

# Recent Wage Increase Has Helped to Reduce UNH Dining Staff Shortage

A wage increase from \$15 to \$17 an hour has improved staff recruitment across the board.

## Chandler Blaisdell, Staff Writer

A wage increase for UNH Hospitality & Campus Service workers, which went into effect in August, has helped to draw new applicants to UNH Dining, helping to alleviate staffing shortages during the start of 2024-2025 school year.

According to the General Manager of Philbrook Dining Hall, Maureen Carter, staffing shortages in both dining halls center around the need for more “servery cooks,” or the employees who are tasked with working stations such as the grill or main line.

The wage increase, which affected the whole of UNH Hospitality & Campus Services’ non-student employees, not just within UNH dining, brought the starting wage up to \$17 an hour. Previously, the wages started at \$15 an hour. The wages for student employees remain unchanged, with their base pay for the dining hall starting at either \$12, \$13, or \$14 depending on the position; a raise of 25 cents is given for each subsequent year they come back.

Due to the wage increase, “we are finding we have a lot more applicants...something we did not have before,” Carter said.

According to UNH’s Senior Vice Provost for Student Life, Kenneth Holmes, the process for this wage increase started back in 2022.

The Director of Conferences, Catering & Retail Services at UNH, Dorrie McClintok, shed some light on how the wage increase process began. “We reached out to Compensation and explained to them that we were really struggling to retain people because we felt that \$15 an hour just wasn’t a living wage,” she said. Compensation, a division of the UNH Human Resources Department, conducted a “full market analysis” in order to determine how much the wage increase should be.

“Compensation is fantastic,” said McClintok. “We didn’t have to do anything but explain our situation.”

According to the Senior Executive Chef of Holloway Commons (HoCo) dining, Todd Sweet, “since Covid, it’s been a struggle to bring people on board, because a lot of people kind of left hospitality and never really returned to the industry.”

“We’ve been trying to hire furiously to make sure that we are able to keep the concepts...open,” Sweet said. “We’re excited because we have new stir fry staff just coming on board, so we haven’t been able to keep it open as often as we want to, but now we’re definitely going to be able to increase the frequency of that bar being offered.”



Jackie Weik

Outside the Memorial Union Building, Holloway Commons Entrance

Concerning the wage increase, Todd described it as “a substantial across the board pay increase for all operating staff,” adding that it “brought everybody up to what they consider to be attractive for the industry.”

“We’re no longer middle of the road for pay,” Sweet said.

Carter emphasized the difference which this raise did for the morale of the employees as they entered into a new school year.

“Our staff were so underpaid for the work they did,” Carter said. “The open this year was so different from last year, because they’re working so hard, but now they have that little bit of the money.”

Carter also emphasized a push towards “cross training” employees across multiple stations, regardless of which one they were hired for initially.

“Even though we hire somebody for the grill station, we’re cross training them in other stations. That way we can utilize them in the times that we need,” Carter said.

Concerning the operation of stations for this new school year, Carter said that “everything is primarily open for the most part, where we struggled with that last year. So we’re at least trying to keep it up and open during the peak service times.”

“The last thing that we try to do is close the station, and [I] always remind our people, it’s one guest at a time. So it’s better to just keep it open,” Carter said.

Due to the exit of Holloway Commons’ previous General Manager earlier this semester, Carter is acting as the General Manager of both dining halls until the position is filled.