University of Colorado Health will take a large stride toward system building during the next month when it moves to a single system for payroll, timekeeping, and scheduling.

The launch of Kronos will replace the disparate systems presently in place at UCHealth hospitals in metro Denver, northern Colorado, and southern Colorado. It will occur in phases, with the scheduling application going live April 27, timekeeping May 10, and the first live pay date May 29, noted IT Project Manager Suzanne Beers in an email April 9.

The Kronos conversion caps more than a year of behind-the-scenes work involving Human Resources, Information Technology, Payroll, and other staff in all three regions, said Gaylene Lemons, director for compensation for UCHealth.

“Each region has been stand-alone from a pay rate perspective,” Lemons said. “It’s very difficult today for an employee to work in different regions. Kronos will enhance employees’ ability to work across the entire system.”

With the Kronos launch, she said, an employee will clock in at any hospital with a badge swipe and the system will handle the rest, eliminating the time-consuming inefficiencies of sifting through multiple policies to calculate pay, Lemons said.

**Market competition.** The base pay for employees will not change with the switch to Kronos. Rather, base pay and differential rates will continue to be based on each hospital’s market, as determined by regular salary surveys, Lemons added.

Generally speaking, UCHealth determines compensation rates by developing detailed job descriptions, evaluating salary surveys for a given market, and targeting pay for employees at the median, or 50th percentile, of the salary range.

“‘We continue to review markets to make sure we’re market-competitive,’” Lemons said. But she noted that salaries and hourly pay are only one component of compensation. A hospital that pays...
a slightly higher shift differential than others, for example, doesn’t necessarily have an overall competitive edge, she maintained.

“That’s one data point viewed in a silo,” Lemons said. She pointed to UCHealth’s “total compensation package,” which includes annual performance incentive payouts — a benefit provided by very few hospitals or health systems nationwide — a defined benefit retirement plan, comprehensive medical coverage, and an array of other benefits as a more accurate gauge of value to employees.

“When you put all of these elements together, our total compensation is very competitive,” Lemons said.

In another move to efficiency, the system is also standardizing job codes and titles, replacing dozens of different names for the same job. For example, a staff nurse goes by many different titles throughout UCHealth, Lemons said. That’s confusing both internally and externally, she said. Consolidating job codes will eliminate costly inefficiencies, while winnowing down the number of job titles should make it easier for job applicants to find open positions that match their skills.

Lemons compared the system-wide adoption of Kronos to the Epic electronic health record integration that began at University of Colorado Hospital in 2011. The Epic launch at UCH replaced dozens of stand-alone systems for multiple clinical areas with a standardized patient record visible to all providers across the hospital. The integration broadened in 2013, when UCHealth’s northern and southern regions went live on Epic, laying the groundwork for an integrated patient medical record that improves patient care, safety, and efficiency.

For additional information about Kronos pay policy standardization at UCH, visit the Hub.