and timely manner
- Contributes to improve our business processes
- Displays and practices exemplary behavior at all times
- Always ready to assist
- Values team success
- Demonstrates an exceptional proficiency and quality in their work
- Consistently exceeds expectations
- Takes initiative to get things done and puts in extra effort

Selection:

Nominations are to be submitted to the Division head by email, with a description of why your nominee is the best candidate for this award, by the 1st working day of November (*for the Fall award given at our last meeting before Winter Break*), and by the 1st working day of May (*for the Spring award given at the last meeting prior to the fiscal year end*). Final determination of the awardee will be made by the division head and the division head's direct reporting managers.

The Award:

- 1) Half day paid leave at the discretion of their supervisor
- 2) Division "Trophy of Excellence"
- 3) A \$1000 gift (*which will be taxable income to the recipient*)
- 4) Acknowledgement of the award recipient posted on the division website

TIGER SERVICE AWARDS

For the third tier of the recognition program, we recommend altering the Tiger Service Awards. As our research showed, waiting to recognize employees until 5 years of employment misses the opportunity to recognize quality talent. These individuals may then choose to move on to other organizations, a phenomenon that is common for millennials. In addition, employees who have shorter-term employment, such as Residential Life Coordinators, are missed when waiting to recognize service at 5 years. By recognizing service earlier, organizations have an opportunity to invest in and retain these employees. Lastly, we received feedback regarding the lack of meaningfulness and usability of the gifts. For these reasons, we recommended service awards start at 1 year, occur again at 3 years, at the 5 year mark, and every 5 years thereafter with each milestone receiving \$100 per year of service. Certain milestones will receive an extra benefit. Please see below for our full recommendation:

Service Awards

- 1 Year
 - Employee receives \$100 based on one year of service.
- 3 Year
 - Employee receives \$300 based on three years of service.
- 5 Year
 - Employee receives \$500 plus a two-night stay at a local hotel of choice. These could include The Broadmoor, The Great Wolf Lodge, Mt. Princeton Hot Springs, Art Hotel in Denver.
 - The College would coordinate a vacation package deal at pre-picked hotels in the area given to the employee as a gift certificate.
- 10 Year
 - Employee receives \$1000 based on 10 years of service, plus a two-night stay at a local hotel of choice.
- 15 Year
 - Employee receives \$1500 based on 15 years of service, plus a two-night stay at a local hotel of choice.
- 20 Year
 - Employee receives \$2000 based on 20 years of service plus a two-night stay at a local hotel of choice.
 - Employee has the choice whether to switch out the hotel vacation package for \$750 flight certificate
- The above (20 Year) award would continue to be awarded every 5 years of service with the additional \$100 per year added to the award.

Final Comments, Including Financial Details

The research surrounding successful retention and work environments in big companies, peer institutions, and local companies overwhelmingly show evidence that awards, direct recognition for particular projects, and staff-to-staff awards make up the right formula to foster the type of working environment we hope to achieve at Colorado College. By implementing all three levels within Colorado College, we will build a community of support, retention and excellence.

The remaining question is: *What will this cost Colorado College?* Research shows that companies with the strongest retention set aside between 1 -3% of their Payroll budget for staff recognition. We’re recommending setting aside a maximum of 1.5% with a minimum of 1%. The details are laid out below.

We are utilizing the fiscal year 2016 actual staff salary expenditures.

Current Known Colorado College Recognition Spending

All Staff Payroll (FY 16)	\$29,143,323.72
Current Tiger Service Award spending	<\$10,000.00
Presidential Leadership Awards cost	\$7,500
Percent of Payroll Budget used for the above awards	0.06%

Projections for 3-Tiered Recognition Program (Prowler Props, Divisional Awards, Tiger Service)

Tier 1	Prowler Props	\$64,425.00
Tier 2	Tiger Service Awards (money)	\$115,000.00
Tier 2	Tiger Service Awards (vacation package)	\$25,000.00
Tier 3	Divisional Awards	\$87,188.23
	=	\$291,433.00
	=	1% of Payroll Budget

We understand that this will be a costly adjustment for the college. Therefore, we recommend the college gradually implement the proposed three-tiered approach over time. We suggest first altering our current Tiger Service Awards to reflect the frequency, updated value, and added vacation packages proposed In Tier 3, Tiger Service Awards, by the end of FY 2017. We hope the college will then see the benefit of adding, perhaps with slight adjustments to the current operating budget or with donations, Prowler Props by the end of FY 2019, and Divisional Awards by close of FY 2021. If the college finds that utilizing 1% of the payroll budget is not sustainable, we recommend implementing the full Tiger Service Awards adjustments, an abbreviated version of our Tier 1, Prowler Props, and nudging divisions to consider adjusting their project recognition awards to reflect the values noted in Tier 2, Divisional Awards.

Thank you for reading our report, and we look forward to hearing what you decide!

-The 2017 Block Project for Block 5 Team