

COLA for All – Frequently Asked Questions

What is “COLA FOR ALL”?

A campaign started by the SLC Chapter of the AAUP advocating for an annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) as the minimum measure required to address declining salary values at the college. A petition in support of “COLA for All” was signed by 168 members of the faculty.

Would “COLA FOR ALL” include guest faculty? If so, why?

Yes. All teaching faculty deserve a COLA. Guest faculty are currently ineligible for any salary adjustment or increase until after their 10th year at the college. This means that the largest group of faculty at the college have seen the largest decline in salary value. This is unacceptable.

What about staff?

We advocate COLA FOR ALL employees of the college.

Does the COLA FOR ALL campaign only consider cost-of-living for this year?

No. As the petition states: “Annual adjustments have fallen far behind inflation, resulting in a 12% decline in tenure track salaries and a 19% decline for most contingent faculty salaries over the last 5 years...” COLA FOR ALL requires a policy to address past, present, and potential future declines in salary value.

Won’t COLA give raises to those whose salaries are already competitive?

COLA isn’t a raise. It is an adjustment that prevents decline in salary values.

Does the COLA FOR ALL campaign suggest we not address inequities among faculty?

No. As the petition states: “Addressing the broader issues of salary compression and suppression will require further measures, but COLA for all is the foundation of any lasting compensation policy.” It is false to assert that there must be a choice between COLA and additional measures. COLA is merely a starting-point.

What happens if inflation is zero or negative?

Inflation fluctuates. But the average is roughly 3%. A common way to insulate salaries and the budget from this variation is to commit to an annual COLA up to 4% and not below 2%. Such a commitment would not only build salaries in times of low inflation but also allow the College to withstand spikes in inflation.

Why did the faculty wait until December to demand COLA FOR ALL? Why aren’t they adhering to the governance structure of the college?

We didn’t and we are. The Faculty Bylaws grant CCT and Advisory, not PPC, the authority to review salary scale and budget. Following a poll that showed a majority of faculty favored COLA (among other policies), CCT met with Advisory last spring and proposed it. Despite agreeing with the basic findings of CCT’s research, the President chose instead to charge a new subcommittee, whose basic findings only add more evidence in support of CCT’s.

Don’t you appreciate the work of the PPC?

We do! But if SLC is to truly acknowledge “the fundamental role that compensation plays in employee morale and satisfaction and its direct impact on employee engagement” then getting employees to 10% below the mean is not enough. Neither can it pay for those below that floor by neglecting to maintain the salaries of others. The policy doesn’t live up to its own philosophy.

The administration is proposing something concrete about compensation. Why are faculty questioning it?

That’s what responsible faculty and staff do! The proposal has many virtues, especially the goal of identifying a floor for many employee salaries—but it is neither concrete nor applicable to all employees.

Won’t salaries keep up with the inflation rate if, as the policy proposes, our salaries keep pace with those at comparator colleges and universities?

There’s no guarantee. The proposal’s philosophy states that “the College strives to provide each employee with a fair and competitive total compensation package” but the operative principle is competitiveness. In the current landscape, tying ourselves to peer institutions may be a race to the bottom. The College should instead be guided by principles of dignity and security for its employees.

COLA FOR ALL

Proposed Compensation Policy Revision

Faculty Meeting - Tuesday, February 20, 2024

In order to stop further decline in salaries due to inflation,

The SLC Compensation Policy Goals should include an annual percentage increase equal to or greater than the annual Federal Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) for all employees at the College.

While additional measures are required to address salary equity, this amendment puts a stop to further loss of value for all salaries

