



PERA Defined Benefit Retirement Plan Participants

Checklist for within five years of retirement

You have spent many years saving and educating yourself about retirement investment options for your retirement. You are now in the final phase. About three to five years from your actual retirement date, it's time to do two important things in preparation for the big day. The first is to seriously consider the cost of your retirement. The second is to assess your retirement savings. Knowing where you currently stand and exactly where you are headed will help determine what needs to be done to successfully complete the process leading up to your actual retirement day.

Evaluate the cost to retire

Estimate: Consider the amount of money you will need during retirement to maintain your desired standard of living and determine if your retirement savings is on track. This will help you determine if your projected retirement date is achievable. This may involve a visit with your personal financial planner.

Retirement eligibility: Check your eligibility for retirement with PERA and the University of Colorado. You must meet the eligibility requirements for both PERA and CU.

[PERA website](#)

[CU Retirement Ready Digital Session and website](#)

[CU Retirement Ready Eligibility Guide for PERA DB Participants](#)

[CU Retiree Benefits for PERA DB Participants](#)

Assess your retirement savings

Get organized: Gather and organize the data from all your assets: PERA, other pension plans, Social Security (if applicable), any voluntary supplemental savings accounts, investments and insurance policies.

Seek counsel: Talk with the appropriate professionals about your financial future.

Financial planner: Discuss your assets, cost to retire and goals with your financial planner to determine your best course of action for the next three to five years. TIAA offers CU employees free financial consultations. Schedule your appointment on your campus by calling 1-800-732-8353 or through [the website](#).

CU Employee Services benefits professional: Contact a benefits professional (303-860-4200, option 3 or email benefits@cu.edu) who can answer any questions you have about CU's [retiree benefits](#). The benefits professional can also tell you about retirement planning sessions, Employee Services retirement sessions and website resources.

IRS calendar-year tax-deferred savings plan limits: Contact your fund sponsor(s) and review the contribution limits in the [Voluntary Retirement Guide](#) to find out how you can maximize tax-deferred contributions to supplemental CU 403(b), PERA 401(k) and PERA 457 accounts. You may be eligible for catch-up contributions.

PERA service credit: Please contact PERA regarding your PERA service credit calculation and options to purchase additional years of service credit (303-832-9550). In most cases, you receive a month of service credit for each month of employment in which you earned monthly salary greater than or equal to 80 times the federal minimum wage hourly rate at the time of service. (Example: With a \$7.25 minimum wage, any member whose salary is at least \$580 – (\$7.25 x 80) – would generally receive one month of service credit.) Salaries less than that amount will be prorated.

CU retiree benefit service year: PERA service credits are not necessarily equal to qualified CU retiree benefit service years. CU Employee Services benefit professionals will review your qualified retiree benefit years of service with the university and determine your eligibility for CU retiree benefits. You may be asked to provide a letter from your human resources office verifying employment years that are not identified in the university's human resources system, Human Capital Management (HCM).

PERA highest average salary (HAS): PERA determines the highest annual salaries associated with four periods of 12 consecutive months. Participation in the Premium-Only Plan, and the health care and dependent care flexible spending account plans can affect your HAS calculations for PERA benefits. Understand that you may only make changes to these elections during CU's Open Enrollment. Please contact PERA regarding your HAS calculation (303-832-9550).

Social Security Retirement Estimator (if applicable): [This website](#) gives estimates based on your actual Social Security earnings record. Please keep in mind that these are estimates; your actual benefit amount cannot be determined until you apply for benefits. This amount may differ from the estimates provided because:

- Your earnings may increase or decrease in the next three to five years.
- After you start receiving benefits, they will be adjusted for cost-of-living increases. Your estimated benefits are based on current law. The law governing benefit amounts may change.
- Your benefit amount may be affected by military service, railroad employment or pensions earned through work on which you did not pay Social Security tax (e.g., PERA).

University retiree benefits: Take a look at [retiree benefits](#) currently offered at the university to get an idea of what you may be eligible for when you retire. Benefits available to eligible CU retirees may include medical, dental and life insurance coverage.

- Medical and dental coverage: Non-Medicare eligible PERA retirees may be eligible for medical and dental plans. Anyone who is Medicare eligible is NOT eligible for CU retiree medical and dental benefits.
- Optional life insurance: Review your current amount of optional life insurance. You may need to change the amount of CU or PERA life insurance over the next few years. Your CU optional life insurance coverage decreases upon retirement. Contact PERA to learn what will happen to your PERA optional life insurance upon retirement.

Determine retirement date: Choose one or two possible target dates for retirement. The information gathered as you consider the cost to retire will enable you to begin to focus on a particular retirement date.