

Spring 2024-5 End of Year Report and Five-Year Plan from the Staff Salary Committee – Presented as part of the Compensation Committee’s full report.

AliciaRose Martinez, Patty O’Halloran, Erica Shafer, Thecla Shubert, Sam Soren, and Mandy Sulfrian

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Introduction:

The compensation committee had a productive and exciting year. We welcomed new members, Patty O’Halloran, Erica Shafer, and Sam Soren on the staff side. We also had an opportunity to establish a welcome and fruitful collaboration with HR’s new Director of Total Rewards, Cameron Martin, whose expertise and ideas have made the work of the committee significantly easier. We are delighted that our campus wide collaborations have continued to be so strong and are equally excited to continue to welcome new members to the committee in the coming year.

This report summarizes our work this year and, per our charge from the Campus Budget Committee, provides a five-year plan for compensation. **Please note that compensation changes for the 2026 fiscal year and the July raise will be announced in May. At the time of writing this report, these changes have not been finalized. We will release an addendum to this report after these changes are finalized.**

Thank you to *everyone* who has supported our work, collaborated with us, or provided feedback. We appreciate your continued support and engagement and hope you likewise find this report helpful.

Spring projects and recommendations:

During the Spring semester the compensation committee worked on three projects; dental coverage, housing, and benefits/communication. We’ve included a summary of our work in each area below:

Dental [Recommendation]

- **Argument for Adding Employee Orthodontia Care to Benefits:**

Adding adult orthodontic care for benefits eligible employees and their spouses/eligible partners to the college's dental benefits package represents a small but meaningful step toward creating a more equitable and competitive benefits offering for our staff and faculty. Upon review, it is clear that Colorado College's self-insured dental plan already compares favorably with the Delta Dental Plus Premier plan, which should be considered the gold standard due to its extensive coverage (being the largest dental insurance company in Colorado). However, to bring CC's dental plan in line with this gold standard and ensure we are meeting the diverse needs of our current employees, adult orthodontic care should be added.

- **Equity Considerations:**

One of the strongest arguments for including adult orthodontia in our benefits package is the principle of equity. Historically, many employers have not offered adult orthodontia coverage based on the assumption that employees received adequate orthodontic care during childhood. This assumption is flawed, as it overlooks various socio-economic factors, including access to healthcare, financial ability, and cultural norms, that influence whether employees had orthodontic treatment when they were younger. From an *ADEI* perspective, this assumption is inequitable. It unintentionally creates a divide between employees who were able to access orthodontic care in their youth and those who were not.

Furthermore, this disparity is even more pronounced when considering the benefits extended to employees' children. While employees without orthodontia coverage receive no assistance for their own orthodontic care needs, they may still be contributing premiums that help assist with orthodontic care for other employees' dependents. This policy creates an inherent inequity within the benefits structure, making it clear that offering adult orthodontic coverage is a necessary adjustment to ensure all employees are treated equally under the plan.

- **Cost Considerations:**

Adding adult orthodontic care is not an astronomical cost for the college, especially when weighed against the benefits of improved employee satisfaction, retention, and wellness. The estimated cost to modify the dental plan is approximately \$60,000, a reasonable investment to ensure fairness in the benefits offered. The college is already anticipating a 5% increase in dental premiums to meet next year's claims spend projections. Adding adult orthodontia coverage would require the college to slightly double the premium increase to 10%. The additional monthly cost per employee is modest, ranging from \$0 (for single plans) to \$4.30 per month (for family plans).

By adopting this small increase in premiums, the college can offer a significantly more equitable dental benefit that includes adult orthodontia coverage. This change would not only bring CC's dental benefits closer to the gold standard, but it would also demonstrate the institution's commitment to supporting the diverse needs of its employees in a meaningful way.

- **Market Competitiveness:**

It is also important to note that about 50% of Delta Dental employer insurance programs already cover adult orthodontia. This makes the inclusion of adult orthodontia in our benefits neither uncommon nor unreasonable. Offering this benefit would help position the college as a more competitive employer within the market, appealing to prospective employees who may be weighing multiple offers and looking for comprehensive benefits packages.

- **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, adding adult orthodontic care to the college's dental plan is a cost-effective, equitable, and competitive move that would enhance employee satisfaction and retention. It addresses an important gap in our current benefits offerings, creates a more inclusive environment for employees of all backgrounds, and demonstrates the college's commitment to supporting the health and well-being of its entire workforce. With a modest increase in premiums, the college can move toward providing a more comprehensive, fair, and appealing benefits package that better serves its employees.

Housing

For the past few years, the compensation committee has grappled with the issue of affordable housing for CC staff and faculty. We've included a summary of our research and possible opportunities for the college.

- **Affordable Housing in Colorado Springs:**

Wendy's Village: housing project in Harrison SD2 focused on serving district educators.

- 40 one-bedroom units (~352 sq. ft. each) located on school-owned land
- \$825/month rent, with first and last month's rent waived
- \$10.6 million project with no taxpayer or district funds
- Built in partnership with We Fortify, a local nonprofit housing developer

Bentley Commons: affordable housing project in Southwest Colorado Springs serving low to moderate-income residents.

- 192 total units (168 new + 24 renovated), including one, two, and three-bedroom apartments
- Income-restricted for residents earning 30%–60% of Area Median Income (AMI)
- \$64 million project spearheaded by nonprofit coalition GPR Properties (Greccio Housing, Partners in Housing, Rocky Mountain Community Land Trust)
- Amenities such as a community clubhouse, fitness and computer centers, playgrounds, gardens, and trail access
- Built near Hancock Expressway & Astrozon Blvd to address housing shortages in a rapidly growing area

- **Opportunities for Colorado College**

Use of College-Owned Land

- Explore underutilized property (micro-units, tiny homes, duplexes).
- Housing near campus or within community-oriented developments

Partnership with local nonprofits

- Work with organizations like We Fortify, Greccio Housing, or Rocky Mountain Community Land Trust, City of Colorado Springs
- Leverage external funding to reduce the college's direct financial burden

Tiered Housing Support

- Provide rent subsidies or housing access for lower-paid staff, early-career faculty, or essential service roles
- Income-based

Enhance Total Compensation

- Frame housing assistance as part of a broader compensation and benefits conversation.
- Appeal to prospective employees by offering security and affordability in housing.

Benefits and communication

We were charged by the CBC to “*familiarize committee members with employee benefits and consider how to help faculty and staff get the most of value out of current benefits. Create a communication plan to assist with informing the community on benefits.*”

The compensation committee had the pleasure of working with a student group who was also evaluating this issue for a class project. We were given permission to share the results of our 2024 survey with them. Key findings from their report include:

- Continuing and expanding communication through email
- Continue one-on-one benefits counseling through HR
- Offer more workshops and onboarding training
- Regularly survey the staff and faculty
- Improve the HR website and consolidate information
- Build an AI chatbot to answer benefits questions

The committee largely agrees with the students’ findings. We spoke with Cameron Martin and Gina Lujan about this issue and likewise identified a few key areas of improvement:

- In addition to updating the HR website, also update the benefits portal and staff handbook to ensure they have the most up-to-date information and are consistent across the board
- Increase advertising for open forms, benefit fairs, and other events
- Consider targeted events such as the previous Excel at CC on tuition benefits as a way to hone in on specific subjects
- Consider the development of other promotional materials such as flyers and videos

Many of these projects will rely heavily on the capacity and expertise of the HR staff. The committee remains prepared to assist or consult upon request.

Five-year plan:

Our five-year plan is composed of two sections: salary and additional non-salary goals.

Salary plan:

Using an estimated inflation rate of 2.488% (rounded to 2.49% for calculations), as projected by [Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis](#), we recommend the following increases over the next five years:

LIVING WAGE							
	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030 AVERAGE
Inflation	2.9	2.49	2.49	2.49	2.49	2.49	2.49
MIT	\$23.03	\$23.88	\$24.47	\$25.08	\$25.70	\$26.34	\$27.00
EPI	\$22.12	\$23.92	\$24.52	\$25.13	\$25.76	\$26.40	\$27.06
Average	\$22.57	\$23.90	\$24.50	\$25.11	\$25.73	\$26.37	\$27.03
Difference (Average)	1.33/4.65		\$0.60	\$0.61	\$0.62	\$0.64	\$0.66
Total annual expenses - estimated by taking the total number of employees below living wage and calculating the difference from the previous years living wage. Actual numbers will be somewhat lower.							
Number of employees impacted			164	176	184	196	222
Annual Cost			\$204,672	\$223,308	\$237,286	\$260,915	\$304,761
ACROSS THE BOARD PROGRESSION (Inclusive of Structure Movement - calculated at 2% each)							
Percent		4.4	4	4	4	4	4
Total Comp	\$40,000,000	\$41,779,000	\$43,450,160	\$45,188,166	\$46,995,692	\$48,875,519	\$50,830,539
Increase		\$1,779,000	\$1,671,160	\$1,738,006	\$1,807,526	\$1,879,827	\$1,955,020
							\$1,805,089
MIDPOINT PROGRESSION							
	\$600,000	\$1,100,000	\$1,600,000	\$2,100,000	\$2,600,000	\$3,100,000	\$3,600,000
		\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
							\$500,000
TOTAL anticipated per year			\$2,375,832	\$2,461,314	\$2,544,812	\$2,640,742	\$2,759,781
*All numbers rounded to the nearest second decimal							
*Projections currently assume that 2024-5 recommendations are accepted							

Broadly speaking, we recommend that the college continue the salary structure recommended in 2024-5. For too long, the staff have not had any consistency or predictability around salary on a year-to-year basis. We firmly recommend that the college, as much as possible, maintain a set, transparent, and predictable structure comprised of three parts: *

- **Living wage** – a raise to all employees below the living wage metric for that fiscal year. This is in line with our compensation philosophy which states: *We pay our benefits-eligible employees a living wage and work to get all others as close as possible.*
- **Midpoint progression** – a raise that accelerates employees to their midpoint in such a way that they reach that point by no later than their fifth year of employment in a given position. This is in line with our compensation philosophy which states: *We provide professional development and career advancement opportunities.*
- **Across the board progression** – a raise that includes funds to move the band structure and to provide a raise to all employees within their band based on inflation. In our 2024-5 recommendation this was broken into two categories (structure movement and across the board progression) but for ease of communication/administration and to mirror our faculty counterparts we have combined these categories into one. This is in line with our compensation philosophy which states: *We provide compensation (pay plus benefits) that is internally and externally equitable.*

We believe that enacting a consistent compensation plan will help us develop and truly refine a set of best practices – rather than trying something brand new every year. We also believe that this will improve retention, loyalty, and a sense of financial security for employees. Certainly, economic events or extraneous circumstances may require deviances from this plan we have laid out, but we are confident

that should such circumstances arise the CC community and future compensation committee will be well prepared to innovatively address these issues in a way that preserves our values and priorities.

As described in our fall recommendation, we also believe that these measures would support our ADEI commitment.

**For additional details on each of these three items, including rationale and how they should be implemented, please see our 2024-5 recommendation.*

Discussion of Cost

We are recommending, on average, a \$2,556,496 increase in staff compensation each year for the next five years. We recognize that this number is high but believe that the compensation initiatives are deeply important

If the college is unable to meet this number, we would recommend compromising by cutting the across-the-board progression to a lower percentage which makes up the largest estimated cost.

However, we also feel that it is important that the college takes steps to reduce our reliance on tuition for compensation. We do not wish to over burden students with prohibitive expenses, but we still believe that the college needs to take bold action to improve our compensation, and *especially* to support living wage and career progression through the midpoint adjustment. To this end we recommend that the college consider budgetary cuts to help fund compensation. We ask that, as necessary, the college consider cutting costs in the following ways:

- Evaluating the necessity of backfilling vacant positions in order to ultimately reduce the size, and therefore expense, of our staff.
- Cut staff and faculty facing programming such as lunches, entertainment, open bars, and decorations at events, receptions and parties. Although we understand that these can play an important role in community and culture building, we also believe that there are ways to cut costs without completely compromising or eliminating these events. We believe that this is an effective way to save money without compromising our core mission or student experience.
- Audit expenses and effectiveness of student programming. CC has a history of “overprogramming” and offering many competing or underattended events. We ask that CC carefully define what we want an experiential liberal arts education to look like and consider how student facing events support this goal and whether they have adequate student buy in to support the programming/event. We also ask departments to more closely partner with our events staff to ensure that we are not overscheduling or scheduling conflicting events. We believe the student experience is key, but we also believe that it is incredibly important that the college is a good steward of our financial resources, as well as our time and energy.
- Ask departments to adopt an incremental budget strategy, such as the one being rolled out this year. Also ask departments to prioritize endowed funds over operational funds to cover their expenses so we can utilize unrestricted funds for compensation
- Carefully evaluate expenses through an ADEI lens and specifically consider whether expenses are going towards unnecessary indicators of prestige or if they are actually supporting our mission, values, the student experience and, especially supporting the diversity of CC’s student body.

We recognize that each of these issues will be contentious and subjective but urge the college administration and community to recognize the necessity of tradeoffs to adapt to the changing economic

landscape and to properly financially support the staff and faculty who facilitate the operations of this institution. We also encourage our community to recognize the great privilege and financial freedom we have, especially compared to our public institution peers, and to consider how we can be more mindful and conscientious stewards of that privilege and resources. Should the occasion for cost cutting arise, we recommend that the CC community be consulted and invite others to share their perspectives and ideas as well. We recognize that this is a decision with a substantial impact and no one person should be in charge of making it.

Additional Goals:

Over the last few years Colorado College has made some major improvements to our benefits, including adding fertility treatment, improving leaves and PTO, and this year's updates to our medical insurance. Our 2024 survey revealed that staff feel our benefits are one of the most attractive incentives to working at CC. To this end, when looking at total compensation and our goals for the next five years, we recommend that the college and subsequent compensation committees focus the majority of their efforts on competitive pay and implementing a clear and consistent raise structure, as described above.

With this in mind, we have just a few additional goals for the next five years. We have not set specific deadlines for these goals but ask that each year the compensation committee review these goals and incorporate them into their annual work.

Merit Pay:

In our [Fall 2023-4 report](#), the compensation committee cautioned the college against rolling out merit pay (sometimes referred to as pay for performance) without laying the necessary groundwork to make this a success. It has come to our attention that the cabinet and board of trustees are still interested in implementing a merit pay program. The committee still feels that the college needs to address some existing inequalities and areas of weakness in order to make merit pay successful. Before we tie pay to performance, it is *especially* vital that the college ensures that our supervisors are prepared to have productive, constructive, and equitable performance conversations. Over the next five years the compensation committee should assist (as needed) the college in implementing the following:

- **Supervisor training.** Currently at CC, there is a wide disparity in the supervisory experience. To ensure equity, we recommend ongoing mandatory supervisor training be implemented on the following topics:
 - How to have a performance conversation and how to give constructive feedback
 - Building a positive and supportive work culture for your team/office/department
 - General expectations
 - Benefits and support for your employees
 - Career competencies (see below)

For faculty supervisors we specifically recommend that they be given an additional training that highlights staff expectations, processes, and policies that they might otherwise not be aware of (For example – timesheets, meal and break periods, ITL, and new employee programs, etc.).

- **Career competencies.** We support the college's effort to develop a set of standard career competencies which can be used to evaluate staff performance and shape career development plans. We recommend that these career competencies be fully implemented prior to the roll out of merit pay.

- **Review and standardization of titles and job descriptions.** Part of an equitable performance review system must include a clear mutual understanding of the employees' duties and responsibilities. To help facilitate this, we recommend the college conduct an audit of job descriptions and titles to ensure they are accurate and consistent. We also recommend auditing supervisory positions to ensure that everyone with direct reports has the proper qualifications and skills to be in a supervisory position. We recommend the college restructuring as needed to ensure that we have the most competent supervisors. We also recommend that the college establish clear criteria for what experience a supervisor needs to be hired.
- **Implementation of 360 feedback practices.** We recommend that the college implements some type of 360 feedback practices. We recommend this process is conducted once a year and also includes peer/horizontal reviews in addition to supervisor/supervisee or vertical reviews.
- **Alignment and calibration.** We recommend that HR be closely involved in the review process and meet with supervisors and division leads to ensure that the process is conducted in alignment with the standards established by the college. We believe this will help ensure that evaluations are equitably administered.
- **Tie to band placement/career advancement.** We believe it is important to build on existing salary structures and to work to create consistency in the way annual pay increases are administered. Therefore, we recommend that any merit pay be tied to midpoint progression and contribute to an employees career advancement. If we keep in mind Ryan Simmon's "learning, doing, leading" system, it makes sense that someone in the beginning of their career/band (or the "learning") stage be recognized more substantially for exceptional performance than employees who have greater tenure and experience in their role and may therefore may easily accomplish these standards.

Evaluation:

We recommend that the compensation committee continues a regular evaluation process in order to accurately understand and represent the needs of our community.

- **Survey every two to four years.** We recommend that the compensation committee conducts a survey every two to four years, as appropriate given the unique needs and projects of the committee. Our 2024 survey was highly successful with over 300 responses, and we believe that this is a valuable way for the committee to gather feedback. The committee should plan on allowing them significant time to process the data and should spread their surveys out so as to not fatigue the community.
- **Listening sessions.** The compensation committee has established a precedent of holding listening sessions throughout the year, including informal sessions during ITL breakfast and a series of more formal sessions throughout the summer. We recommend that subsequent committees continue this as it has proven a great way to engage directly with our community.
- **Equity Audits.** Assist in addressing any concerns raised by HR's equity audits, as needed.

Benefits:

While we recommend that the majority of the college's focus be on salary, we also recognize that benefits are an important part of total compensation. As aforementioned, we recommend that over the next five years the committee continue to support HR with improving communication around our benefits. We also recommend the committee continue working on the projects we started this year, including any additional

improvements to the dental plan, as detailed above, and further evaluation of the research on housing and research on GLP-1 medication.

Communication, Transparency, and Training around Compensation:

- We recommend that all staff receive training in how compensation is determined, how positions are placed in bands, and career competencies/growth at CC. We also recommend that CC improve transparency and communication around compensation. A few small things, like posting a person's bands and quartile in Banner, sending total rewards letters, etc, would greatly improve these areas. We also recommend that the college consider publicly publishing *all* positions job descriptions and bands to help with transparency, career planning, and equity. This would largely mirror the transparency policies that our public institution peers are required to follow.

Response to the 2021 five-year plan:

In 2021 the compensation committee crafted a five-year plan. While we have been asked to revisit that plan this year, we still wanted to take this opportunity to briefly respond to the items we included in Year 3 (2024-5) of our original five-year plan.

- Develop and administer a new survey of staff members
 - The compensation committee opted to address this item the previous year and have instead spent 2024-5 working off the survey results from the previous year.
- Propose the creation of a reserve crisis fund to mitigate the financial burdens of events like the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - The committee was informed by the Campus Budget Committee that such contingency funds already exist.
- Evaluate the College's benefits package and develop a plan for revision as needed
 - Our committee has made a number of recommendations around benefits over the last few years. See "Spring Projects and Recommendations" above for information about this year's recommendations.

We accomplished the goals and priorities established by our 2021 committee peers. The items listed in our 2021 five-year plan for years 4 and 5 have already been completed so this will be the last time we refer to this document. Going forward, we expect to refer to the five-year plan established this year (above).

Response to 2023-4 established goals:

We would like to take a moment to respond to the goals laid out by the 2023-4 committee for this year:

- Carefully consider our recommendation to include a few key items and be mindful of not "over recommending"
 - This year we focused on four key areas of compensation and were able to produce a condensed recommendation that met the requirement on our charge from the Campus Budget Committee to be five pages or less. This report is slightly longer, but we hope the Campus Budget Committee will excuse this as we felt it was important do our five-year plan justice.
- Conduct market research and consider compensation trends

- We conducted extensive research when considering how to respond to the spike in living wage last year. We also consulted the Economic Research Institute for information about expected trends in compensation. Cameron Martin, Director of Total Rewards, also was generous enough to lend his expertise and help the committee with a number of questions while also providing significant assistance with data and calculations. Finally, we conducted research on how our recommendation contributed to our broader ADEI goals.
- Improve onboarding for new committee members
 - Prior to working on our fall recommendation, we had two onboarding meetings with new members – one in which Ryan Simmons presented about the compensation structure and one in which continuing members presented on the history and previous work of the committee. This year we have a number of members ending their term, so we also used the Spring semester to craft a compensation committee guide and compile a number of reference materials. These materials are stored internally on our Teams page.

Conclusion:

Thank you for your time, consideration, and collaboration. Please keep an eye out for our addendum with more details about the upcoming July compensation changes. We invite you to reach out to any of your committee representatives with questions, concerns, or feedback. We also will be hosting listening sessions this summer which are a great way to engage with the committee in person.

Sincerely,

AliciaRose Martinez, Patty O'Halloran, Erica Shafer, Thecla Shubert, Sam Soren, and Mandy Sulfrian