2022-2023

COMMUNITY COLLEGE COMPENSATION TALKING POINTS

WACCT
WYOMING ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEES

An investment in community colleges is an investment in local communities and an investment in people who deliver a valuable service.

As the state expects more from community colleges and colleges desire to remain important centerpieces in their communities for the workforce and economic development, colleges have confronted greater challenges with recruitment and retention of faculty and staff. Some assume that local revenues and tuition increases can be better used to compensate college staff without a State Aid increase. This argument is based on false assumptions, as community colleges do not receive "extra" dollars in local property taxes or tuition. Both of these revenue sources fluctuate, and property taxes in particular can be highly volatile in many college district communities.

While FY2022 property tax revenues are finally back to pre-pandemic levels,their impact is diluted by high inflation on all the colleges over the last few years, and by property taxes being down in recent prior years.

In its FY2023-2024 State Aid budget request, the colleges and the Commission did request $19.2 million for salary increase funding for college employees to get these staff to the market midpoint for 2020 pay levels. While grateful for the $8.45 million received by the colleges from the Legislature for salary increases, this amount is significantly insufficient to address most recruiting and retention challenges. In the current ultra-competitive environment and with higher-than-expected inflation, this appropriated amount barely keeps the colleges stable at salary levels that are already lower. The current inflation and competitive job market indicate that significant salary funding is still needed. Colleges face these staffing issues:

- Wages are not keeping pace with inflation, nor are they still competitive. As the full request was less than half funded, we are now two years further behind.
- Hiring pools of qualified applicants are shrinking.
- Competing regionally and nationally for talent both in public settings and private, for-profit settings.

The colleges use local, state, and regional compensation benchmarks to set pay ranges and to place new hires within those ranges. Budget reductions have put further strain on existing employees, including low state unemployment and inflation as contributing factors. On average, community college starting faculty salaries are $5,500 below starting high school teachers, based on aggregated statewide salary data. Without sufficient action to continue to chip away at salary erosion, colleges may have to dip into reserves, a short-term fix, or may need to re-prioritize services and required staffing needs.

Governor Gordon recommended $8.1M in additional community college compensation effective April 1, 2023 (the WCCC requested $8.5M).

WHAT WILL THE COLLEGES DO IF THE STATE CANNOT SUPPORT WAGE INCREASES THIS YEAR?

Some colleges will attempt to mitigate the cost of new hires by a slight wage increase taken from college reserves to meet the short-term need, yet fail to address wage compression effects. The rest of the colleges will continue the current course with no increases as budgets are already strained, creating further inequities among college employees statewide.