

Alamo Colleges trustees raise hourly minimum wage to \$15

Alia Malik

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The Alamo Colleges District board of trustees Tuesday night approved a living wage of \$15 per hour for full-time workers and large raises for the lowest-paid part-time and work study employees, an act to further the district's agenda of upward socioeconomic mobility in San Antonio — and help students who juggle paid jobs.

The \$15 hourly wage represents a 30 percent increase over the current minimum in the district of five community colleges.

The minimum hourly wage for part-time and temporary employees — including work-study and other student workers — went up to \$12.50. That's a 39 percent raise for work-study employees and a 25 percent increase for other part-time and temporary workers.

All the raises take effect Sept. 1. New full-time employees will be hired at a minimum hourly rate of \$14.70, so existing employees can keep the benefit of seniority.

"We're pleased," said Linda Boyer-Owens, associate vice chancellor of human resources, after the vote. "It's the first step in what we need to do for market competitiveness."

Boyer-Owens submitted the proposal to the board along with Chancellor Mike Flores and Diane Snyder, vice chancellor for finance and administration. They said the raises, along with financial aid, could help the district's lowest earners take classes that advance their careers and improve their economic situations long-term.

Most qualify for full financial aid, but it's common for them to work multiple jobs, Boyer-Owens said.



Mike Flores meets with attendees at a Hispanic Chamber luncheon last October, shortly after his appointment as Chancellor of the Alamo Colleges.

Photo: Josie Norris /San Antonio Express-News

“You don’t have time to go to school even if school is paid for,” she said.

A large hourly raise from the Alamo Colleges could help them set aside time for classes.

“It really opens their lives so they can participate in higher education,” Boyer-Owens said.

In a document outlining the change, the three administrators wrote that raising the wage floor “supports the economic and social mobility of the families of the lowest paid members of the Alamo Colleges District workforce and the persistence of a growing body of students” employed part-time at the colleges.

“We felt it was very important, as one of our priorities of the budget, to address some of these equity things to really be able to deal with living wage as a key strategy within our compensation,” Snyder told the board’s audit, budget and finance committee earlier this month.

The **COPS/Metro Alliance**, a community organizing coalition, has for years pushed local public entities to adopt a minimum “living wage” of \$15 hourly as part of a national movement. The Alamo Colleges had already raised its minimum wage, along with the City of San Antonio, Bexar County and some public school districts, with the stated intent of moving gradually toward the \$15 goal. The city and county reached \$15 last fall.

About four years ago, the Alamo Colleges District raised its minimum wage for full-time employees from \$10.12 to \$11.50 per hour. Part-time and temporary employees were brought to \$10 per hour and the minimum for work-study employees became \$9 per hour.

The Alamo Colleges District employs about 2,400 paid staff, not counting faculty. This year’s proposed round of raises affect 146 full-time employees and 420 part-time or temporary employees. Based on current employment levels, administrators estimated the change will add about \$914,000 to budgeted expenditures next fiscal year, including associated increases to benefit costs.