



Faculty Questions directed towards the President and Provost for moderation at faculty senate meeting:

Question 1. Last week, the Washington Health Care Authority (HCA) distributed the Change in Plans notification outlining 2024 health care premiums and benefits in anticipation of open enrollment (attached).

There are some startling discrepancies that profoundly impact Vancouver faculty and staff enrolled in the Kaiser NW plans (which is the only Kaiser plan available in SW Washington, as distinguished from Kaiser WA, which is for employees in the rest of the state).

I've pasted some premium comparisons and rates of increase in the table below my signature, but to take a representative example, within **Kaiser NW Classic**, an employee, spouse, and child(ren)'s rates will increase from \$483 to \$910/month (from \$5,796 to **\$10,920 per year**, an increase of **+88%**). This is not at all covered by the 2% raises faculty will receive this year. In the past, someone seeking to reduce costs might opt for the lower premium, high deductible option (**Kaiser NW CDHP**), but here the rate increases are truly astronomical! (2023 = **\$948** in premiums per year plus up to \$3,200 deductible, to 2024 = **\$6,432 - \$9,632**, depending on out-of-pocket expenses, an increase of **+578%**. And no, I didn't omit a decimal point!). (By comparison, the highest rate increases for Pullman employees are +36%.)

The only other alternative is the Uniform Medical Plan (UMP), but – in addition to the difficulties in changing from the Kaiser system to the open market (transferring medical records, shopping for a new doctor) – due to the doctor shortage in SW Washington, it may be truly difficult to find physicians who are accepting new patients. All the more so if employees depart Kaiser in great numbers all at once, due to astronomical price increases!

How did this happen, and what is WSU doing to make sure that employees have access to affordable health care in SW Washington? Who is bargaining with Kaiser on our behalf?

Monthly Premiums	2023	2024	increase
Kaiser NW Classic (SW WA + Oregon)			
Employee	\$172	\$331	+92%
Employee + Spouse	\$354	\$662	+87%
Employee + Children	\$301	\$579	+92%
Employee + Spouse + Child(ren)	\$483	\$910	+88%
Kaiser NW CDHP (w/ family deductible)	(\$3000)	(\$3200)	
Employee	\$25	\$195	+680%
Employee + Spouse	\$60	\$390	+550%
Employee + Child(ren)	\$44	\$341	+675%
Employee + Spouse + Child(ren)	\$79	\$536	+578%



UMP Classic (shop for your doctors on open market within preferred provider list)			
Employee	\$135	\$124	-8%
Employee + Spouse	\$280	\$248	-12%
Employee + Child(ren)	\$236	\$217	-9%
Employee + Spouse + Child(ren)	\$381	\$341	-10%
UMP CDHP (shop for your doctors on open market within preferred provider list): high deductible	(\$3000)	(\$3200)	
Employee	\$29	\$35	
Employee + Spouse	\$68	\$70	
Employee + Child(ren)	\$51	\$61	
Employee + Spouse + Child(ren)	\$79	\$96	

By comparison, this is what Pullman/Spokane/Everett employees are paying for their Kaiser WA plan:

Kaiser WA Classic (state-wide except SW WA)	2023	2024	increase
Employee	\$167	\$226	+35%
Employee + Spouse	\$344	\$452	+31%
Employee + Child(ren)	\$292	\$396	+36%
Employee + Spouse + Child(ren)	\$469	\$622	+32%
Kaiser WA CDHP (state-wide except SW WA)	(\$3000)	(\$3200)	
Employee	\$25	\$26	4%
Employee + Spouse	\$60	\$52	-14%
Employee + Child(ren)	\$44	\$46	+4%
Employee + Spouse + Child(ren)	\$79	\$72	-9%

- *How did this happen, and what is WSU doing to make sure that employees have access to affordable health care in SW Washington?*

Kasier Permanente representatives provided the following reasons for the increase in premiums during a Public Employee Benefit Board Meeting:

- *Inflation and supply chain disruptions,*
- *Increased demand for care for services following the lock-down and pandemic,*
- *Labor shortages for hospital and providers, and*
- *Provider challenges because of pressure on costs to deliver care.*

WSU Benefits personnel have had conversations with Health Care Authority, the administering agency for our state benefit package about this. It is expected the state will be requesting Requests for Proposals to see if the insurance plans can be extended to offer more options in future plan years, with most likely that occurring in 2026, since this process normally takes 18 months.



Additional HRS Benefits has held two information/educations so far for SW Washington personnel discussing their other options, which consist of three UMP plans. We plan to offer more sessions for this group specifically, as well as system-wide during the months of October and November to provide resources and address questions. So far benefit comparisons have been discussed, as well as resources for searching for new medical providers under that plan (links available under the FAQ's on the [OE website](#).) Performing a primary care [physician search](#) for the Uniform Plan in that area, we see there are around 1900 providers listed as preferred providers within 25 miles of Vancouver.

- *Who is bargaining with Kaiser on our behalf?*

Health Care Authority is the state agency who negotiates the benefit package all Washington state higher education institutions and general government agencies.

Question 2. Please explain the rationale for delaying the faculty pay raise by 3 months and indicate how the appropriated funds saved from this practice were or will be expended.

The primary reason is 9 month faculty are not on appointment in the summer. Administratively central offices and college/campus administrative offices would have to do duplicate inputs/processes if we had the July effective date.

Additionally, the one-time savings helps make up the difference between the 2.3% raises that the university could afford based solely on the new appropriation and the 2.5% that we actually did. The University had to make up that .2% difference.