

Results from the New Student Survey (2019)

UMaine Office of Institutional Research
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The 2019 New Student Survey results are based on 1,161 new first-year students, 1,003 of whom completed the survey at summer orientation. The remaining 158 respondents completed an online version of this survey after orientation, 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 survey.

These results reflect roughly 54% of the UMaine population of new first-year students in fall 2019. Although an imperfect completion rate, we have no reason to believe these data differ appreciably from what we 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.

We begin with a presentation of the item-by-item results (pp. 3-7), after which we present a set of analyses based on a subgroup of these 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 share some things that caught our collective eye:

- UMaine is the first choice for 70% of these respondents.
- For 13% of respondents, the father's educational attainment did not go beyond high school; for the mother's, this is true for 22% of respondents.
- 62% of respondents feel "well prepared" or "very well prepared" for UMaine.
- 38% of these respondents plan to study 10 or fewer hours in the typical week, and 84% expect a first-year GPA of 3.0 or higher.
- Respondents' concerns as they anticipate their experience at UMaine (indicating it as "a concern" or "somewhat of a concern"):
 - grades (85%)
 - balancing time (84%)
 - having enough spending money (79%)
 - paying for school (76%)
 - anxiety about starting college (71%)

- The least of respondents' concerns (indicating it as "not a concern"):
 - romantic relationships (54%)
 - size of classes (58%)
 - transportation (66%)
 - personal safety (75%)
 - drugs and alcohol (82%)¹

- The five highest-rated factors influencing the decision to attend UMaine (on a scale of 1 to 5):
 - athletic/recreational opportunities (mean rating: 4.35)
 - campus atmosphere (mean rating: 4.34)
 - campus activities (mean rating: 4.33)
 - campus safety (mean rating: 4.32)
 - campus tour/visit (mean rating: 4.28)

- The five lowest-rated factors influencing the decision to attend UMaine (again, on a scale of 1 to 5):
 - residence halls (mean rating: 3.66)
 - web site (mean rating: 3.71)
 - personal contact with alumni (mean rating: 3.72)
 - location (mean rating: 3.75)
 - campus diversity (mean rating: 3.80)

- The six schools that interested respondents most (other than UMaine), to which they had applied and had been accepted:
 - University of New Hampshire
 - University of Southern Maine
 - University of Vermont
 - University of Rhode Island
 - University of New England
 - Husson University

¹ Of course, this means that roughly one in five respondents *are* concerned about drugs and alcohol as they anticipate their experience at UMaine. The other statistics in this list should be regarded similarly.

Item-By-Item Results

Mother's highest level of education?

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Grammar school	3	0.3
Some high school	39	3.4
High school graduate	210	18.3
Postsecondary other than college	55	4.8
Some college	167	14.5
College degree	406	35.3
Some graduate school	25	2.2
Graduate degree	214	18.6
Don't know	30	2.6
Total	1149	

(12 nonrespondents)

Father's highest level of education?

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Grammar school	2	0.2
Some high school	16	1.4
High school graduate	134	11.6
Postsecondary other than college	23	2.0
Some college	163	14.1
College degree	538	46.5
Some graduate school	22	1.9
Graduate degree	248	21.5
Don't know	10	0.9
Total	1156	

(5 nonrespondents)

Other Siblings at College?

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
I'm the first of my brothers and sisters to go to college	529	45.9
I have at least one brother or sister who has gone to college in the last four years	448	38.9
I have at least one brother or sister who has gone to college five or more years ago	89	7.7
I'm an only child	86	7.5
Total	1152	

(9 nonrespondents)

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

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Very well prepared	147	12.7
Well prepared	568	49.1
Somewhat prepared	408	35.3
Underprepared	23	2.0
Not certain	10	0.9
Total	1156	

(5 nonrespondents)

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

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
5 hours or fewer	54	4.7
6 - 10 hours	384	33.2
11 - 15 hours	414	35.8
16 - 20 hours	242	20.9
21 hours or more	64	5.5
Total	1158	

(3 nonrespondents)

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

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
3.00 or higher	967	83.9
2.00 - 2.99	184	16.0
1.00 - 1.99	2	0.2
Total	1153	

(8 nonrespondents)

An aside: Do expectations agree with reality? Respondents to the 2018 survey disclosed expectations not dissimilar to those reported on the item above: 83% expecting a GPA of 3.0 or higher, and 17% expecting a GPA between 2.00 and 2.99. In contrast, the actual end-of-year GPA for this earlier group was 48% and 33%, respectively. An additional 13% earned a GPA between 1.0 and 1.9, with 6% earning a GPA lower than 1.0.

Is UMaine your first-choice school?

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	806	69.6
No	352	30.4
Total	1158	

(3 nonrespondents)

Number of colleges applied to?

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
1	135	11.7
2	121	10.5
3	152	13.1
4	164	14.2
5	169	14.6
More than 5	415	35.9
Total	1,655	

(5 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
Grades	15.1%	44.8%	40.1%	1,145
Balancing my time among classes, studying, work, and leisure	16.2%	44.0%	39.8%	1,141
Financial - paying for school	23.7%	40.1%	36.2%	1,151
Financial - having enough spending money	21.1%	44.1%	34.8%	1,144
No specific concerns, general anxiety	29.0%	46.0%	25.0%	1,136
Relationships with new friends	32.8%	42.2%	25.0%	1,142
Chose best major	37.1%	38.4%	24.5%	1,146
Making sure I get the extra help I need	32.5%	48.1%	19.5%	1,140
Being away from friends	40.4%	40.3%	19.4%	1,142
Health	46.3%	35.2%	18.5%	1,141
Residence hall life	41.0%	42.9%	16.1%	1,141
Finding my way around campus	38.9%	46.2%	14.9%	1,142
Romantic relationships	54.3%	32.3%	13.4%	1,139
Instructor expectations	44.1%	43.4%	12.6%	1,139
Being away from family	49.2%	39.5%	11.3%	1,144
Relationships with faculty	48.7%	41.4%	9.9%	1,141
Size of classes	57.7%	34.5%	7.8%	1,139
Transportation	65.7%	27.9%	6.4%	1,140
My personal safety	74.8%	20.4%	4.8%	1,140
Drugs and alcohol	81.8%	14.5%	3.7%	1,140

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

	Mean Rating	Poor		Good		Excellent	Total Respondents
		1	2	3	4	5	
Athletic/Recreational Opportunities	4.35	0.3%	1.8%	13.9%	30.6%	53.3%	992
Campus Atmosphere	4.34	0.2%	1.5%	13.9%	33.2%	51.2%	1,063
Campus Activities	4.33	0.0%	0.9%	15.2%	33.5%	50.4%	1,012
Campus Safety	4.32	0.3%	1.5%	14.5%	32.9%	50.8%	1,008
Campus Tour/Visit	4.28	0.6%	2.0%	15.8%	32.0%	49.6%	984
Academic Programs	4.25	0.0%	0.7%	16.2%	40.8%	42.2%	1,070
Undergraduate Research	4.23	0.3%	1.5%	17.9%	35.0%	45.3%	948
Application Process	4.23	0.3%	1.4%	17.9%	35.5%	44.9%	1,009
Overall Value	4.23	0.2%	1.4%	16.3%	39.8%	42.2%	999
Parent's Preference	4.16	1.1%	4.1%	18.9%	29.8%	46.1%	941
Commitment to Sustainability	4.16	0.6%	2.2%	21.0%	33.4%	42.8%	961
Open House or Accepted Student	4.15	0.6%	3.1%	20.0%	33.4%	42.9%	895
Size of School	4.11	0.4%	2.9%	20.0%	38.7%	38.0%	1,058
Study Abroad Program	4.10	0.6%	2.7%	21.5%	36.5%	38.7%	879
Transfer/AP Credit Available	4.10	1.3%	2.9%	20.9%	34.3%	40.6%	852
General Reputation	4.09	0.3%	2.8%	20.5%	40.6%	35.8%	1,073
Personal Contact with Students	4.09	0.9%	3.4%	21.8%	34.2%	39.8%	933
Teacher Recommendation	4.08	1.0%	2.4%	21.9%	37.4%	37.3%	839
Honors Program	4.07	1.2%	2.5%	21.8%	36.6%	37.9%	815
Total Cost	4.07	1.6%	5.6%	21.4%	27.0%	44.5%	1,030
Personal Contact with Faculty	4.01	0.9%	4.8%	22.9%	35.1%	36.3%	898
Merit Scholarships	4.01	1.9%	6.3%	20.6%	31.9%	39.3%	969
Financial Aid Package	4.00	2.9%	5.0%	21.4%	30.9%	39.7%	999
Email Communications	3.99	1.0%	5.0%	23.6%	34.9%	35.5%	988
Buildings and Facilities	3.98	0.5%	4.4%	22.9%	40.9%	31.4%	1,057
HS Counselor Recommendation	3.98	2.2%	4.0%	23.3%	35.0%	35.6%	829
Personal Contact with Admissions	3.93	1.8%	4.1%	25.8%	35.7%	32.6%	884
Student/Faculty Ratio	3.92	0.3%	4.7%	27.9%	36.6%	30.5%	964
Social Networks	3.87	1.7%	4.1%	28.9%	35.8%	29.5%	861
Dining Services	3.84	1.3%	5.7%	27.9%	37.3%	27.7%	992
Campus Diversity	3.80	2.3%	8.2%	27.5%	31.5%	30.5%	953
Location	3.75	2.9%	11.4%	26.1%	27.0%	32.5%	1,067
Personal Contact with Alumni	3.72	4.4%	8.6%	29.2%	26.6%	31.2%	775
Web Site	3.71	4.6%	8.5%	26.8%	31.8%	28.4%	1,001
Residence Halls	3.66	1.6%	9.9%	31.8%	34.7%	22.0%	993

Regarding the table above, bear in mind that the ranked mean ratings in the second column are each based on a scale of 1 to 5. Consequently, while it is true that, say, Residence Halls appears at the bottom of this table, the corresponding mean (3.66) is far from the bottom of the numerical scale on which it is based. In short, this factor is comparatively low to the other factors—not low in an absolute sense.

On the next page, we summarize these data separately by residency.

Listed below are factors typically considered when choosing a college. Please rate UMaine on each factor using the 5-point scale. (Summarized by residency status.)

In-State			
Factor	Mean Rating	“Good” or higher %	<i>n</i>
Athletic/Recreational	4.28	98%	597
Campus Activities	4.25	99%	611
Campus Atmosphere	4.23	98%	640
Academic Programs	4.20	99%	646
Campus Safety	4.19	98%	606
Parent's Preference	4.19	95%	577
Campus Tour/Visit	4.17	97%	589
Application Process	4.15	98%	607
Overall Value	4.14	98%	601
Undergraduate Research	4.11	98%	567
Teacher Recommendation	4.07	97%	532
Total Cost	4.07	92%	622
Transfer/AP Credit Available	4.06	95%	537
Open House/Accepted Student	4.05	96%	531
Commitment to Sustainability	4.02	96%	574
Size of School	4.01	95%	637
Personal Contact with Students	4.00	95%	564
General Reputation	3.99	96%	648
HS Counselor Recommendation	3.99	94%	524
Study Abroad	3.98	96%	519
Honors Program	3.97	96%	498
Merit Scholarships	3.95	91%	592
Buildings and Facilities	3.91	95%	637
Email Communications	3.91	93%	590
Financial Aid Package	3.90	90%	604
Personal Contact with Faculty	3.87	92%	533
Campus Diversity	3.83	91%	572
Personal Contact w/Admissions	3.81	93%	529
Social Networks	3.80	93%	524
Student/Faculty Ratio	3.76	93%	579
Personal Contact with Alumni	3.73	88%	487
Dining Services	3.73	91%	600
Location	3.71	85%	644
Web Site	3.63	88%	601
Residence Halls	3.51	86%	596

Out of State			
Factor	Mean Rating	“Good” or higher %	<i>n</i>
Campus Safety	4.52	99%	402
Campus Atmosphere	4.50	99%	423
Campus Activities	4.46	99%	401
Athletic/Recreational	4.45	98%	395
Campus Tour/Visit	4.45	98%	395
Undergraduate Research	4.41	98%	381
Commitment to Sustainability	4.36	99%	387
Application Process	4.36	99%	402
Overall Value	4.35	98%	398
Academic Programs	4.31	100%	424
Open House/Accepted Student	4.29	97%	364
Study Abroad	4.27	98%	360
Size of School	4.26	99%	421
Honors Program	4.24	97%	317
General Reputation	4.24	98%	425
Personal Contact with Faculty	4.22	97%	365
Personal Contact with Students	4.21	97%	369
Transfer/AP Credit Available	4.17	97%	315
Student/Faculty Ratio	4.16	98%	385
Financial Aid Package	4.15	96%	395
Email Communications	4.12	96%	398
Parent's Preference	4.11	94%	364
Personal Contact w/Admissions	4.11	96%	355
Buildings and Facilities	4.10	96%	420
Merit Scholarships	4.10	93%	377
Teacher Recommendation	4.09	96%	307
Total Cost	4.08	93%	408
Dining Services	4.02	96%	392
Social Networks	3.99	96%	337
HS Counselor Recommendation	3.96	93%	305
Residence Halls	3.88	92%	397
Web Site	3.82	86%	400
Location	3.81	87%	423
Campus Diversity	3.76	87%	381
Personal Contact with Alumni	3.69	85%	288

UMaine vs. Other School of Interest

As indicated at the outset, we also asked students to provide an additional set of ratings with a comparison school in mind—another school they had applied to, they were accepted at, and, excluding UMaine, interested them most. The remainder of this report shows, in the eyes of these new first-year students, how UMaine stacks up against the comparison schools on these 35 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 1,161 new students on whom the preceding results are based, 833 are represented in the graphs below.²
- 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 on average received more favorable ratings than the comparison school—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—public in-state, public out-of-state, and private schools—and present a separate graph for each.
- Not unexpectedly, some institutions surfaced more frequently than others as comparison schools (see the table on the following page). Consequently, we also present separate graphs for University of New Hampshire, University of Southern Maine, University of Vermont, University of Rhode Island, University of New England, and Husson University.
- 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 in 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 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 the text box in the lower right corner of each graph.)

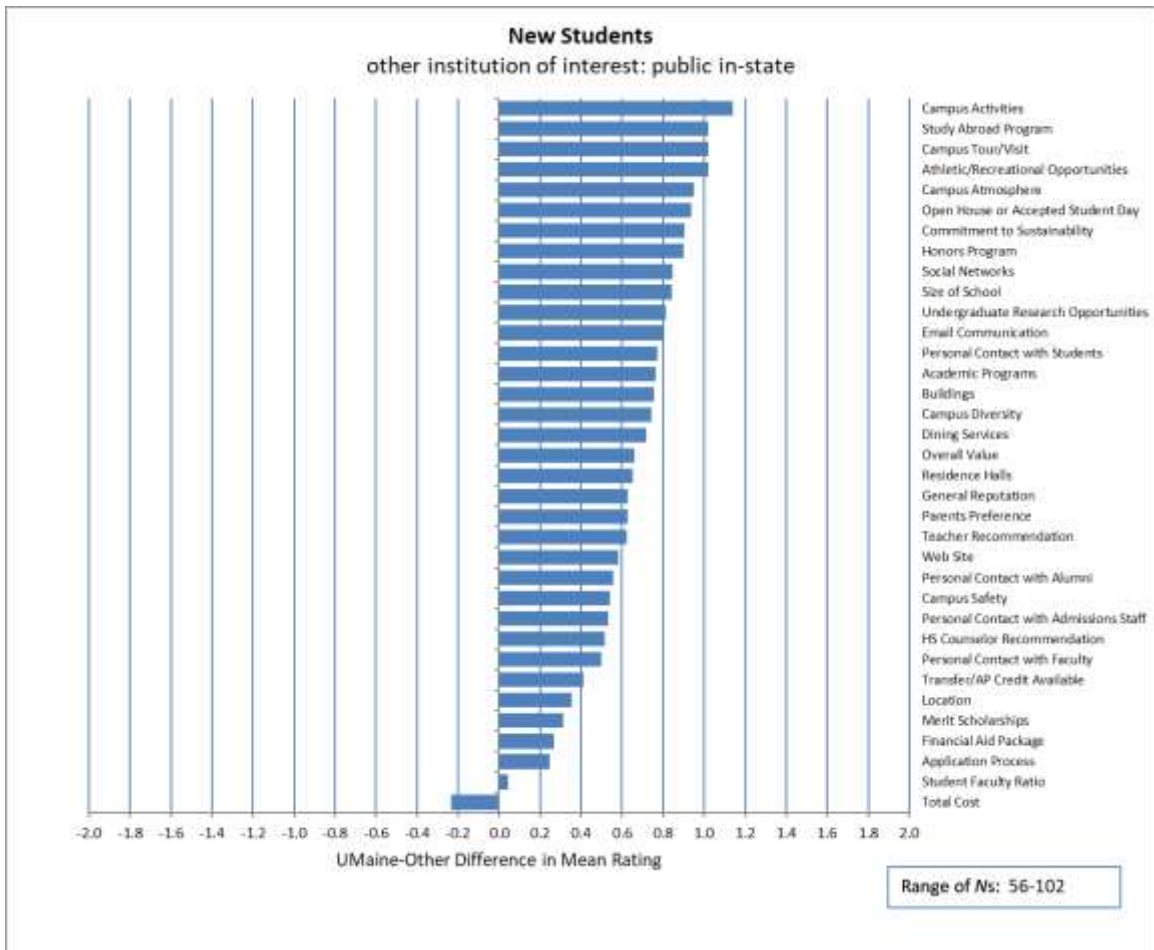
² Why the difference? 272 of these 1,161 students did not respond to these items and 56 students did not provide a comparison school.

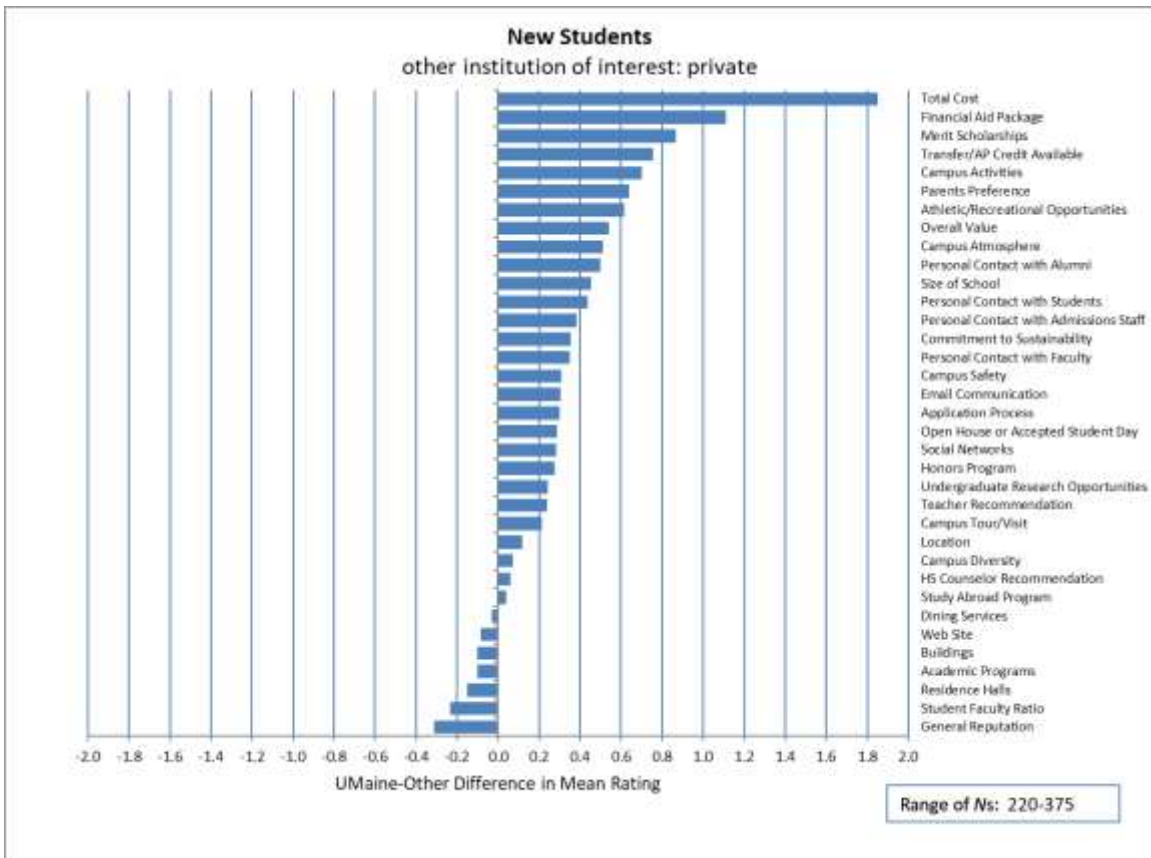
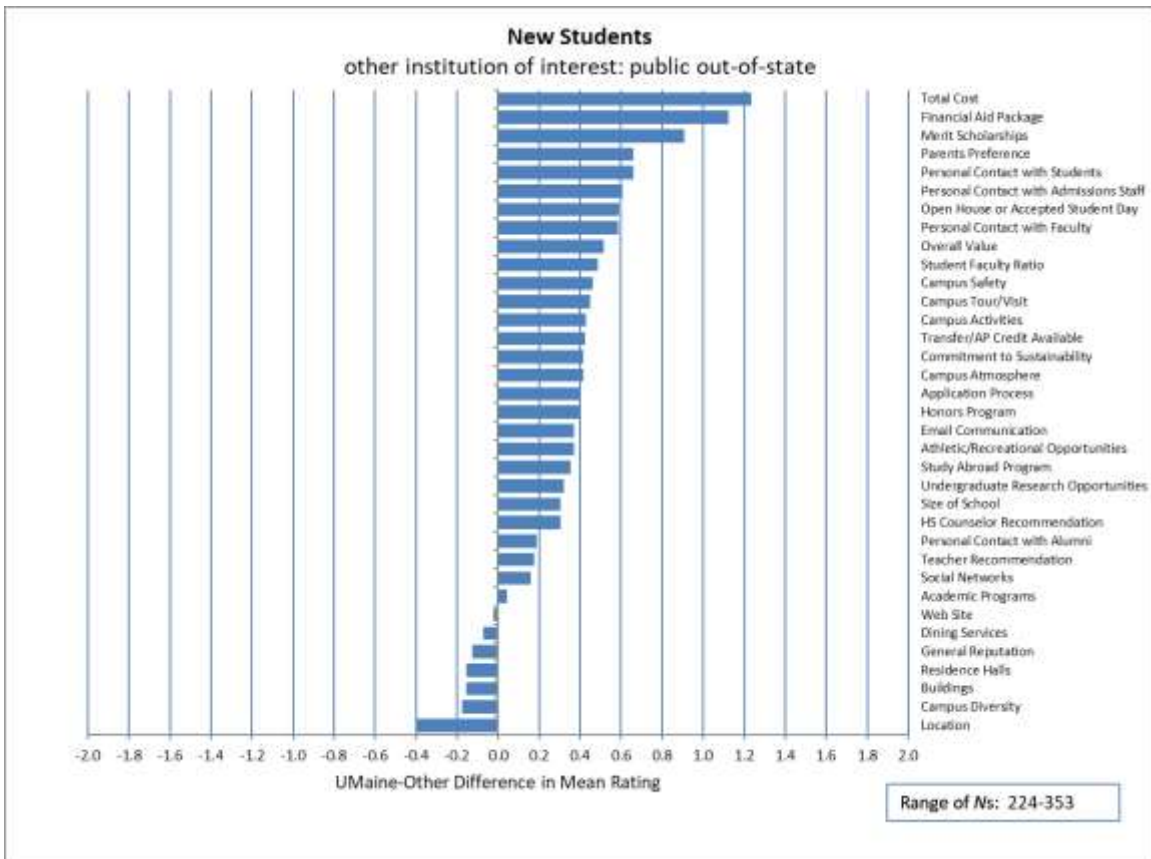
Comparison schools indicated by at least 10 students

UMaine New Students (<i>n</i>)	Comparison School of Interest
51	University of New Hampshire
47	University of Southern Maine
34	University of Vermont
29	University of Rhode Island
28	University of New England
25	Husson University
23	University of Maine Farmington
21	University of Massachusetts Amherst
21	Worcester Polytechnic Institute
19	University of Connecticut
18	Wentworth Institute of Technology
13	Maine Maritime Academy
12	Unity College
11	Clarkson University
11	Penn State University
11	University of Massachusetts Dartmouth
10	Merrimack College
10	Rochester Institute of Technology

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—after all, these students did matriculate here—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. And in a few instances, the *direction* of the difference may change as well. For example, UMaine on average is rated more favorably than public in-state comparison schools with respect to Location, Campus Diversity, and Buildings. When compared with public out-of-state and private schools, however, UMaine is rated less favorably on these same considerations.





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

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

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. Again, it is particularly important to remain mindful of the smaller number of respondents on which these school-specific graphs are based.

