

## *Results from the New Student Survey (2018)*

UMaine Office of Institutional Research  
June 2019

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The 2018 New Student Survey results are based on 1,658 new first-year students, 1,239 of whom completed the survey at summer orientation. The remaining 419 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 74% of the UMaine population of new first-year students in fall 2018. 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 72% of these respondents.
- For 23% of respondents, the father's educational attainment did not go beyond high school; for the mother's, this is true for 14% of respondents.
- 59% of respondents feel "prepared" or "very well prepared" for UMaine.
- 34% of these respondents plan to study 10 or fewer hours in the typical week, and 83% 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 (86%)
  - balancing time (85%)
  - having enough spending money (81%)
  - paying for school (78%)
  - anxiety about starting college (71%)

- The least of respondents' concerns (indicating it as "not a concern"):
  - drugs and alcohol (80%)<sup>1</sup>
  - personal safety (73%)
  - transportation (65%)
  - size of classes (59%)
  - romantic relationships (57%)
  
- The five highest-rated factors influencing the decision to attend UMaine (on a scale of 1 to 5):
  - athletic/recreational opportunities (mean rating: 4.42)
  - campus atmosphere (mean rating: 4.37)
  - campus safety (mean rating: 4.36)
  - campus activities (mean rating: 4.36)
  - Undergraduate research opportunities (mean rating: 4.29)
  
- The five lowest-rated factors influencing the decision to attend UMaine (again, on a scale of 1 to 5):
  - residence halls (mean rating: 3.77)
  - personal contact with alumni (mean rating: 3.78)
  - location (mean rating: 3.80)
  - campus diversity (mean rating: 3.81)
  - financial aid package (mean rating: 3.86)
  
- 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 Rhode Island
  - University of Vermont
  - University of Massachusetts-Amherst
  - University of New England

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

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

	<i>n</i>	%
Grammar school	2	.1
Some high school	18	1.1
High school graduate	218	13.2
Postsecondary other than college	51	3.1
Some college	250	15.1
College degree	676	40.9
Some graduate school	38	2.3
Graduate degree	380	23.0
Don't know	20	1.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,653</b>	

(5 nonrespondents)

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

	<i>n</i>	%
Grammar school	7	.4
Some high school	43	2.6
High school graduate	321	19.6
Postsecondary other than college	76	4.6
Some college	236	14.4
College degree	585	35.7
Some graduate school	25	1.5
Graduate degree	305	18.6
Don't know	42	2.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,640</b>	

(18 nonrespondents)

**Other Siblings at College?**

	<i>n</i>	%
I'm the first of my brothers and sisters to go to college	689	41.8
I have at least one brother or sister who has gone to college in the last four years	694	42.1
I have at least one brother or sister who has gone to college five or more years ago	102	6.2
I'm an only child	164	9.9
Total	1,649	

(9 nonrespondents)

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

	<i>n</i>	%
Very well prepared	200	12.1
Well prepared	775	46.9
Somewhat prepared	613	37.1
Underprepared	49	3.0
Not certain	15	0.9
Total	1,652	

(6 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 fewer	57	3.5
6 - 10 hours	495	30.0
11 - 15 hours	615	37.2
16 - 20 hours	378	22.9
21 hours or more	107	6.5
Total	1,652	

(6 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	1,363	82.7
2.00 - 2.99	283	17.2
1.00 - 1.99	2	0.1
Lower than 1.00	1	0.1
Total	1,649	

(9 nonrespondents)

An aside: Do expectations agree with reality? Respondents to the 2017 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 45% and 36%, respectively. An additional 14% earned a GPA between 1.0 and 1.9, with 5% earning a GPA lower than 1.0. Evidence of this rude awakening surfaces each year we make this comparison.

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

	<i>n</i>	%
Yes	1,183	71.7
No	468	28.3
Total	1,651	

(7 nonrespondents)

**Number of colleges applied to?**

	<i>n</i>	%
1	250	15.1
2	134	8.1
3	234	14.1
4	243	14.7
5	215	13.0
More than 5	579	35.0
Total	1,655	

(3 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	13.9%	44.5%	41.6%	1,644
Financial - paying for school	21.7%	37.5%	40.8%	1,647
Balancing my time among classes, studying, work, and leisure	14.8%	45.2%	40.0%	1,642
Financial – having enough spending money	18.9%	44.7%	36.4%	1,638
No specific concerns, general anxiety	29.5%	45.9%	24.5%	1,639
Relationships with new friends	35.7%	40.6%	23.7%	1,639
Chose best major	39.0%	37.5%	23.5%	1,638
Making sure I get the extra help I need	30.4%	48.4%	21.2%	1,640
Health	47.0%	34.2%	18.8%	1,642
Being away from friends	41.2%	40.5%	18.3%	1,640
Finding my way around campus	35.8%	46.0%	18.2%	1,641
Residence hall life	41.5%	42.4%	16.1%	1,642
Instructor expectations	41.6%	44.1%	14.3%	1,636
Being away from family	49.7%	36.7%	13.6%	1,639
Romantic relationships	56.7%	31.1%	12.1%	1,639
Relationships with faculty	47.6%	40.4%	12.0%	1,640
Size of classes	58.5%	32.9%	8.6%	1,639
Transportation	64.9%	26.9%	8.2%	1,640
My personal safety	73.3%	21.9%	4.8%	1,638
Drugs and alcohol	80.2%	16.5%	3.3%	1,640

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	4.42	0.1%	1.4%	12.8%	27.4%	58.3%	1,423
Campus Atmosphere	4.37	0.0%	1.8%	14.0%	30.1%	54.2%	1,571
Campus Safety	4.36	0.1%	1.3%	14.2%	31.1%	53.2%	1,439
Campus Activities	4.36	0.1%	0.5%	14.4%	33.5%	51.4%	1,476
Undergraduate Research Opportunities	4.29	0.1%	0.9%	17.4%	32.8%	48.8%	1,401
Campus Tour/Visit	4.29	0.4%	1.6%	17.9%	28.4%	51.7%	1,409
Application Process	4.27	0.6%	0.5%	18.8%	31.7%	48.4%	1,466
Overall Value	4.25	0.1%	1.0%	18.1%	35.4%	45.4%	1,436
Academic Programs	4.25	0%	0.7%	16.7%	39.8%	42.8%	1,524
Open House or Accepted Student Day	4.22	0.7%	1.7%	19.4%	31.4%	46.8%	1,261
Commitment to Sustainability	4.20	0.3%	1.8%	20.3%	33.4%	44.3%	1,362
Personal Contact with Students	4.19	0.5%	1.7%	20.2%	33.6%	44.0%	1,396
Study Abroad Program	4.16	0.5%	3.0%	20.2%	32.5%	43.8%	1,288
General Reputation	4.14	0.2%	1.8%	20.8%	38.1%	39.1%	1,536
Size of School	4.13	0.5%	2.3%	21.5%	35.7%	40.1%	1,513
Teacher Recommendation	4.12	1.0%	1.9%	21.6%	35.1%	40.4%	1,244
Parent's Preference	4.12	1.8%	3.9%	19.4%	30.2%	44.6%	1,363
Honors Program	4.09	1.0%	1.6%	24.3%	33.4%	39.7%	1,150
Personal Contact with Faculty	4.08	0.8%	2.6%	24.3%	32.3%	40.0%	1,348
Buildings and Facilities	4.07	0.3%	2.8%	22.3%	39.21%	35.5%	1,519
Transfer/AP Credit Available	4.03	1.3%	3.6%	24.0%	33.0%	38.1%	1,235
Email Communications	4.03	2.0%	3.2%	24.3%	31.1%	39.4%	1,434
HS Counselor Recommendation	4.02	1.8%	3.8%	22.4%	34.1%	37.9%	1,245
Total Cost	4.00	1.6%	7.2%	23.4%	24.9%	42.8%	1,480
Personal Contact with Admission	3.96	1.8%	4.4%	26.1%	31.4%	36.3%	1,302
Student/Faculty Ratio	3.95	0.9%	3.9%	26.3%	36.9%	32.1%	1,399
Social Networks	3.92	0.8%	4.1%	28.9%	34.5%	31.8%	1,265
Dining Services	3.92	1.1%	4.5%	27.8%	34.5%	32.1%	1,432
Merit Scholarships	3.90	2.0%	7.2%	24.1%	32.6%	34.1%	1,396
Web Site	3.88	4.0%	5.8%	24.2%	30.2%	35.8%	1,445
Financial Aid Package	3.86	2.6%	7.7%	25.3%	30.0%	34.4%	1,445
Campus Diversity	3.81	2.9%	7.8%	25.7%	32.4%	31.2%	1,397
Location	3.80	2.8%	10.5%	25.0%	26.9%	34.7%	1,517
Personal Contact with Alumni	3.78	4.5%	7.1%	27.0%	28.3%	33.1%	1,136
Residence Halls	3.77	1.3%	7.0%	31.6%	32.8%	27.2%	1,435

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 (3.77) 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	4.34	98%	743
Campus Activities	4.27	99%	776
Campus Atmosphere	4.23	97%	798
Campus Safety	4.19	97%	753
Application Process	4.18	99%	770
Academic Programs	4.17	99%	802
Undergraduate Research	4.16	99%	728
Overall Value	4.15	99%	763
Campus Tour/Visit	4.15	98%	732
Parent’s Preference	4.14	95%	719
Teacher Recommendation	4.14	98%	681
Open House/Accepted Student	4.10	97%	658
Personal Contact with Students	4.07	98%	739
HS Counselor Recommendation	4.06	96%	678
Commitment to Sustainability	4.05	98%	707
Study Abroad	4.04	96%	657
General Reputation	4.00	97%	809
Total Cost	3.99	92%	778
Honors Program	3.97	97%	620
Size of School	3.97	96%	798
Transfer/AP Credit Available	3.97	95%	692
Personal Contact with Faculty	3.95	97%	714
Buildings and Facilities	3.95	96%	796
Email Communications	3.94	95%	761
Social Networks	3.88	95%	658
Personal Contact w/ Admission	3.86	94%	704
Campus Diversity	3.83	91%	736
Website	3.83	90%	767
Personal Contact with Alumni	3.81	91%	645
Dining Services	3.78	92%	759
Location	3.77	85%	801
Student/Faculty Ratio	3.74	93%	737
Merit Scholarships	3.73	87%	752
Financial Aid Package	3.71	86%	771
Residence Halls	3.60	89%	755

Out of State			
Factor	Mean Rating	“Good” or higher %	<i>n</i>
Campus Safety	4.54	100%	686
Campus Atmosphere	4.52	99%	719
Athletic/Recreational	4.52	99%	680
Campus Tour/Visit	4.45	98%	677
Campus Activities	4.45	100%	700
Undergraduate Research	4.43	100%	673
Overall Value	4.36	99%	673
Application Process	4.36	99%	696
Commitment to Sustainability	4.36	98%	655
Open House/Accepted Student	4.35	98%	603
Academic Programs	4.34	99%	722
Personal Contact with Students	4.32	97%	657
General Reputation	4.30	99%	727
Size of School	4.30	99%	715
Study Abroad Program	4.29	97%	631
Honors Program	4.23	98%	530
Personal Contact with Faculty	4.22	97%	634
Buildings and Facilities	4.20	98%	723
Student/Faculty Ratio	4.19	98%	662
Email Communications	4.12	95%	673
Transfer/AP Credit Available	4.11	96%	543
Teacher Recommendation	4.10	96%	563
Parent’s Preference	4.10	93%	644
Merit Scholarships	4.09	95%	644
Personal Contact w/ Admission	4.08	94%	598
Dining Services	4.07	97%	673
Financial Aid Package	4.03	94%	674
Total Cost	4.01	91%	702
HS Counselor Recommendation	3.98	93%	567
Social Networks	3.97	95%	607
Residence Halls	3.97	95%	680
Website	3.94	90%	678
Location	3.84	89%	716
Campus Diversity	3.79	88%	661
Personal Contact with Alumni	3.74	85%	491

### 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 1,658 new students on whom the preceding results are based, 1,143 are represented in the graphs below.<sup>2</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 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 Rhode Island, University of Vermont, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, and University of New England.
- 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.)

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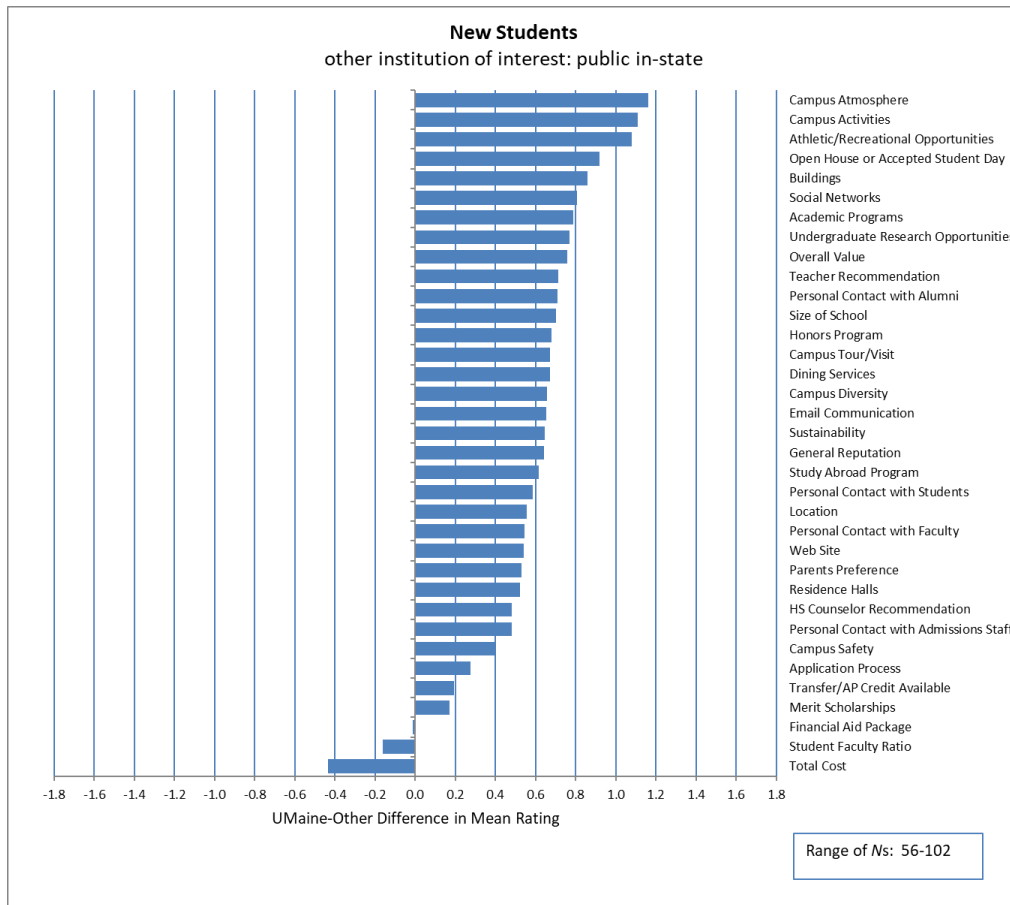
<sup>2</sup> Why the difference? 429 of these 1,658 students did not respond to these items, 82 students did not provide a comparison school, and an additional 4 students indicated UMaine was the only school of interest.

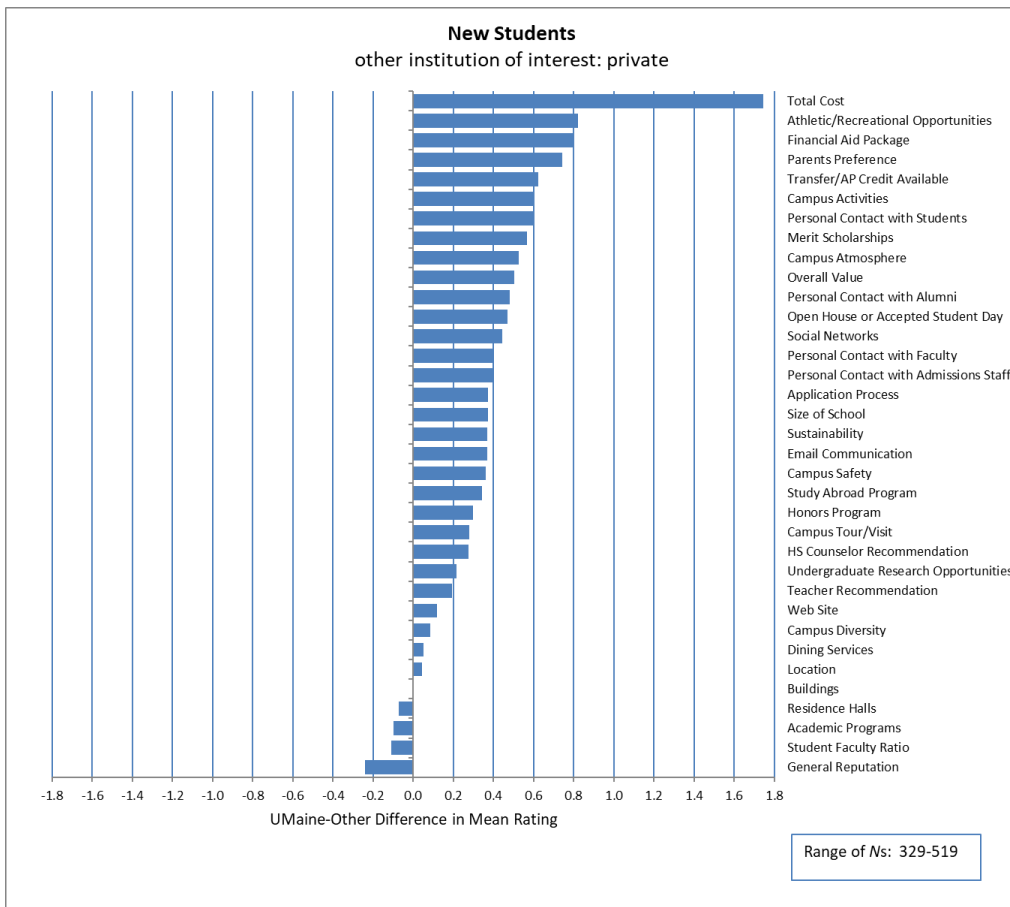
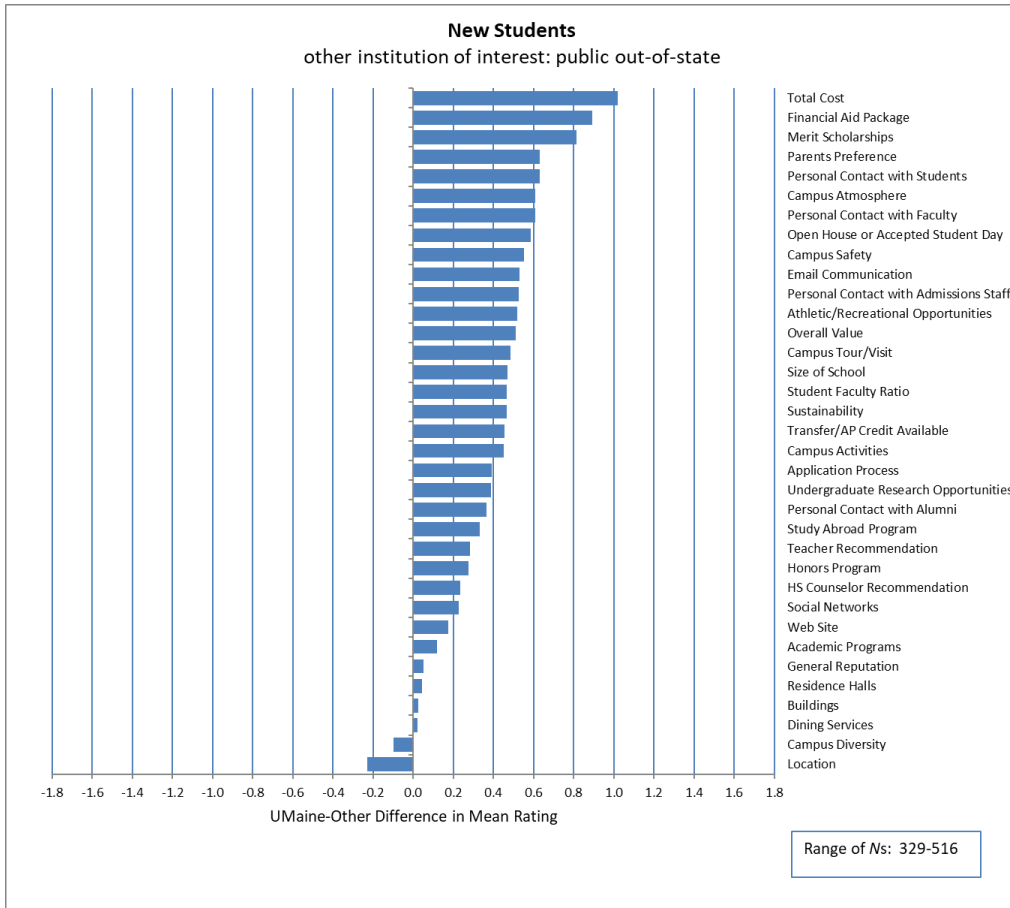
**Comparison schools indicated by at least 10 students**

UMaine New Students ( <i>n</i> )	Comparison School of Interest
80	University of New Hampshire
56	University of Southern Maine
53	University of Vermont
51	University of Rhode Island
48	University of Massachusetts-Amherst
44	University of New England
38	Husson University
36	Wentworth Institute of Technology
22	University of Connecticut
20	Plymouth State University
18	University of Maine at Farmington
13	Merrimack College
14	Quinnipiac University
13	Worcester Polytechnic Institute
12	Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
12	Rochester Institute of Technology
11	Northeastern University
10	Endicott College

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 General Reputation, Residence Halls, and Location. 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 Rhode Island
- University of Massachusetts-Amherst
- University of New England

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.

