

“At the heart of the university is its Catholic, Dominican tradition grounded in the compatibility of faith and reason, which affirms the dignity of the human person and concern for the common good.”

— Dominican University, Mission and Ministryⁱ



The Story of Quest Workers at Dominican University

A report by UNITE HERE Local 1
February 2022



Quest employee average annual earnings (2021)	\$21,561
Poverty guideline for family of four (2021)	\$26,500
Necessary to support one adult and one child in Chicago MSA (2021)	\$67,080
US. median household income (2021) ⁱⁱ	\$79,900

Dominican University depends on employees of Quest Food Management Services to welcome visitors to campus and keep undergraduates well fed. Quest is contracted by the University to provide dining services in the Main Campus Dining Hall and the Cyber Cafe.

Quest Food Management Services is a large service company that reports \$65 millionⁱⁱⁱ in annual revenue. The 2021 average annual earnings for Quest employees at Dominican University was \$21,561^{iv}, less than the U.S poverty guideline for a family of four.^v

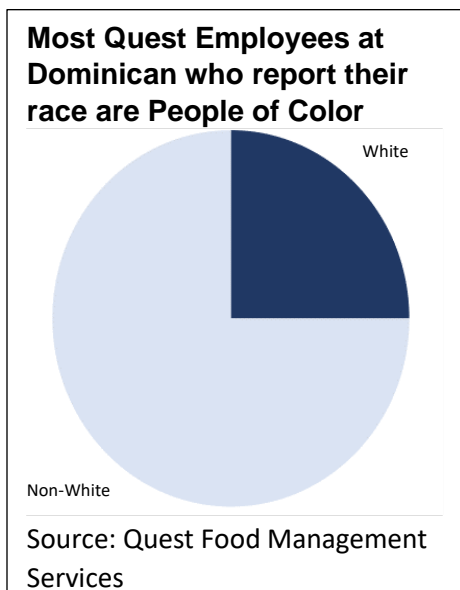
According to the MIT Living Wage Calculator, in 2021 a single adult with one child would have to earn \$67,080 per year to support him or herself in the Chicago Metropolitan Statistical Area.^{vi}

UNITE HERE surveyed Quest workers at Dominican University in December of 2021 and January of 2022.

The 18 respondents reported the following.^{vii}

How do Quest workers at Dominican University survive?

- 83% lack enough money to pay their bills
- 78% have \$1,000 or less in savings
- 78% owe more than \$1,000 not including a mortgage
- 67% receive government welfare program benefits

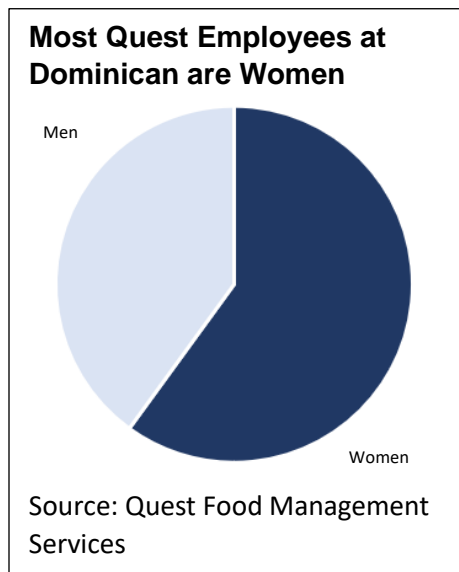


“I’ve worked for Dominican University for 25 years. Everyday is a struggle. The wages don’t support me and health insurance isn’t affordable. I don’t feel respected as a 25 year loyal employee.”

- Antoinetta Jones, Cook

“I have been working for four years. I am a mother of two kids. I can barely make ends meet. It is a struggle, insurance is so expensive.”

– Liliana Ocampo, Cook



Quest workers at Dominican University are food insecure

- 50% cannot afford healthy food for their families
- 39% have household members who have gone hungry in the last six months
- 72% went to a food pantry in the last six months

Quest Workers at Dominican University face barriers to healthcare

- 50% of respondents, or a member of their household, could not afford to go to the doctor
- 56% of respondents, or a member of their household, could not afford their medications
- 61% of respondents, or a member of their household, skipped some kind of medical service

“It can be a struggle with bills, family and mishaps in life, but with more pay it can be much smoother with less stress and more family time.”

- Fairell Hunt, Food Service Worker



A note on sources:

Data about Quest employee earnings and some demographics were provided to UNITE HERE Local 1 by Quest. Other information about Quest employees are the results of the Winter 2021/2022 survey conducted by UNITE HERE Local 1.

ⁱ Dominican University Website. <https://www.dom.edu/about-dominican/mission-and-ministry>

ⁱⁱ U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development NOTICE PDR-2021-01. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il/il21/Medians2021.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Quest Food Management Services Website. <https://www.questfms.com/about-quest>

^{iv} Quest data provided to UNITE HERE Local 1. Average annual earnings for employees employed for the entire calendar year 2021

^v U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, 2021 Poverty Guidelines. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines/prior-hhs-poverty-guidelines-federal-register-references/2021-poverty-guidelines>

^{vi} Massachusetts Institute of Technology Living Wage Calculator. <https://livingwage.mit.edu/>

^{vii} Based on a UNITE HERE Local 1 survey of 18 out of 30 UNITE HERE Local 1 members who work for Quest Food Management Services at Dominican University as of 1/2022.

