

Staff Pay Explained: What Would Have Changed, and Why Staff and Faculty Objected

By Declan Bradley

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Over the last several weeks, Reed College staff and faculty have raised ongoing objections to the college's proposed changes to the staff compensation system. These changes have since been placed on indefinite hold for "further review." As several audience members noted at Tuesday's staff meeting, the proposed changes have often been somewhat technical and opaque. It is my hope that, by presenting our team's conclusions from a week of data analysis in R, we will be able to further clarify the effect these changes would have on Reed staff. We understand, of course, that this is both incomplete and rushed, as breaking news often is, and we welcome any and all corrections from staff, faculty, or administration. Shoot us an email, or stop by editing night, and we'll do our best to update this story as we learn more.

A Note on How We Obtained This Data

This analysis is based on a series of four files posted to the Reed HR website: staff-pay-ranges.pdf, job-titles-and-grades.xlsx, non-exempt-grades.xlsx, and exempt-grades.xlsx. Three of these four files have since been taken down, and only job-titles-and-grades.xlsx remains, but the *Quest* is working from locally saved copies. Upon close examination of the data, *Quest* reporters discovered that two of the files, exempt-ranges.xlsx, and non-exempt-grades.xlsx, contained secondary data tables titled "Exempt Ranges - Hidden" and "Non-Exempt Grades - Hidden," respectively.

These two hidden tables appear to contain data on proposed pay ranges for grades 11-17, which staff had requested at Tuesday's staff meeting and been denied (see this week's story on that meeting). The *Quest*'s working theory is that, at some point, someone working on a large Excel project intended to export only a single sheet tab, likely "Exempt Ranges" or "Non-Exempt Grades," but instead accidentally exported and published the entire Excel project, including the hidden tables.

After consulting with lawyers from the Student Press Law Center, the *Quest* has decided that in light of staff questions on the matter, we have an obligation to publish this data.

We would like to make clear that none of our reporters engaged in unprofessional tactics or attempted to gain access to confidential information. These are the exact files that Reed HR published on their own website, and anyone with an internet connection had access to them for several days before they were taken down. Nevertheless, as a concession to privacy concerns, the editorial board has decided not to publish the raw data tables or source code — as we do in other data-driven stories — and instead will only refer to the data in visualizations and generalized ranges for each pay grade.

First, it's important to correct a misconception that I've heard from several other students, and which I myself held before I started reporting on the story: namely that this change would somehow affect pay for faculty. It would not. These changes are to staff compensation only, although many faculty have been advocating on behalf of staff, as they did at last week's faculty meeting.

How, then, would staff pay change? Under the previous system of staff salaries for 2021-22, according to the PDF released by HR, staff were paid within a minimum-maximum pay range defined by position, where each position had its own range.

**Note: The Difference Between Staff and Faculty.*

Faculty refers to "academic personnel" — typically professors, researchers, or others directly engaged in teaching and learning at a college or university. Staff refers to all employees of the college that are not faculty (think HCC personnel, etc).

However, under the proposed new system, multiple positions could be lumped into a single "Pay Grade," giving them a shared pay range of maximum and minimum pay. Note that this would increase the minimum pay for some positions, but decrease the maximum for others, although HR has assured staff that there will be no reductions in current salaries, even if a staff member's current pay would have exceeded

their new maximum pay.

This means that, under the proposed system, compensation for some positions would have been capped below current levels, while others would have had their ranges extended. As seen above, the *Quest* calculated aggregate data on changes to minimum and maximum pay for employees in each new pay grade and found that a majority of employees (roughly 103 of the 183 positions listed in HR documents) would have been affected by decreases to their maximum pay caused by being sorted into newly created pay grades 4, 5, and 6. Pay Grade 3's maximum pay would have declined the most, while Pay Grades 7, 8, 9, and 10 would have seen their maximum pay increase.

On the left, we provide a more granular view of the data broken down to the level of individual positions. Note that the median for overall changes in both maximum and minimum pay appears at first to hover near or above zero. Still, the decreases in pay pulling the 1st quartile below zero fall disproportionately on lower pay grades like 4, 5, and 6.

Between them, the salaried staff members sorted into pay grades 4, 5, and 6 stand to lose more than \$37,690 in collective annual earning potential. This statistic does not include the hourly employees in this or other grades, who are not depicted in the above charts due to scale constraints and the difficulty of projecting their earnings onto an annual metric.

Meanwhile, compensation ranges for the upper-level grades in the proposed pay-scale system remain high. While the HR department likely did not intend to release this data, the "Hidden" tables contained in the file packages published on the HR website provide data on Pay Grades 11 and up, including what appears to be the highest grade, Grade 17, at \$309,100 to \$494,600 a year.

As a result, the proposed system could further stratify an already stratified pay system for staff. According to Reed's 990 financial disclosure forms from 2019, which the *Quest* obtained through ProPublica, the college's highest-paid employee that year was Vice President Hugh Porter, at \$435,935 a year, while President Audrey Bilger received \$304,592. This confirms that these hidden data tables are likely correct since the upper-level pay grades correspond at least roughly to the 2019 pay for upper-level employees. It also implies that, if the data is accurate, the college's compensation range for its highest-paid employees has likely increased over the last four years, and would continue to do so under the new system.

As seen above, a shift to compensation under the proposed pay system would further stratify staff into fixed pay categories, but it would also standardize pay across departments and positions. Note that in most grades, such as Grade 5, individual positions can be seen shifting from a chaotic distribution, spread out across the x-axis by role, to a more uniform one in which all job positions in a given grade share endpoints. HR representatives have cited "internal pay equity" as a justification for the original development of this plan, and this could be seen as evidence to that effect.

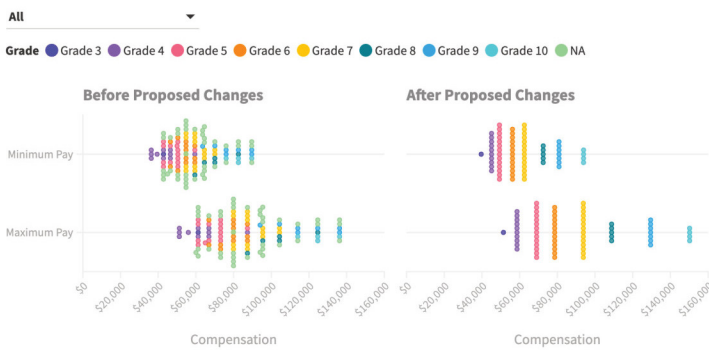
However, note also that, according to the publicly released Excel sheet of job titles and grades, it is possible for multiple employees holding the same position and job title to be placed into different pay grades, and receive different compensation ranges as a result.

For example, at right, the table references five distinct Directors of Student Life, three of whom are assigned to Grade 6, another to Grade 7, and the last to Grade 8. While one of three Grade 6 Directors is listed as "live-in," it is not immediately clear why this would not make them eligible for higher compensation than the other two, nor what distinguishes the Grade 7 and Grade 8 Directors from the first three.

Opaque details like this are part of what have driven staff and faculty objections to the proposed system, with staff at Tuesday's meeting expressing confusion, and one faculty member saying that they "could not make sense of" HR communications. Regardless, staff outcry has led to a pause in the "compensation project," with Vice President of Finance Lynn Valenter and President Audrey Bilger apologizing to staff, while confirming that the proposed changes had been placed "under review until further notice." We await further updates on this situation and the future of staff compensation at Reed.

Reed College Staff Compensation by System

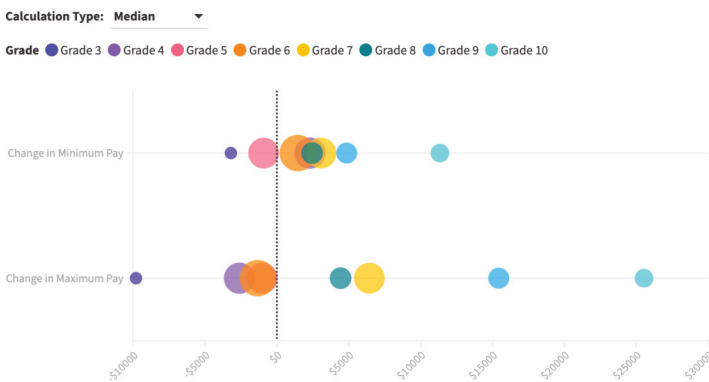
Data from Reed HR Website; Since Taken Down



Note: 40 of the 136 employee references contained in the staff-pay PDF were not listed in the corresponding job-titles-and-grades file. Since this leaves the *Quest* with no information as to their pay under the pay grade system, these employees are represented only on the left hand side of this chart. This should not in any way be taken to imply that the college will employ fewer staff after these proposed changes, or that these employees with NA pay grade are affected any more or less by these changes than other employees, as the *Quest* simply has no data on this group.

Change in Minimum and Maximum Pay By Pay Grade

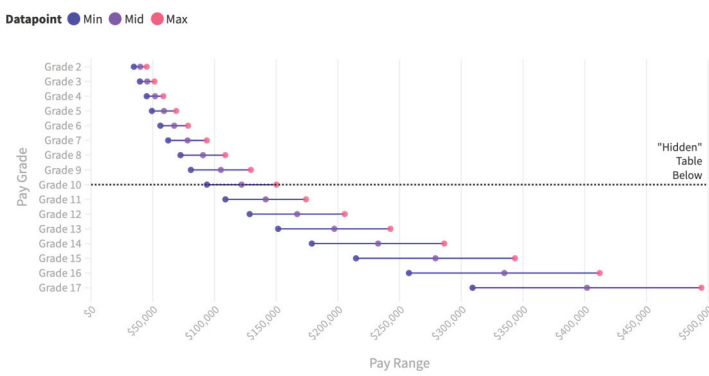
Sized by reported number of employees in each pay grade



Source: Reed HR Website; since taken down • Note: 40 of the 136 position references contained in the staff-pay PDF were not listed in the corresponding job-titles-and-grades file, to the best of our knowledge. Since this leaves the *Quest* with no information as to their pay under the pay grade system, we cannot calculate their change in pay, so they are not represented in this chart.

Reed College Pay Ranges by Grade Under Previously Proposed System

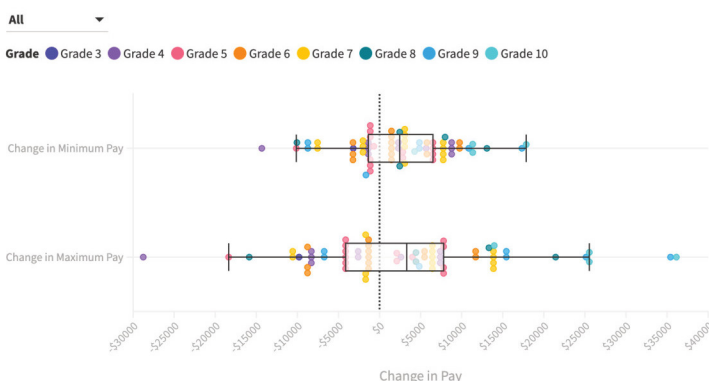
Data from Reed HR website; since taken down



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Change in Minimum and Maximum Pay by Position

Data from Reed HR website; since taken down



Source: Reed HR Website • Note: 40 of the 136 position references contained in the staff-pay PDF were not listed in the corresponding job-titles-and-grades file, to the best of our knowledge. Since this leaves the *Quest* with no information as to their pay under the pay grade system, we cannot calculate their change in pay, so they are not represented in this chart.

Senate Beat Wage Review Happened

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those out," said Pandey. The Appointments Committee (AppCom) recommended Bose Hewitt to Station Manager, Gregory Mack to KRRC Engineer, and Lily Garvey to Record Librarian, all of which passed unanimously within the Senate.

Senator Meera Balan ('26) and Senator Xixi Dukes ('26) reported that they had scheduled a meeting with Commons and a few Jewish students on campus to discuss their plans for making Commons food more kosher-friendly. Senator Balan is also currently working with CSO Gary Granger to make a map outlining the places that are dark on campus, in order to install better lighting.

Canyon Day this year is on April 1st. "No, it's not a joke," said Senator Dukes.

Additionally, Senator Dukes formally requests people to "stop kicking down my door" concerning HUM 110 about Pancho Savery. Dukes is aware and is already scheduling a meeting with the Office of Institutional Diversity. "I'm working on it, I promise," Dukes said.

Once the Senate concluded their business, they opened up the floor to business from the audience.

A member of the audience expressed their concerns about the lack of scales in the drug locker. Reportedly, there are testing strips in the locker, but otherwise, the locker has been empty for the last few weeks or so. "Thank you for bringing that to our attention," said President Zenger. "It's really important because those scales exist for a very important reason. They really should be there so people have every and all opportunity to use safely."

In the audience, Rowan Frost, the Program Director for Sexual Health, Advocacy, and Relationship Education (SHARE), shared related information specific to the Health and Counseling Center (HCC). The HCC offers needle exchanges Wednesdays and Fridays from 3 to 5 pm, where anyone can walk in, and no information is taken. Whether it's drugs or diabetes medication or hormones, syringes, and safe injection supplies — as well as fentanyl test strips — are available at the HCC during open hours. Regarding the test strips, specifically, "You don't have to talk to anyone, you can just take the strips," said Frost.

Additionally, Frost encourages everyone to become educated about the use of Narcan. Students can make an appointment at the HCC through the online health portal, selecting "Naloxone/Narcan appointment" in order to receive a brief 5 to 10-minute one on one informational session about it, as well as a prescription for Narcan. According to Frost, the copay on Narcan is usually not more than \$35. Students can also ask about Narcan if they are at the HCC for an unrelated appointment.

On behalf of SHARE, Frost also shared information about the "Take Back the Night" event that SHARE is organizing. The event has been done internationally since the early 70s, and was put together originally by local community activists as a show of support for women, who weren't able to walk safely at night. The event has since become an umbrella event to show support for survivors of sexual assault and violence. "Take Back the Night" will take place next Tuesday night (April 4th), from 9 pm to 11 pm, in Eliot Chapel. Survivors who attend will be offered a survivor's support guide. There will be people speaking on their own experiences, mostly on Reed's campus, and there will be advocates there to support them.

"Mostly what survivors need is the support of their friends and community," said Frost. "Please feel free to join, no one is required to speak."

SHARE will be hosting a table to make origami cranes, each one made with "a prayer and a wish of healing for a survivor." Students can stop by to make cranes and either leave them or take one with them. The table will also have a banner where students can write messages as a show of support for survivors.

The Highs and Lows of Pay Grade Assignments

INCREASES

Largest Increases to Maximum Possible Pay

- 1) Assistant Director of Human Resources (+\$36,137)
- 2) Associate Dean to the Office of Institutional Diversity (+\$35,442)
- 3) Director of Admission; Director of College Relations Operations and Informations Systems; Director of Risk Management and Environmental Health and Safety; Nurse Practitioner; Psychologist Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (+\$25,541)
- 4) Assistant Controller (+\$25,135)
- 5) Assistant Dean of Institutional Diversity (+\$21,436)

Largest Increases to Minimum Possible Pay

- 1) Assistant Director of Human Resources (+\$17,857)
- 2) Associate Dean to the Office of Institutional Diversity (+\$13,069)
- 3) Assistant Dean of Institutional Diversity (+\$21,436)
- 4) Director of Admission; Director of College Relations Operations and Informations Systems; Director of Risk Management and Environmental Health and Safety; Nurse Practitioner; Psychologist Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (+\$11,345)
- 5) Assistant Controller (+\$10,856)

DECREASES

Largest Decreases to Maximum Possible Pay

- 1) Art Collections Manager and Exhibitions Coordinator (-\$21,334)
- 2) Art Director (-\$18,365)
- 3) Studio Art Technical Director (-\$18,364)
- 4) Art Gallery Director (-\$15,859)
- 5) Director of International Programs (-\$15,478)

Largest Decreases to Minimum Possible Pay

- 1) Art Director; Studio Art Technical Director (-\$10,131)
- 2) Art Gallery Director (-\$10,055)
- 3) Art Collections Manager and Exhibitions Coordinator (-\$9,645)
- 4) Director of Corporate Funding and Government Support; CIS Director; Title IX and 504 Coordinator (-\$8,730)
- 5) Clinical Case Manager; Staff Counselor; CIS Associate Director (-\$7,544)