

Dr. Oberlander,

We appreciate your prompt response to our initial communication expressing our concerns regarding the implementation of the compensation study for the Diesel, Welding, Machining, and Electrical (TEC) faculty salaries. Career and Technical Education (CTE) holds an integral position in equipping our students for the constantly evolving job market. The proficiencies cultivated through CTE programs are not only invaluable but also in great demand. As the CTE faculty, we are wholeheartedly dedicated to delivering the highest quality education to our students.

However, the outcomes of the compensation study, along with the subsequent meetings, which regrettably failed to provide an acceptable explanation, have left us with a sense of undervaluation and unacknowledged contributions. When the CTE faculty met with our Dean, the CFO, Interim HR Director, and VP of Academic Affairs, our anticipation was to receive a transparent account of how our positions were determined and how our commitment to the college would be recognized. Unfortunately, none of us received a satisfactory explanation. This left us with a prevailing sentiment of being unheard, with no genuine effort to grasp the essence of our message.

Our institution's success and the success of our students are closely tied to our faculty members' expertise, passion, and dedication. Therefore, attracting and retaining top talent is a shared priority, essential for the continued growth and success of our institution. In addition to emphasizing the importance of competitive compensation as outlined in previous correspondence, we wish to emphasize the recognition of industry experience in our compensation structure. Most of our faculty members bring extensive industry experience to the classroom, enriching our students' education with real-world insights and practical knowledge.

By developing a compensation scale that acknowledges and rewards years of industry experience brought by our CTE faculty members; we not only attract seasoned professionals but also highlight our commitment to excellence in education. This move will empower our institution to bridge the gap between theory and practice, ensuring that our students are well-prepared to meet the demands of their chosen industries. If we want to be the best we need to attract and retain the best, we are competing with industry that typically pays 2 or 3 times what our current salary structure allows. The very students that we are training to enter the workforce are often accepting positions paying more than our current tech faculty. The scenario where students, in their initial year in the industry, earn more than their instructors not only fails to make our CTE faculty feel appreciated but may also prompt them to reconsider their commitment to the field of education.

The most current data we found was sourced from Wyoming Workforce website years 2007 – 2018. Percent of graduates working in Wyoming in Year relative to graduation as follows:

- Diesel Technicians starting in the industry are making \$81,161 median wage their 1st year out of college and \$114,518 median wage after 5 years.
- Industrial Electricians starting in the industry are making \$92,237 median wage their 1st year out of college and \$117,057 median wage after 5 years.
- Welders starting in the industry are making \$85,496 median wage their 1st year out of college and \$103,059 median wage after 5 years.

- Machinists starting in the industry are making \$65,073 median wage their 1st year out of college and \$84,556 median wage after 5 years.

After reviewing these numbers, current faculties salaries are below many of these benchmarks. This issue also compounds with wage compression and inadequacies in hiring practices. We have brought on new employees making similar or greater wages than employees with time and experience in. Having tenured staff making similar or less money than newly hired employees with less experience and qualifications is a poor practice and contributes to an unfavorable work environment.

As we shifted from NWCCD employees to GCCD, we had strong hopes that industry experience would be factored into our compensation, like it had at NWCCD. While GCCD touts that it has completed a compensation study to create a competitive salary structure for all employees, our new faculty step scale does not appear to be competitive to NWCCD's new step scale. This is not only the college that we have decided to split from, but the closest community college to us geographically. The split from Sheridan promised to give us better opportunities.

While we acknowledge the 4% cost of living increase, it barely scratches the surface considering the relentless surge in inflation rates. Governor Gordon's April 2023 release highlighted that the average inflation rate in Northeast Wyoming hit 9.25% in 2021 and a formidable 8.0% in 2022. Projections for 2023 indicate an anticipated inflation range of 3.7% to 4.0%. This culminates in an approximate total inflation rate of a staggering 20.95% over this period. In stark contrast, faculty salaries at NWCCD saw an average increase of merely about 2.0-2.3% in the falls of 2021 and 2022. Consequently, faculty members who stood by the district before this witnessed a total salary increase of a paltry 8.6% during a time when inflation skyrocketed to 20.95%. This underscores that faculty who made the transition from NWCCD to Gillette College now wield about 12.35% less purchasing power than they did a mere three years ago. While the administration at Gillette College may boast that everyone received a raise, let it be clear: a 4% increase is woefully inadequate for faculty to merely sustain their current standard of living.

Our mission as a community college is to help address the shortage of skilled workers within our community. Our role as faculty extends beyond the confines of our campus, and by providing quality CTE education, we contribute significantly to equipping our community with the highly skilled workforce it urgently needs. There are not only shortages locally for welders, diesel technicians, machinists, and electricians but nationwide. This community college was supposed to be a tool to support our community by helping to fill these gaps.

The morale of all TEC employees is at an all-time low. It feels as though technical education, which is unarguably a pillar of this institution, is receiving little priority of the administration. While we love teaching and mentoring students, we also would like to have some input on how policies and procedures of the new district are formed. None of us have been asked for our opinions on what we want the new college district to look like. We are told to join committees to bring forth our concerns and ideas. It feels as though the concerns these committees have brought forward go unanswered or lack proper feedback from administration. This is supposed to be a shared governance institution, but it is a proving to be an authoritarian style top-down organization.

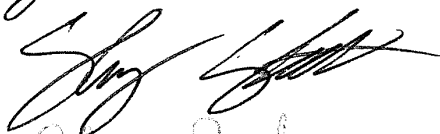
In conclusion, on behalf of The Career and Technical Education Faculty, we urge your support and consideration in creating a compensation package that aligns with our institution's goals and values. This package should reflect both academic qualifications and the invaluable contributions of industry-

experienced faculty members who are dedicated to the success of our institution and the betterment of our community.

The resolution we demand is a concrete proposal that clearly incorporates not only years of teaching experience, but fair valuation for industry experience as well in the calculation of CTE faculty salaries. This proposal must be the cornerstone for instigating a fresh contract, one that distinctly reflects this vital salary adjustment for the esteemed CTE faculty. This is not a mere request, but an imperative that ensures each of us possesses the clarity necessary to make an empowered decision regarding our future with Gillette College. We insist on a substantive response to this demand by the close of business on Monday, October 16th, 2023. Our determination on this matter is resolute and unwavering.

Sincerely,

Joseph Gingerich, Diesel Technology
Sky Stitt, Diesel Technology
Nick Wilson, Diesel Technology
Jared Vance, Electrical Technology
Tony Giest, Machine Tool Technology
Troy Miller, Welding Technology
Christina Redman, Welding Technology



Christina Redman



Troy Miller

