

## *Results from the New Student Survey (2012)*

UMaine Office of Institutional Research  
1 October 2012

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The 2012 New Student Survey results are based on 1,625 new first-year students, 1,323 of whom completed the survey at summer orientation. The remaining 302 respondents completed an online version of this survey, which was made available to students who (a) did not attend the summer orientation or (b) attended but, for whatever reason, did not complete the paper-and-pencil survey.

These results are based on roughly 80% of the UMaine population of new first-year students in fall 2012. This is an impressive completion rate—up from 66% last year—and we have no reason to believe these data differ appreciably from what would obtain had we reached the entire population of new students. That said, we clearly did not hear from all new students, and one should remain mindful of this when considering, or communicating, the figures reported below. Further, the number of respondents varies from item to item, which similarly should be kept in mind when considering, or communicating, these results.

We begin with a presentation of the item-by-item results (pp. 3-7). After this, we present a set of analyses based on a subgroup of UMaine's new students. Specifically, we compare students' perceptions of UMaine with their perceptions of another school that they had applied to, they were accepted at, and, excluding UMaine, interested them most (pp. 8-15).

But first, we first share some things that caught our collective eye:

- UMaine is the first choice for almost three quarters of respondents.
- High school is the highest level of father's and mother's education for, respectively, 26% and 21% of respondents; for an undergraduate college degree, the respective figures are 33% and 38%.
- 16% of respondents are the first in their family to attend college.
- 69% of respondents feel "prepared" or "very well prepared" for UMaine.
- 38% of these respondents plan to study 10 or fewer hours in the typical week, and over three quarters expect a first-year GPA of 3.0 or higher.
- Respondents' concerns as they anticipate their experience at UMaine:
  - grades (86% indicating it as "a concern" or "somewhat of a concern")
  - managing time (83%)
  - paying for school (82%)
  - having enough spending money (80%)
  - getting the extra help they need (69%)

- The five highest-rated factors influencing the decision to attend UMaine (on a scale of 1 to 5):
  - campus activities (4.34)
  - campus atmosphere (4.29)
  - athletic/recreational opportunities (4.28)
  - campus safety (4.28)
  - academic programs (4.27)
  
- The five lowest-rated factors influencing the decision to attend UMaine (again, on a scale of 1 to 5):
  - location (3.82)
  - residence halls (3.82)
  - contact with alumni (3.82)
  - financial aid package (3.72)
  - merit scholarships (3.71)

<b>Item-By-Item Results</b>
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**Mother's highest level of education?**

	<i>n</i>	%
Grammar school	9	.6%
Some high school	25	1.5%
High school graduate	336	20.8%
Postsecondary other than college	64	4.0%
Some college	239	14.8%
College degree	614	37.9%
Some graduate school	47	2.9%
Graduate degree	256	15.8%
Don't know	29	1.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,619</b>	

(6 nonrespondents)

**Father's highest level of education?**

	<i>n</i>	%
Grammar school	11	.7%
Some high school	57	3.5%
High school graduate	413	25.6%
Postsecondary other than college	66	4.1%
Some college	224	13.9%
College degree	538	33.4%
Some graduate school	31	1.9%
Graduate degree	236	14.6%
Don't know	35	2.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,611</b>	

(14 nonrespondents)

From the two tables above, we estimate that roughly 16% of respondents are first-generation college students.

**Other Siblings at College?**

	<i>n</i>	%
I'm the first of my brothers and sisters to go to college	664	41.5%
I have at least one brother or sister who has gone to college in the last four years	680	42.5%
I have at least one brother or sister who has gone to college five or more years ago	105	6.6%
I'm an only child	152	9.5%
Total	1,601	

(24 nonrespondents)

**How well prepared do you feel for your academic courses at UMaine?**

	<i>n</i>	%
Very well prepared	220	13.7%
Well prepared	890	55.3%
Somewhat prepared	435	27.0%
Underprepared	14	.9%
Not certain	51	3.2%
Total	1,610	

(15 nonrespondents)

**During the coming year at UMaine, how much time do you expect to study during a typical week?**

	<i>n</i>	%
5 hours or less	53	3.3%
6 - 10 hours	554	34.8%
11 - 15 hours	604	37.9%
16 - 20 hours	306	19.2%
21 hours or more	77	4.8%
Total	1,594	

(31 nonrespondents)

**What do you expect your grade point average to be at the end of your first year at UMaine?**

	<i>n</i>	%
3.00 or higher	1,226	77.9%
2.00 - 2.99	347	22.0%
1.00 - 1.99	1	.1%
Lower than 1.00	0	0.0%
Total	1,574	

(51 nonrespondents)

**Is UMaine your first-choice school?**

	<i>n</i>	%
Yes	1,067	71%
No	435	29%
Total	1,502	

(123 nonrespondents)

**Number of colleges applied to?**

	<i>n</i>	%
1	265	17.6%
2	228	15.1%
3	275	18.2%
4	229	15.2%
5	189	12.5%
More than 5	323	21.4%
Total	1,509	

(116 nonrespondents)

**As you think about beginning your college experience at UMaine, which of the following concerns do you have?**

	Not a concern	Somewhat of a concern	A concern	Total Respondents
Financial - paying for school	17.8%	37.6%	44.6%	1,614
Grades	13.9%	42.2%	43.9%	1,606
Balancing my time among classes, studying, work, and leisure	16.8%	48.8%	34.4%	1,615
Financial - having enough spending money	20.0%	47.8%	32.2%	1,607
Chose best major	41.5%	36.9%	21.5%	1,611
Relationships with new friends	37.7%	41.8%	20.4%	1,611
Making sure I get the extra help I need	30.8%	51.0%	18.3%	1,613
Finding my way around campus	38.0%	46.3%	15.7%	1,614
No specific concerns, general anxiety	34.8%	49.9%	15.3%	1,601
Residence hall life	43.9%	42.6%	13.6%	1,609
Being away from friends	45.2%	41.4%	13.5%	1,610
Instructor expectations	40.2%	48.3%	11.5%	1,614
Relationships with faculty	47.9%	41.8%	10.3%	1,613
Health	59.6%	30.1%	10.3%	1,614
Being away from family	55.1%	35.8%	9.0%	1,605
Size of classes	56.6%	34.7%	8.7%	1,614
Transportation	63.7%	27.9%	8.4%	1,614
Romantic relationships	61.5%	30.6%	7.9%	1,609
My personal safety	75.3%	20.3%	4.4%	1,604
Drugs and alcohol	80.7%	15.8%	3.5%	1,611

Listed below are factors typically considered when choosing a college. Please rate UMaine on each factor using the 5-point

	Mean Rating	Poor		Good		Excellent	Total Respondents
		1	2	3	4	5	
Campus Activities	4.34	0.4%	1.6%	11.5%	11.5%	50.1%	1,404
Campus Atmosphere	4.29	0.5%	1.0%	14.4%	14.4%	47.4%	1,430
Athletic/Recreational Opportunities	4.28	1.1%	2.1%	14.9%	14.9%	50.3%	1,353
Campus Safety	4.28	0.4%	0.9%	15.1%	15.1%	46.0%	1,375
Academic Programs	4.27	0.1%	0.7%	13.0%	13.0%	41.9%	1,447
Campus Tour/Visit	4.25	0.9%	1.8%	14.6%	14.6%	46.5%	1,326
Overall Value	4.22	0.7%	1.2%	15.3%	15.3%	42.2%	1,373
Open House or Accepted Student Day	4.21	1.0%	2.1%	16.8%	16.8%	44.5%	1,215
Undergraduate Research Opportunities	4.19	0.3%	1.9%	16.6%	16.6%	40.1%	1,326
Application Process	4.17	0.4%	2.5%	18.1%	18.1%	41.5%	1,392
Personal Contact with Students	4.16	1.0%	2.3%	17.5%	17.5%	40.8%	1,280
General Reputation	4.12	0.3%	1.2%	20.0%	20.0%	35.7%	1,444
Teacher Recommendation	4.10	1.0%	2.5%	19.2%	19.2%	37.2%	1,180
Honors Program	4.10	1.8%	2.9%	18.8%	18.8%	40.1%	1,104
Study Abroad Program	4.09	1.1%	2.3%	21.0%	21.0%	37.9%	1,177
Parents Preference	4.08	2.4%	3.4%	21.1%	21.1%	43.3%	1,306
HS Counselor Recommendation	4.07	1.0%	2.7%	21.7%	21.7%	37.5%	1,161
Dining Services	4.05	0.7%	3.6%	21.1%	21.1%	35.3%	1,360
Transfer/AP Credit Available	4.05	1.9%	2.9%	22.5%	22.5%	38.7%	1,131
Personal Contact with Faculty	4.04	1.3%	2.7%	21.9%	21.9%	35.3%	1,254
Size of School	4.03	0.8%	3.6%	22.2%	22.2%	34.4%	1,428
Buildings	4.01	0.2%	2.6%	22.2%	22.2%	29.0%	1,426
Student Faculty Ratio	3.95	0.6%	4.5%	25.3%	25.3%	31.4%	1,334
Email Communication	3.93	2.2%	5.3%	22.5%	22.5%	32.4%	1,304
Personal Contact with Admissions Staff	3.92	1.4%	4.9%	25.7%	25.7%	31.8%	1,208
Social Networks	3.90	1.4%	4.1%	27.8%	27.8%	30.4%	1,071
Web Site	3.88	2.4%	6.4%	23.4%	23.4%	31.6%	1,362
Campus Diversity	3.85	2.3%	6.8%	24.5%	24.5%	30.3%	1,346
Total Cost	3.83	4.1%	9.0%	22.2%	22.2%	35.5%	1,413
Location	3.82	3.4%	9.2%	23.7%	23.7%	34.4%	1,442
Residence Halls	3.82	1.4%	5.3%	29.6%	29.6%	26.3%	1,360
Personal Contact with Alumni	3.82	3.4%	6.3%	25.0%	25.0%	29.6%	1,107
Financial Aid Package	3.72	5.7%	8.5%	24.2%	24.2%	30.2%	1,357
Merit Scholarships	3.71	6.2%	8.5%	24.6%	24.6%	30.9%	1,270

Regarding the table above, keep in mind that the ranked means in the second column are each based on a scale of 1 to 5. Consequently, while it is true that, say, Merit Scholarships, Financial Aid Package, Resident Halls, Location, and Total Cost appear at the bottom of this table, the corresponding means are far from the bottom of the numerical scale on which they are based. In short, these five factors are low relative to the other factors—not low in an absolute sense.

## UMaine vs. Other School of Interest

As we indicated at the outset, we also asked students to provide an additional set of ratings with a comparison school in mind—another school that they had applied to, they were accepted at, and, excluding UMaine, interested them most. The remainder of this report shows, in the eyes of our new first-year students, how UMaine stacks up against the comparison schools on these 34 factors.

Methodological notes and caveats:

- These graphs only include UMaine new students who provided ratings for a comparison school *to which they had applied and had been accepted*. Of the 1,625 new students on whom the preceding results are based, 903 are represented in the graphs below.<sup>1</sup>
- Ratings range from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). For each factor, we graph the difference between the mean rating for UMaine and the mean rating for the other school. For example, a “UMaine-Other difference” of +1.0 on Total Cost indicates that UMaine received more favorable ratings on average than the comparison school, and by 1.0 point on the 5-point scale. (A positive difference always favors UMaine.)
- Bars extending to the right signify more favorable ratings for UMaine versus the comparison school (on average); where bars extend to the left, the nod goes to the comparison school.
- We grouped the comparison schools into three categories—private, public in-state, and public out-of-state—and present a separate graph for each group.
- Not unexpectedly, some institutions surfaced more frequently than others as comparison schools (see table on following page). Consequently, we also present separate graphs for University of Southern Maine, University of New Hampshire, University of New England, University of Vermont, Husson University, and University of Rhode Island.
- When reviewing the graphs below, one should focus on the *relative* length of bars, whether bars tend to be in the positive region (favoring UMaine) or the negative region (favoring the comparison school), and how the general profile of bars in one graph compares with the general profile of bars in another. In particular, it is important to not attach particular significance to the *absolute* length of a bar (e.g., “.4” versus “.6”), which arguably asks more of these data than they can deliver.
- The number of respondents varies from graph to graph, which should be kept in mind when considering the results. (See text box in the lower right corner of each graph.)

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<sup>1</sup> Why the difference? 244 of these 1,625 students either did not provide a comparison school or indicated UMaine was the only school of interest, 296 had not been accepted to their comparison school, 21 did not indicate their acceptance status at their comparison school, and 161 did not respond to the items.

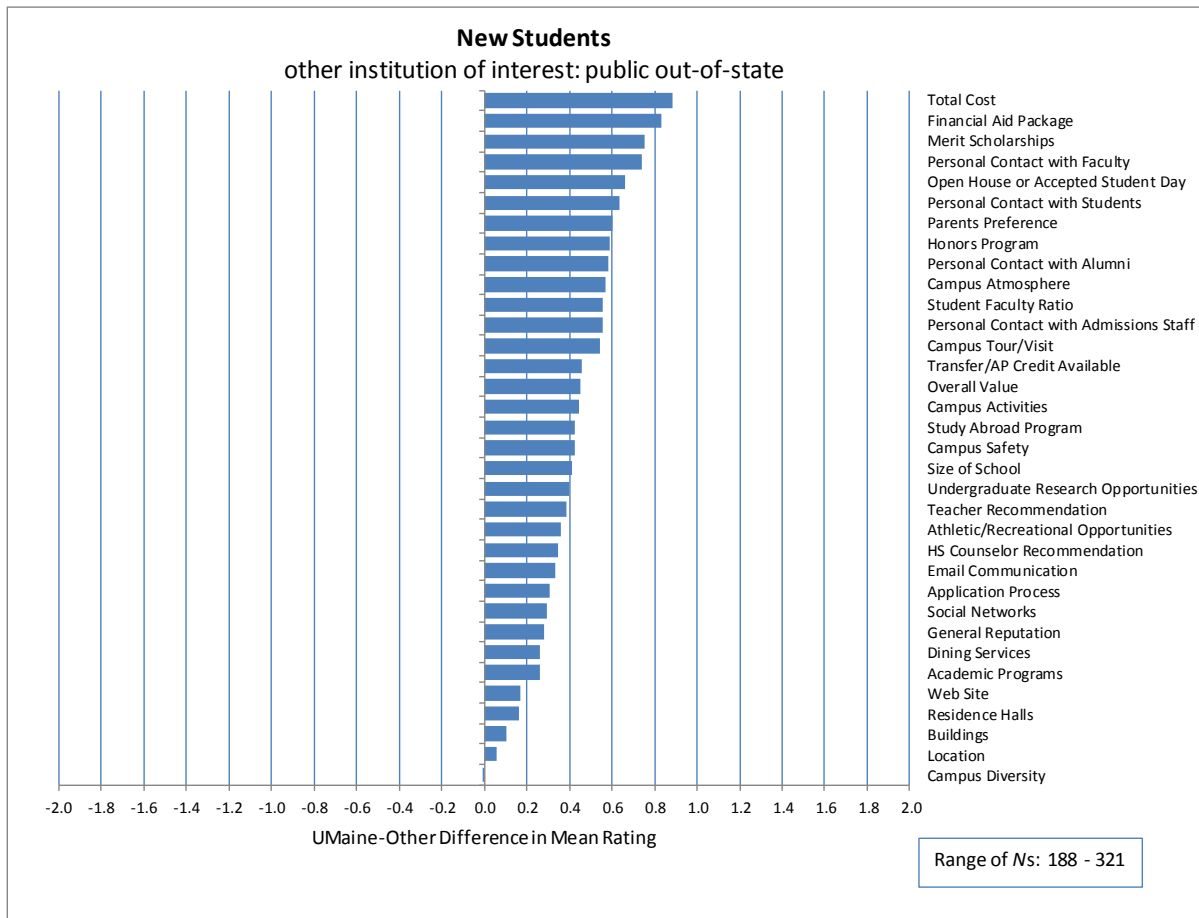
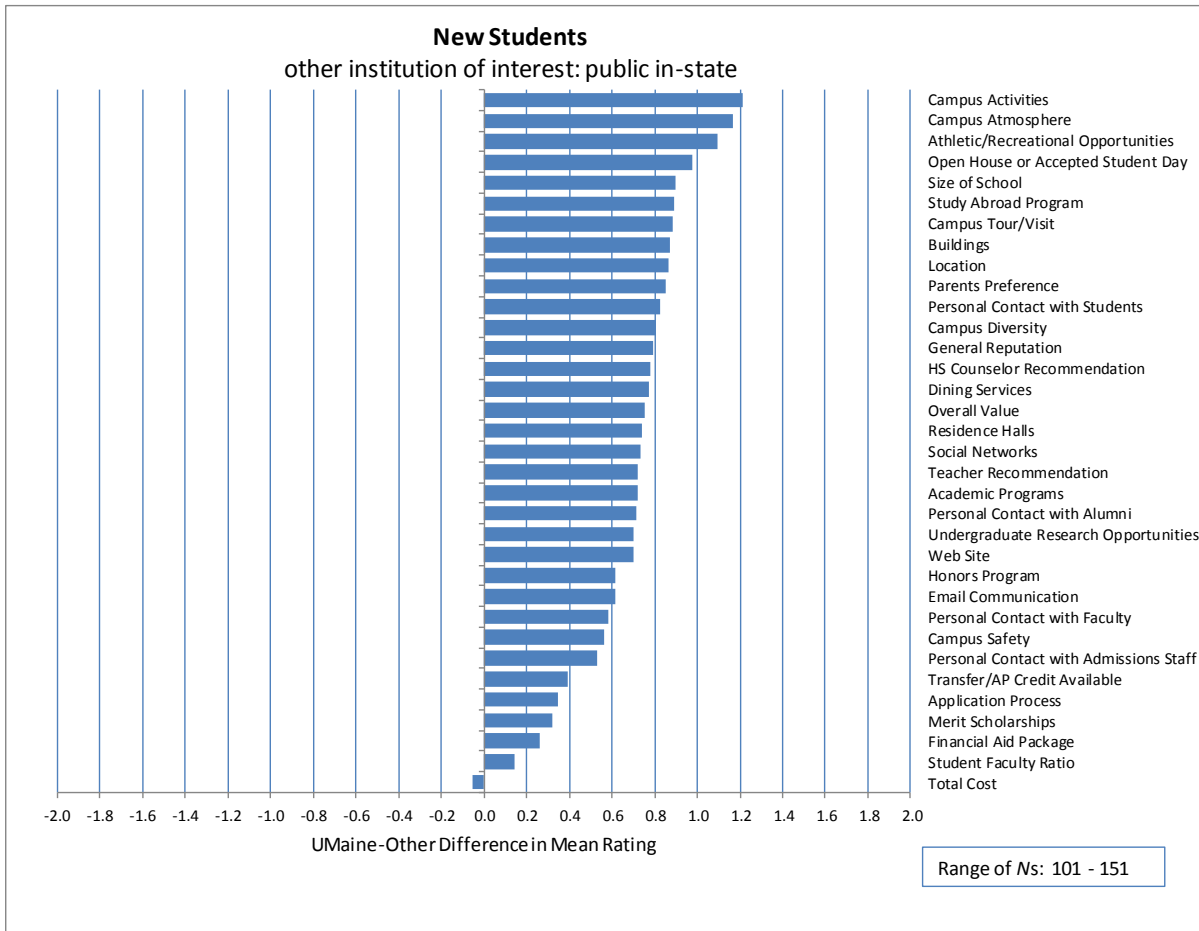


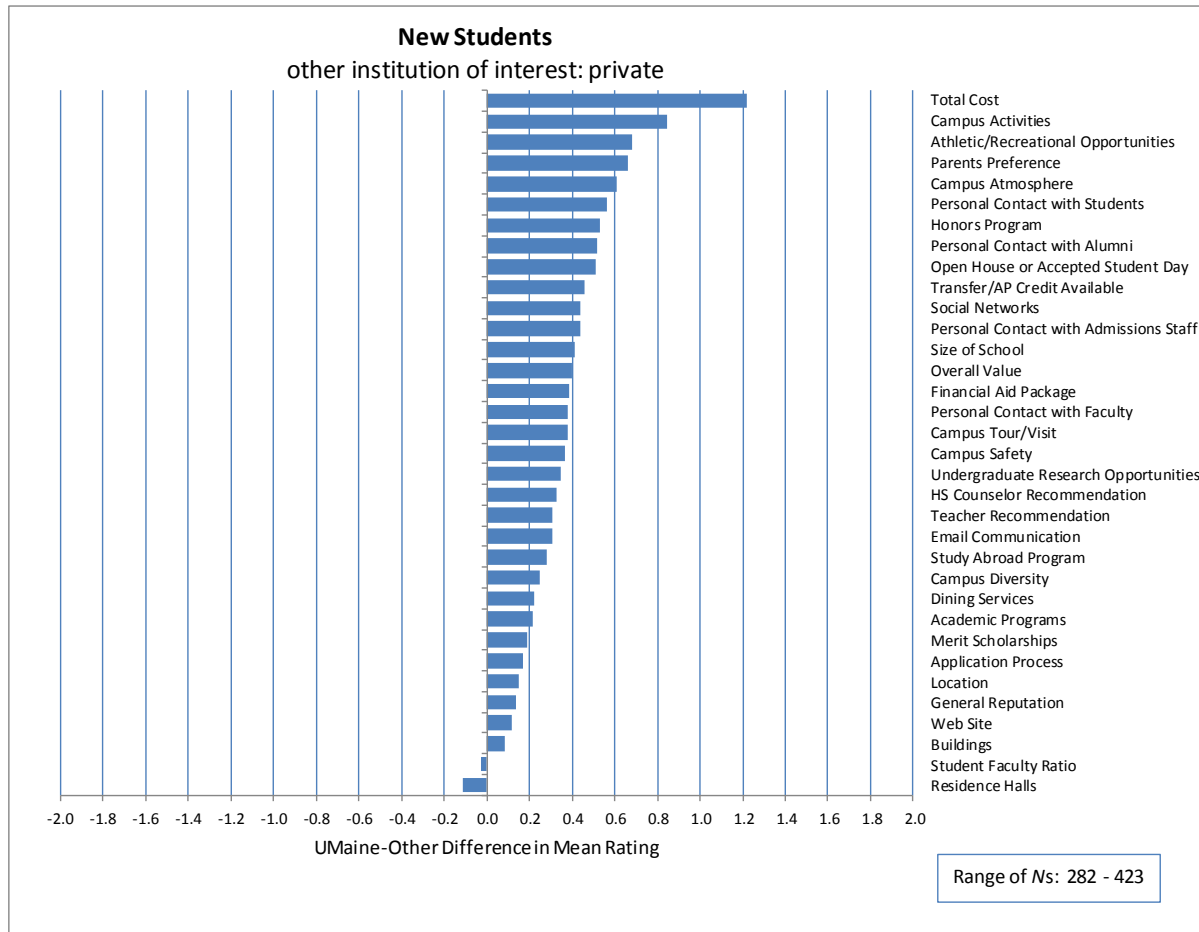
**Comparison schools indicated by least five students**

UMaine New Students ( <i>n</i> )	Comparison School of Interest
72	USM
61	University of New Hampshire
52	UNE
46	University of Vermont
30	Husson
30	URI
28	UMF
21	University of Connecticut
15	Maine Maritime Academy
14	Saint Josephs
14	UMass Amherst
12	Keene State
12	Thomas College
12	Worcester Polytechnic Institute
11	Northeastern University
11	Wentworth
10	Boston University
9	Plymouth State University
8	UMFK
7	Champlain College
7	Merrimack College
7	Roger Williams University
7	UMPI
6	Clarkson
6	Colorado State University
6	Quinnipiac
6	Rochester Institute of
6	UMass Lowell
6	Unity College
6	University of New Haven
6	Wheaton College
5	Paul Smiths
5	Penn State
5	Saint Anselm
5	Syracuse University
5	UC Boulder
5	UMA
5	UMM

The first three graphs show the results for our groupings of comparison schools: public in-state, public out-of-state, and private schools. There is much to contemplate in these results, to be sure. And depending on one's interests, readers naturally will vary in what strikes them as most salient, relevant, actionable, and so on. A few summary comments:

- Not surprisingly, most differences favor UMaine. This is true whether the comparison involves a public in-state, public out-of-state, or private school.
- The relative magnitude of a difference for a given factor may change across the three groups of comparison schools. In a few instances, the *direction* of the difference may change as well. An example of this is seen with Residence Halls, where UMaine is rated more favorably than both public in-state and public out-of-state comparison schools on average, but less favorably relative to private comparison schools.





We now focus on six comparison institutions that surfaced more frequently than others:

- University of Southern Maine
- University of New Hampshire
- University of New England
- University of Vermont
- Husson University
- University of Rhode Island

As in the three graphs above, most differences favor UMaine here as well, although the magnitude and direction of a difference for a given factor may vary across the six schools. For example, consider the UMaine-Husson graph (where all differences favor UMaine) and the UMaine-UVM graph (where there are several differences favoring UVM). That said, it is particularly important to remain mindful of the smaller number of respondents on which these school-specific graphs are based.

