
Purdue Benefits

Q: The university works hard to provide employees with affordable benefits, yet at the last Senate meeting a notable issue was raised regarding AffirmedRX. Employees reported dramatic cost increases due to medication reclassifications, and administration advised contacting AffirmedRX, though those efforts appear to have yielded little change. Since the last Senate meeting, what steps has Purdue taken to re-negotiate with AffirmedRX or otherwise address these Pharmacy Benefit Manager decisions to restore more reasonable medication costs?

Purdue appreciates the thoughtful feedback received thus far on health benefits and is reviewing prescription coverage changes to enhance personalized support for those most impacted.

Employers across the country are facing the largest jump in health insurance costs in 15 years. According to consulting firm Mercer, 2025 will mark the fourth consecutive year of increases. While the national average for university health care has grown nearly 6% annually since 2017, Purdue's average increase has been just 2.1% — saving our employees an estimated \$79.5 million from 2016 to 2024.

The Board of Trustees annually reviews and approves Purdue's health plans by balancing the national trend of rising health insurance costs while also managing to fund at least 90% of health insurance premiums, compared to the Big Ten average of 82.8%, and cover 75% of total health care costs for employees. For the 2026 calendar year Purdue's total investment is \$171 million in health care costs, which is \$12 million more than the previous year. In 2025, employees are expected to pay \$600,000 more in health care costs while the university's medical spend is expected to increase nearly \$20 million. The university also added a one-time \$1,000 contribution to HSAs or HRAs to the 5,600 employees impacted by the changes, a total of \$5.6 million, to assist in covering the increase in medication costs.

In response to feedback from faculty and staff and to support accessible, affordable health care, Human Resources, along with the Board of Trustees, met with faculty and staff recently to further assess the impact of the transition to AffirmedRx as Purdue's pharmacy benefit manager and the changes to the 2025 and 2026 formulary. The university is grateful for the thoughtful input shared and has committed to reviewing the changes being made and providing continued outreach to employees and their families most impacted by the changes.

Free Speech

Q: In light of recent cases at other universities, such as a Ball State employee dismissed after social media posts regarding the assassination of Charlie Kirk, would Purdue act in a similar manner? Do Purdue faculty and staff still retain First Amendment rights to free speech?

What happens at another university has no implications to this university.

Purdue evaluates each situation on a fact-specific basis under the well-established “public employee speech doctrine” developed in the Connick–Pickering–Garcetti line of cases. Under this doctrine, even if an individual utterance were to be so abhorrent or inimical to our values as a campus community as to warrant public condemnation, our obligations as a public institution impose a higher threshold before condemnation of an individual’s speech could be extended to punishment.

When members of our campus community wish to express personal views on a matter of public concern, it is important for them to be clear that their opinions are being expressed in a personal capacity and not as representatives of the University. As our Policy on Institutional Neutrality states:

“Of course, recognizing Purdue University’s commitment to freedom of expression and its role as ‘the home and sponsor of critics,’ individual members of the campus community will always be free to express their views on a particular policy proposal or in a debate over a particular political or social issue, provided that such views or concerns are expressed in a personal capacity and do not purport to be official statements of Purdue University.

Q: Beyond reiterating Purdue’s established free speech policy, what specific legal protections or representation can faculty, staff, and students expect from the university in cases where defending freedom of speech and academic freedom becomes imperative?

Purdue’s free speech commitment is clear and unwavering: Commitment to Freedom of Expression - Purdue University.

Faculty/Staff Recruitment

Q: How is the proposed \$100,000 per year H-1B visa fee expected to impact Purdue's recruitment and employment of faculty? How will Purdue formulate a response to this measure?

At this time Purdue continues to recruit and employ faculty, staff and scholars as it has done in the past.

Enrollment Management System

Q: What improvements are being made in Purdue's enrollment management systems to ensure that quality applicants who cannot register at West Lafayette due to capacity limits are effectively directed to Fort Wayne and Northwest?

The Purdue Main Campus and System have long had measures in place to help prospective students find their best fit. Out-of-state admissions to Purdue's main campus are highly competitive—more so than ever before—and so each year, students, in state and otherwise, who apply but are not admitted receive a form offering to share their details with our Purdue Fort Wayne and Purdue Northwest regional system campuses.

Q: What steps is Purdue Fort Wayne taking to address declining enrollment? How will PFW work to improve public perception, including issuing more positive statements in the future to counter negative press?

Full-time undergraduate enrollment at Purdue Fort Wayne has been steady over the past 5 years. Student success, including academic advising, student support, underpinning technologies and the like continues to be the number one priority and investment area. For example, new for this academic year Purdue Fort Wayne has launched an Office of Student Success Initiatives.

IRB Transition to PERA

Submitted on behalf of multiple faculty members in HHS:

The IRB is making major adjustments as part of the transition to PERA. While the PERA transition is likely to come with many benefits to faculty, the transition itself has been challenging, with limited communication to faculty. Can the University address some of the concerns that are coming up as part of this process? For example:

Pending Protocols:

Q1: Faculty have been informed that pending protocols, including those mid-review, may be deleted as the system changes over. For studies with participants currently enrolled, this issue raises significant concerns about project continuity and human subject protections. It is unclear why Purdue is not "backing up" the current system while the new system is being built to prevent serious data losses.

We (the PERA team) understand your concerns and will find solutions to address them. Please note that Approved Cayuse protocols (including modifications and renewals) are automatically migrating to PERA. Purdue will retain full access to Cayuse through March 31, 2026 (after which we will still have read-only access for an additional three years.) We will provide individualized assistance to any faculty member who needs to move legacy Cayuse protocols (i.e., ones that were not automatically migrated) to PERA before 2026 via a PERA Faculty Support Team, information about which will be shared with deans.

Protocol Migration Process:

Q2: It is not clear how protocols will be migrated between systems. The integrity of IRB records is central to human subjects research. (1) Has the IRB piloted the migration process? (2) What safeguards will be in place to confirm that protocols transfer accurately? (3) Will any automated/AI tools be used, and if so, how will accuracy and confidentiality be protected?

Yes, the PERA data team has worked with IRB module owners to map Cayuse data into the new PERA smartforms, with 8 protocol transfer test runs completed and validated by Purdue project personnel after each run. We are now seeking additional faculty feedback on whether or not automation/AI tools should be used (and if so, with appropriate measures to ensure accuracy and confidentiality). The PERA team will be asking deans to nominate members of a faculty advisory committee to assist and advise in matters such as these.

Adverse Events and Incident Reports:

Q3: Faculty are uncertain about the correct process for reporting adverse events or incidents during the period when the IRB is “closed” and access to both the old and new systems is unavailable. This is a major issue for ensuring safe human subjects research on campus.

We (the PERA team) agree and Professor Jamie Mohler (AVP for Research Compliance) will be available to receive any reports directly at jlmohler@purdue.edu or 765-496-6071. Faculty may also continue to use Cayuse for the time being, or email irb@purdue.edu. (After the migration, PERA itself will also house an additional reporting tool/mechanism.)

Legacy Protocols

Q4: Older “legacy” protocols (active prior to Cayuse) are being fully closed during this transition, rather than being migrated to the new system. It is highly unusual for an approved, longstanding IRB to be arbitrarily closed by a University, for reasons unrelated to human subjects or observed compliance issues. While “compliance” is being listed as a reason, no actual compliance concerns are being noted on protocols, which are currently approved and active. What steps is the University taking to ensure that active work is not disrupted?

This is due to a federal requirement. Federal regulations for the review and oversight of human subjects research (“The Common Rule”) changed in 2019, and thus legacy protocols from that time must be updated to be brought into compliance. The PERA Faculty Support Team will help PIs create new protocols in PERA where modifications/amendments to legacy pre-2019 protocols from COEUS.