

CU Tuition Breakdown White Paper

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Section 1 - Executive Summary:

As undergraduate students looking into the tuition allocation at the University of Colorado Boulder, we have conducted research about how tuition works at our school. We have some strong values regarding our mission, positionality, transparency, our context and our end goal. We understand that there are many stakeholders with many different objectives and perspectives, but at large people desire that the education provided by CU Boulder be affordable and without waste. Due to the fact that there are so many stakeholders on this topic, there is quite a bit of history around how this issue has been approached. Given the complexity of this issue, we have analyzed extensive information and concluded that an accessible and transparent presentation of our findings is essential

Section 2 - Value Statement:

Mission:

ur goal is to investigate how tuition funds are allocated at CU Boulder and analyze their impact on both students and the university as a whole.

Positionality:

As students at CU Boulder, we are undertaking this project not just for academic credit but to gain a deeper understanding of how our tuition—and that of our peers—is utilized. We aim to uncover CU's spending patterns and share this information to empower students with knowledge about where their money goes. Our work is driven by a commitment to fellow students, aspiring to create a more informed and equitable environment for all.

Transparency:

We are dedicated to rigorously tracking our sources and ensuring the accuracy of the data we collect. By comparing tuition expenses to average market prices, we will strive to make the effectiveness of tuition fund usage clear and accessible. We will document our interviews and

clearly outline our data collection methods. All sources will be cited in a comprehensive resources page, allowing our audience to understand the basis of our findings and conclusions.

Context:

We are trying to have a clear image of where the tuition money at CU Boulder goes. Including but not limited to, the increases in tuition fees each year and the excess which is not used. The inspiration behind this research is trying to make a difficult-to-follow topic, a little more clear.

End Goal:

We hope that the data and visualizations we gather and create through this process can be used for the purpose of showing students and people involved with the school a complete and clear picture of financial utilization and to generate greater accountability from the school in how tuition money is used. Lastly we hope to simply help provide a very complete and well organized resource for those who would benefit from having access to this information.

Section 3 - Stakeholders:

Students: All of the students at Boulder have a high interest in how their tuition money is used because it directly affects their education and college experience. There are occasions where student input can effect how tuition money is used. For example, students chose to upgrade the rec center with better equipment and build the buff pool, agreeing to a slightly higher tuition rate to cover the costs. The student's general goal for tuition is to have a good, quality education.

The student population of CU Boulder can be split into a few subgroups: out of state vs in-state, the different colleges, and prospective students. Out of state students pay a much higher tuition rate than in-state students. This means they are more invested in how their money is spent. Each college charges students a different amount and uses this money differently. Prospective students like to see how their tuition would benefit them, to see if they want to go to this school. All of this goes to show that students care about where their tuition is going because they are the ones paying it and they are the ones directly benefiting from it.

Facilities Management: This group includes construction work, renovations, and basic school upkeep. This group is involved in how tuition is spent because tuition pays for this work. Each year, several buildings will go under construction to upgrade or make them better. A big project is when Williams village was built. This group also directly affects the students because if buildings are kept up, students will have a better education experience. It also allows for more students to be accepted at the University when there are enough dorm buildings. The goals of this stakeholder group are to improve the University, one project at a time. They need money to be successful with this goal, so tuition money is very important to them. This stakeholder group also needs the students' support, because they are using the students' tuition money to fund it. This is why students are asked about what they want to see improve at the University.

This stakeholder group also has a direct relationship with contractors, companies that operate businesses, athletics, and donors. They work with contractors to complete all different projects. They build and improve places where other businesses operate. They do projects with athletics. For example, the new scoreboard in Folsom was recently completed. They rely on donors for many projects, because tuition won't cover the costs of many of these projects. Alumni want to see the University be improved on, so they are willing to donate to help future students. This goes to show that this stakeholder group has a relationship with most of the other stakeholders.

Athletics: The athletics department at CU includes: all sports supported by the school participating in organized events in the Big 12 conference and beyond. Why the athletics department at the campus is a stakeholder group for this issue is because they are a very intricate and unique group when it comes to being a part of the financial influx at CU Boulder. They are involved in the issue because they affect how the total makeup of CU Boulders tuition money is reported and used depending on whether you count them in the equation, given their unique position of being donor and sales funded. According to [BuffZone.com](https://buffzone.com), "The department has an operating budget of roughly \$134 million for FY24, boosted by more than \$37 million in football ticket sales from last season."

Calculating where this money comes from and where it factors into the tuition conversation is going to be critical for better understanding the landscape of what exactly we want to talk about and look at concerning this school. Their goals and needs are linked to similar stakeholder groups such as "students" but also differ in a few key aspects. They have a particular interest in the same question we are trying to ask: "where does CU's tuition money go?" but they view it through a different lens. The athletics department has been a critical part of the tuition discussion for as long as the school has been around.

Contractors and Concessionaires: Outside contractors and concessionaires at CU Boulder include: food service providers operating campus dining halls and cafes, maintenance and cleaning services, construction companies for campus development projects, tech service providers, vending operators, and other external businesses. This issue of tuition money is potentially very tied to them because the more influx of tuition money coming into the school, the more and better business is going to be for them for the foreseeable future. Their goals in relation to the topic of CUs tuition money is the fact that they want to receive as many quality contracts as possible to remain profitably tied to the school for a long period of time.

These outside groups are vital for providing support and services to the school and the school and they have a fairly positive symbiotic relationship. Concessionaires and contractors for the school have become a very integral part of the schools operations more and more in the modern world as demand for bigger and bigger buildings, dining services, cleaning services, landscape and building maintenance, and help services for students have grown in the past 20 years for the university.

Alumni Foundations: This paragraph will talk about the CU alumni foundations. CU alumni are involved in the topic through their donations which can cause reallocation of tuition funds. This can happen when one project that would be funded by tuition is then gifted by a donor, that

tuition money will now be spent elsewhere. Alumni and donors' goals are normally to increase the public view of the school. This could be because they are related to a student there, was a student there or even a previous faculty member. Their goal is to supplement improvements to the school where tuition money funding may fall short. The University of Colorado is founded on the basis of donations. The land and resources were a donation to start the school up. The majority of donations go to scholarships and research. The donors have a good relationship with almost everyone possible. They value these good relationships between faculty, school leadership and other high profile school personnel. This is mainly because the allocation of donations is usually collaborative.

Companies that are on campus: This paragraph will address Companies that operate businesses such as cafes, electrical work and the CU Bookstore. These companies are not directly impacted by the allocation of tuition, but the price of tuition can potentially affect their business. This can be the effects of higher tuition causing them to have less spending money, therefore they have less money coming to their business. Cafes and businesses like that would like to see a balance, in forms of tuition being affordable for them to spend their own money at the business. Utility companies are paid by the school so they want to see the tuition to be high enough they still get paid. These companies normally have a good relation with hCU Boulder either through student meal plans funded through the school, this can be related to the tuition, through being included in the tuition and that counts for their allocation. Cafes and dining halls have these options. Some resources are included in the tuition such as electricity in the classes which may be paid for through tuition allocations. Their relationship with the school can be advocating for lowered tuition to allow students to still have the funds to spend at these other companies. This can be tricky though as the companies may not have as much pull in the conversation as they may like. As well as these companies may not know the whole split of funds, and that can affect their influence in the subject.

State government: They are the people who decide where taxpayer dollars go as far as non-federal local affairs go. They give certain amounts of state funding to the college to fund certain things. They do not have any direct issues however they do desire the affordable success of those in their state and wish to educate their populace successfully without losing bright personnel to other places. According to a page on the [CU Boulder website](#), they started funding CU Boulder in 1876, In 1972 voters approved a statewide ballot initiative that transformed the Denver and Colorado Springs Extension Centers into independent campuses and CU into a multi-campus system. Financial support for CU Boulder based extension work was discontinued in 1973. According to the CU Boulder website "[Budget & Fiscal planning](#)" page now a days about 5%) of the school's total funds come from the state. They are without a doubt allies to many local CU students and likely to the campuses as a whole the better the school the more prestige the state in general will get. Also along with better education comes a better work force which brings about better taxes, even if held at the same rate. Aside from that there is also the fact that using education is an easy way to obtain votes.

Admins for each college: There are the administrators of the different colleges within the CU Boulder with different administrators such as College of Arts and Science's Daryl Maeda Dean, Leeds School of Business's Vijay Khatri and Tandean Rustandy Endowed Dean, College of Engineering and Applied Science's Keith Molenaar. They are all allotted portions of the total fund CU gets to handle the funding of their education methods, they also have some pull over how much the tuition is to attend their college for a degree. They decide what equipment and what not gets funded in their department and how they divide their piece of the budget. Also they have some sway in how each of their tuition fees differ. They obviously want to use the money in a way that is most effective to attract students and make them succeed in their chosen career paths, in order to pull more students and thus more funding. While we are sure that there is some friendly competition among this group as they are all pulling from the same group of funds, they all have CUs best interests at heart and actively want the students to succeed.

Section 4 - History of Issue

"What have people inside the University done to explain the tuition dispersion breakdown?"

The biggest breakdown of the campuses budget, spending, and particularly tuition money funding come in a presentation by Katrina Spencer, Deputy Chief Financial Officer in 2022, explaining resource allocations in a broader sense. This video, while slightly outdated, goes into great detail about who is making what decisions with what money, in everything from Federal, to State, to Board of Regents, to system offices, to individual colleges etc. Then it jumps straight into the 2021-2022 budget breakdown and where their sources of funding come from. We see in this report that state funding is 5%, auxiliary funds are 20%, grants and contracts 22%, gifts and investments at 10%, and education and general budget 44%. This is CU's biggest attempt at least inside this university that we've researched in terms of breaking down the financial budgets and plans.

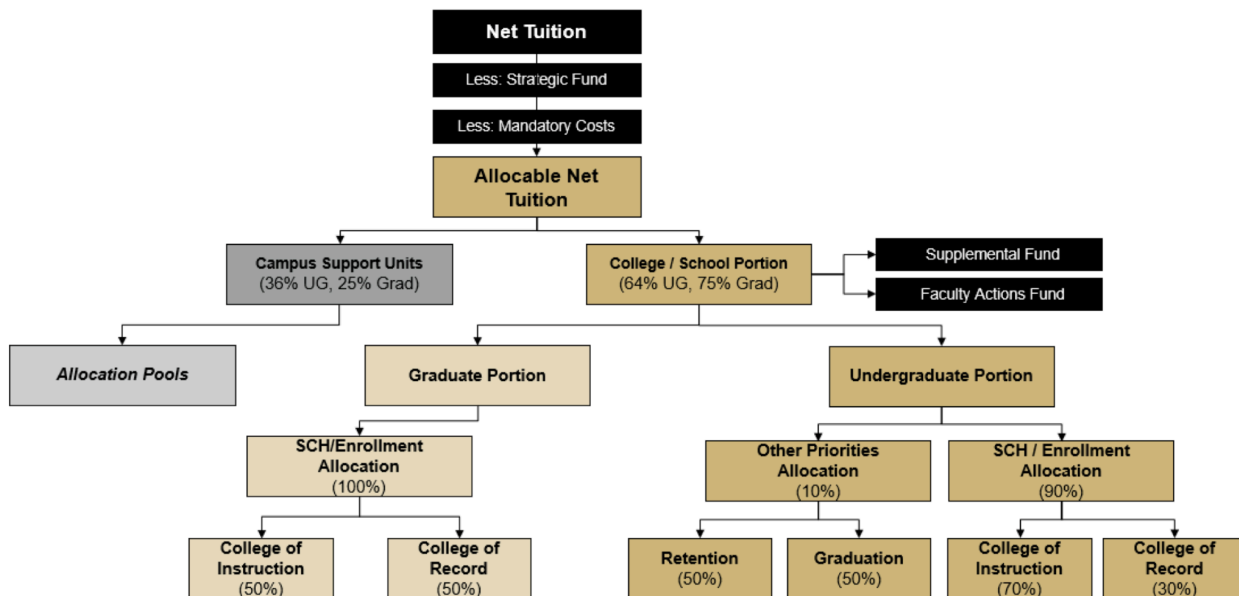
There are also many pages you can go onto in CU's website such as the 2023-2024 campus info card that has raw data that we are looking for. This info card includes their 2023-2024 current funds budget, student headcounts per year, enrollment summaries, and employee headcounts which are not necessarily needed for the purpose of this study but are very interesting to observe nonetheless.

A [relevant source online](#) that we obtained is a 8 page copy of CUs actual operating budget from F2023-24. This shows breakdowns of the revenue in charts as well as in standard accounting form, but what sets this resource apart is its total breakdown of expenditures and transfers. It also has research awards and all of the other cool informational topics we discussed in the "campus card info" section above, but this is all in one very easy to read, well compiled source, that will be perfect for the kind of research we are doing. Our group will lean heavily on this resource as an overarching guide for understanding the colleges operations while we dive further into potentially breaking this information down further for individual colleges or departments.

The University does a decent job at putting out very generalized and unspecified information about money coming in, but they don't really take you behind the scenes to see a full breakdown of how they actually use the money that is coming in.

In 2017 CU Boulder introduced their plan to be more transparent with money usage. It was paused in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic but has been recently revamped. In [this article](#) the money distribution is described, as well as the efforts which CU is implementing for transparency. Multiple income sources are described, as well as their formula to tell the school how much of that money goes where such as undergraduate tuition goes 30 percent to college of records and 70 percent goes to the College of Instruction.

E. Core Funds Revenue Allocations



“How has tuition been used in the past? Big projects?”

Funding for large universities can be a shady subject, in 2017, the lack of transparency at CU Boulder was brought up from many news sources. After these issues were brought to light, many organizations such as the IDEA plan, Strategic Facilities visioning, Academic Futures, Foundations of Excellence, and Financial Futures continued to press on the subject. In 2019 CU Boulder publicly announced that they were planning a budget redesign, but shortly later these works were put on hold due to the COVID 19 pandemic. In May of 2022 the final draft was approved by executive sponsors and was put in effect. Even with this redesign, the University of Colorado Boulder makes it rather difficult to have a clear line of sight where tuition goes, rather it shows you where the money comes from.

One graphic CU Boulder has created shows that about half of the school funding comes from tuition and the allocations of those funds can go anywhere from the system leaders for the University of Colorado Boulder, to the professors who teach here.

Every year, the school hopes to do upgrades on their older buildings, this can be funded in part by students tuition. With the price of tuition though, there is not enough to renovate even one building. The University has to then ask the state for excess money to borrow to complete these renovations. The renovations which are being proposed are usually safety related such as; Asbestos mitigation, building egress, electrical systems, fire alarm systems, fire-rated doors, fire-rated wall penetrations, HVAC system, lighting systems, roofing materials. The school has a well developed plan on which buildings to renovate and when. Even with that, the budget is the main constraint, as 72% of buildings on the University's campus are over 50 years old.

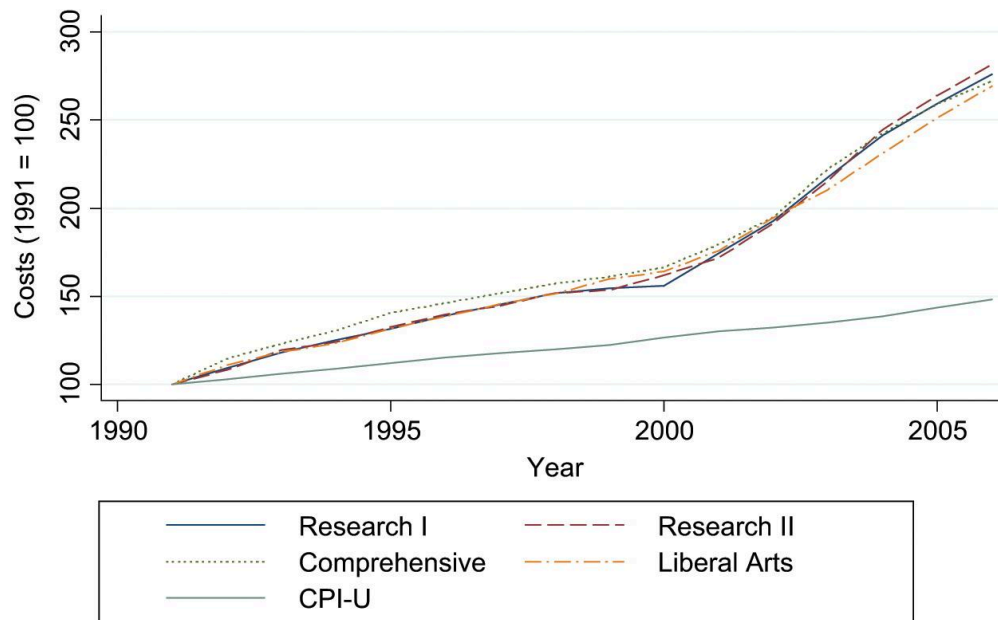
Buildings and infrastructure are one example of the physical projects which tuition goes toward, but there are many other locations which tuition money goes as well. The main one being salaries for faculty. These tuition bills also go to on site services such as academic advisors, mental health resources and technology help. One last item which is included in the tuition price at CU Boulder is a bus pass to the Boulder public transport. Though this may not be a large number if you were to buy it separately, the implicit value of not paying for gas, having to plan the pass and being able to hop on hop of transit anywhere is a selling point for the school.

The University of Colorado Boulder does what is called tiered tuition. This is when depending on what education or degree you are getting, the price may be different. At the moment, in 2024, there are four tiers labeled one through four, cheapest to most expensive respectively. This separation of tuition can imply that some of the money which is gained goes to funding the resources needed for these specific classes such as chemicals for chemistry laboratory classes or specimens to dissect in biology laboratory classes.

“What is the history of tuition rates? Why has it increased?”

Tuition rates have been increasing every year since at least 2002. There isn't one single reason why, moreover there are a multitude of reasons. One reason is that more people are going to college now than in previous years. Another reason is that as more people go to college, colleges have to expand, which costs money. State funding is another reason why college tuition has increased. State funding, other than the pandemic year, hasn't decreased much. However, it feels as though it has decreased because college has gotten more expensive.

[This report](#) and dataset show the increase in tuition rates around the US from the last few years. This data was collected for the purpose of showing people the impact of increased tuition and enrollment in public universities. The results of the data are credible to me because they use multiple sources and they also use simple yet stunning visuals to help. The methodology of collecting this data was using IPEDS forms. The following chart shows tuition rates from 1991 to 2005 for public universities and colleges in the US.

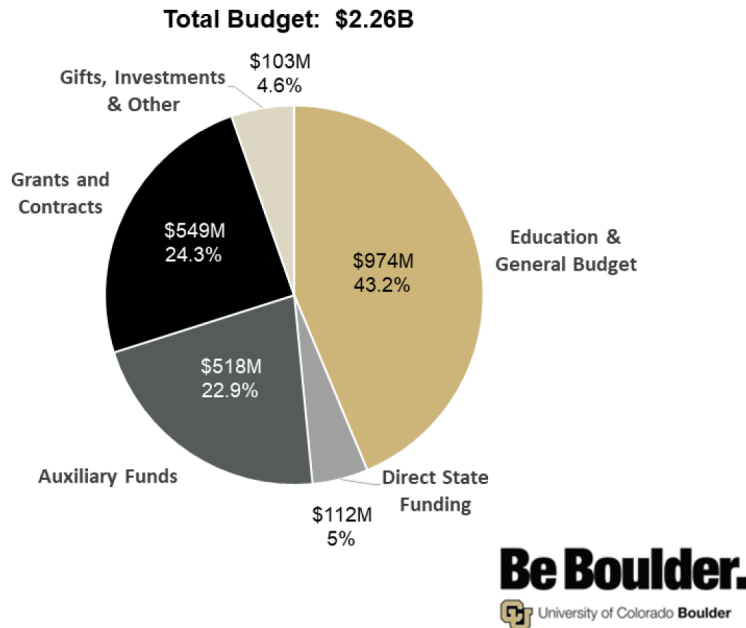


At CU, tuition has increased up to \$500 each year. In 2015, international tuition was separated from out of state tuition. International students were then charged a higher rate than any other students on campus. After 2017, in-state tuition started to get separated into groups. This was so that each student tuition would go towards their respective college, since each college costs a different amount to run. For example, the college of business costs the most to run because the professors in that college get paid more. This is because it costs a lot of money to find these professors and keep them since they could take their knowledge and make more money somewhere else.

Most people think that a decrease in state funding is the reasoning for increased tuition rates. However, this isn't necessarily true. In an interview with Matt Artley, the assistant vice chancellor for revenue management and policy analysis at CU Boulder, he said that state funding hasn't decreased much. One reason people think it is so low is because they look at the wrong statistics. If you look at the whole budget, state funding only covers 5%. However, if you take out restricted funds, state funding covers closer to 11%. State funding has to go to a lot of places, and CU does their best to get all the help we can to lower our tuition, but it only goes so far.

This is the current funds budget for CU in 2024. It shows how much money is put towards each broad part of how we run campus.

FY 2024 Current Funds Budget



Section 5 - Data Summaries

[Dataset #1 \(CU Financial Budget Breakdown for FY 23-24\)](#)

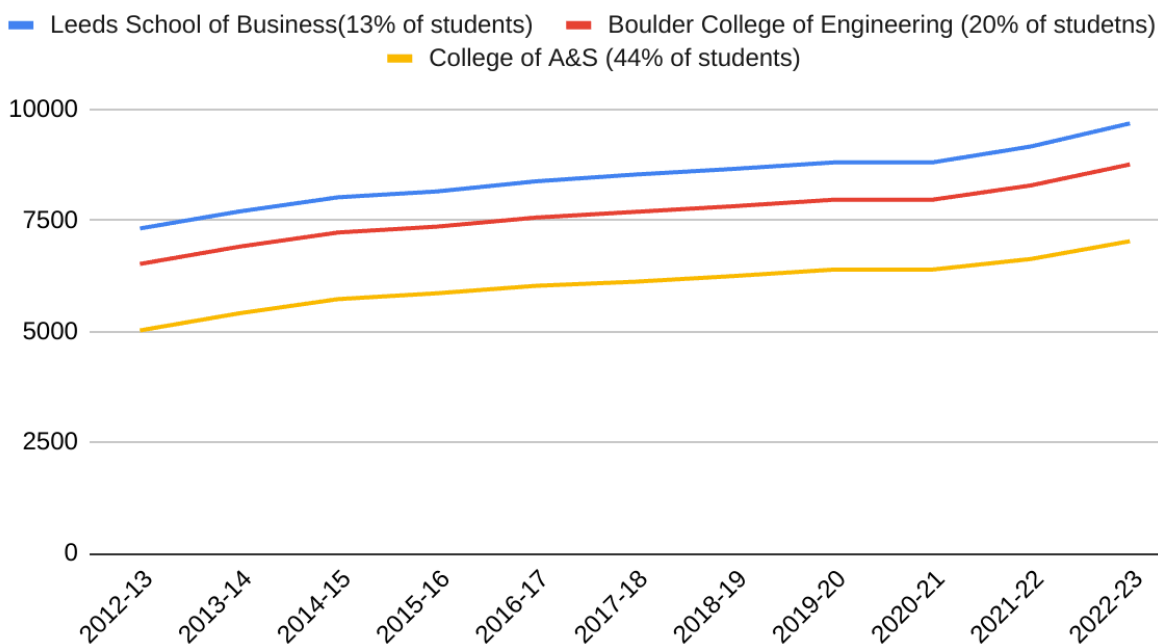
This data was collected by the University of Colorado Boulder, by the finance and budgeting departments with the purpose to present the FY 2023-24 operating budget for the university. The authors of this collection of financial data would be the university themselves, making their relation to the stakeholders (being students and various other parties such as athletics, contractors, donors, affiliates, prospective students, etc.) a complex one. This data is not being used to support anything, it is merely being presented as an organization of the university's financial operations for the FY 2023-2024. This data fortunately and unfortunately does not reveal any information tied to specific people. This source is purely large scale financial and employee information from the school, in terms of quantities. It contains no hard specifics that could create ethical dilemmas. We do not believe there is any way this particular dataset could not be used for the purposes of our studies. It is simply financial, organizational, and operational information that is publicly available so this source should be free to use in any manner we see fit.

Section 5 - CU Boulder Tuition History

The [article](#) "Tuition and Fees Report Fiscal Year 2010-2011" by D. Rico Munm speaks about issues of oversight and unnecessary fees. We are glad to say that CU Boulder is attempting to find a solution to the old system that created these problems by testing out in 2023, with some financial safety nets in place. The school is continuing to refine the process with high hopes for future improvement. The article is also an excellent way to get a general understanding of how expensive CU Boulder is compared to other colleges in Colorado. In modern days students will pay differing amounts of tuition depending on what exactly they need, their tuition money will not go to dorms unless they live on one, it will not go to meal plans unless they have one, it will not go to public transport unless they choose for it to be available to them, it won't even go to other colleges within CU boulder.

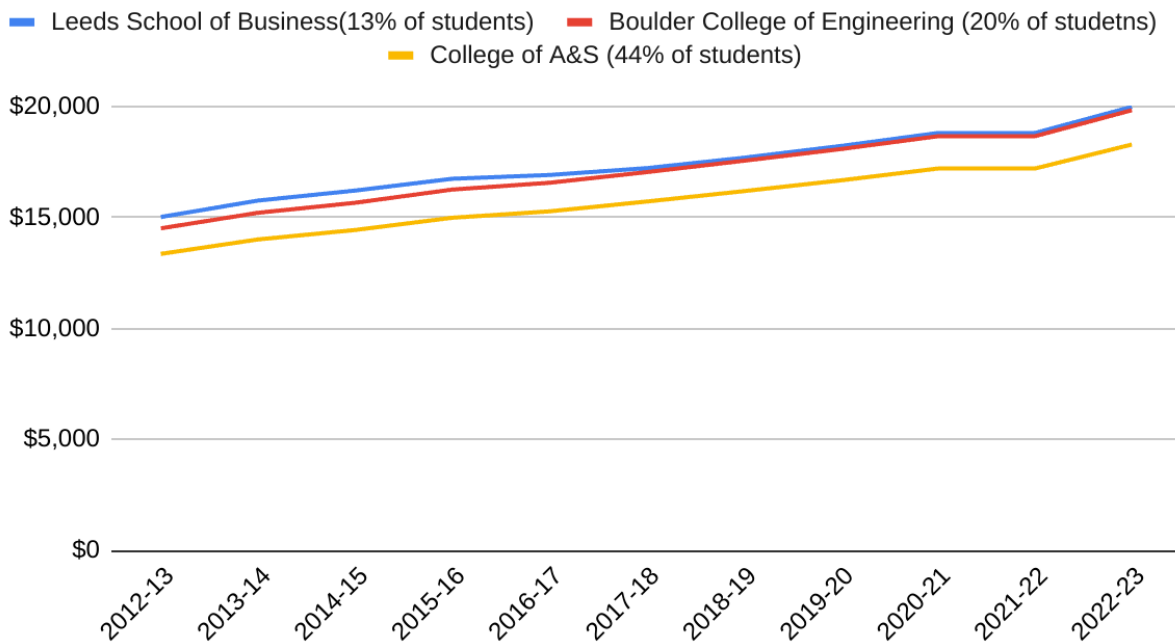
Below is a chart of instate pricing. Sadly the recent attempts to adapt and improve, have made the tuition costs more complicated and made them divide into groups based upon enrollment time, as such assume that these prices are listed for those enrolled in the earliest time possible. Also, assume the student is taking 16 credit hours and that this is the price before COF. The graph is constructed using information from the [Bursar's Office Archives](#). We have elected to only show the 3 colleges with the most students as doing otherwise would make the graph look confusing and jumbled, and as there is only 23% of the students not being represented, according to this [website](#), it still gives a good overall picture of what most students were paying over the years.

CU Boulder In State Tuition



Now we will present a singular graph for out-of-state student tuition.

CU Boulder Out of State Tuition



Given that the individuals out of state are paying so much more and their number is growing significantly ever since CU hired its new football coach Deino Sanders. As such it is curious where that excess funding is going. Will we see a drop in either instate tuition or out-of-state tuition? Will it go to expanding more facilities? Perhaps hiring more professors?

Section 6 - Conclusion:

What are we aiming to do? We want to make a cool visualization graph of how CU Boulders tuition is spent.

Our goal is to create a clear and accessible visualization that illustrates how CU Boulder's tuition is spent. By building upon the foundation laid out in this white paper, we aim to promote transparency and better understanding for students and the broader community.

In this white paper, we laid out the foundation for how we are going to approach understanding CU Boulders tuition distribution. Our ultimate goal is to create an easily accessible and understandable format, through visuals and text, to understand how CU Boulders tuition is dispersed. Our values as a group are for transparency, for honesty, and for accurate useful work to be produced to help students like us.

Citations Page:

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