

Results from the New Student Survey (2020)

UMaine Office of Institutional Research and Assessment
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The 2020 New Student Survey results are based on 633 new first-year students who completed the survey over the summer. These results reflect 29% of the UMaine population of new first-year students in fall 2020. 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 77% 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 20% of respondents.
- 54% of respondents feel "well prepared" or "very well prepared" for UMaine.
- 37% of these respondents plan to study 10 or fewer hours in the typical week, and 86% 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 (81%)
 - Balancing my time among classes, studying, work, and leisure (82%)
 - Financial -- paying for school (76%)
 - Financial -- having enough spending money (76%)
 - No specific concerns, but a general anxiety about starting college (69%)

The least of respondents' concerns (indicating it as "not a concern"):

- Size of classes (61%)
 - Romantic relationships (67%)
 - Transportation (rides to the mall, getting home for break, etc.) (68%)
 - My personal safety (70%)
 - Drugs and alcohol (87%)
- The five highest-rated factors influencing the decision to attend UMaine (on a scale of 1 to 5):
 - Application process (mean rating: 4.22)
 - Athletic/recreational opportunities (mean rating: 4.17)
 - Academic programs (mean rating: 4.16)
 - Campus activities (mean rating: 4.15)
 - Campus safety (mean rating: 4.14)
 - The five lowest-rated factors influencing the decision to attend UMaine (again, on a scale of 1 to 5):
 - Website (Facebook, Twitter (mean rating: 3.75)
 - Open House or Accepted Student Day (mean rating: 3.72)
 - Residence halls (mean rating: 3.71)
 - Campus diversity (mean rating: 3.65)
 - Personal contact with alumni (mean rating: 3.58)
 - 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 New England
 - University of Vermont
 - Husson University

Item-By-Item Results

Mother's highest level of education?

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Grammar school	2	0.3
Some high school	18	2.9
High school graduate	103	16.5
Postsecondary other than college	23	3.7
Some college	83	13.3
College degree	242	38.8
Some graduate school	15	2.4
Graduate degree	112	17.9
Don't know	26	4.2
Total	624	

(9 nonrespondents)

Father's highest level of education?

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Grammar school	0	0.0
Some high school	8	1.3
High school graduate	75	12.0
Postsecondary other than college	18	2.9
Some college	91	14.5
College degree	253	40.4
Some graduate school	24	3.8
Graduate degree	149	23.8
Don't know	8	1.3
Total	626	

(7 nonrespondents)

Other Siblings at College?

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
I'm the first of my brothers and sisters to go to college	266	42.8
I have at least one brother or sister who has gone to college in the last four years	246	39.5
I have at least one brother or sister who has gone to college five or more years ago	47	7.6
I'm an only child	63	10.1
Total	622	

(11 nonrespondents)

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

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Very well prepared	65	10.4
Well prepared	273	43.5
Somewhat prepared	239	38.1
Underprepared	34	5.4
Not certain	16	2.6
Total	627	

(6 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	28	4.5
6 - 10 hours	206	32.9
11 - 15 hours	249	39.8
16 - 20 hours	117	18.7
21 hours or more	26	4.2
Total	626	

(7 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	536	85.8
2.00 - 2.99	88	14.1
1.00 - 1.99	1	0.2
Total	625	

(8 nonrespondents)

An aside: Do expectations agree with reality? Respondents to the 2019 survey disclosed expectations not dissimilar to those reported on the item above: 84% expecting a GPA of 3.0 or higher, and 16% expecting a GPA between 2.00 and 2.99. In contrast, the actual end-of-year GPA for this earlier group was 69% and 23%, respectively. An additional 8% earned a GPA lower than 2.0. It should also be noted that for the 2020 respondents one-third (32.4%) indicated that their grades were a concern.

Is UMaine your first-choice school?

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	481	77.1
No	143	22.9
Total	624	

(9 nonrespondents)

Number of colleges applied to?

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
1	95	15.4
2	73	11.8
3	77	12.5
4	74	12.0
5	77	12.5
More than 5	222	35.9
Total	618	

(15 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	19.0%	48.6%	32.4%	617
Balancing my time among classes, studying, work, and leisure	17.9%	50.1%	32.0%	619
Financial -- paying for school	24.2%	44.3%	31.5%	619
Financial -- having enough spending money	23.9%	47.7%	28.3%	618
No specific concerns, but a general anxiety about starting college	30.6%	43.4%	26.1%	618
A COVID-19 outbreak on campus	38.7%	37.8%	23.5%	617
Making sure I get the extra help I need in my classes	29.7%	48.9%	21.3%	619
Health (physical, emotional)	41.8%	37.9%	20.3%	617
Have I chosen the best major for me?	46.4%	34.9%	18.7%	619
Relationships with new friends	38.5%	43.4%	18.1%	618
Instructor expectations	41.3%	42.1%	16.5%	617
Finding my way around campus	36.8%	48.3%	14.9%	619
My personal health regarding COVID-19	50.8%	34.5%	14.7%	618
Being away from friends	48.6%	37.2%	14.2%	619
Relationships with faculty	45.6%	40.5%	13.9%	618
Residence hall life (roommate, noise, etc.)	47.5%	40.7%	11.8%	617
Being away from family	54.2%	36.1%	9.7%	618
Size of classes	61.1%	30.1%	8.8%	617
Romantic relationships	66.9%	25.6%	7.5%	617
Transportation (rides to the mall, getting home for break, etc.)	67.5%	25.7%	6.8%	618
My personal safety	70.0%	23.5%	6.5%	617
Drugs and alcohol	86.9%	10.9%	2.3%	617

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

	Mean Rating	Poor 1	2	Good 3	4	Excellent 5	Total Respondents
Application process	4.22	0.2%	2.0%	18.7%	33.6%	45.6%	509
Athletic/recreational opportunities	4.17	0.4%	2.0%	19.5%	36.1%	42.0%	488
Academic programs	4.16	0.0%	0.9%	18.8%	43.2%	37.1%	528
Campus activities	4.15	0.0%	1.6%	21.8%	37.1%	39.5%	509
Campus safety	4.14	0.4%	2.4%	21.0%	35.3%	40.9%	501
Campus tour/visit	4.13	1.2%	2.1%	24.0%	27.8%	44.9%	425
Campus atmosphere	4.12	0.4%	2.9%	19.8%	38.7%	38.3%	520
Overall value	4.11	0.2%	1.4%	23.5%	37.3%	37.7%	507
Undergraduate research opportunities	4.08	0.4%	2.3%	23.3%	36.6%	37.4%	484
Email communications	4.04	1.0%	3.1%	25.8%	31.6%	38.5%	512
General reputation	4.02	0.8%	1.1%	24.1%	43.1%	30.9%	531
Parent's preference	4.02	2.7%	5.9%	19.8%	29.7%	41.9%	475
Size of school	4.01	0.4%	4.0%	25.3%	35.3%	35.1%	530
Teacher recommendation	3.99	0.7%	4.3%	26.5%	32.0%	36.5%	422
Commitment to sustainability	3.99	0.2%	2.6%	29.8%	32.6%	34.8%	457
Study Abroad program	3.97	0.7%	3.7%	26.8%	35.5%	33.4%	437
Honors program	3.97	1.6%	3.5%	25.6%	34.9%	34.4%	433
Transfer/AP credit available	3.96	0.9%	3.2%	29.4%	31.7%	34.7%	435
High school counselor recommendation	3.95	0.2%	5.3%	28.2%	31.7%	34.6%	419
Total cost	3.94	0.8%	7.9%	25.1%	29.0%	37.3%	518
Buildings and facilities	3.91	0.6%	4.0%	27.4%	39.9%	28.1%	519
Personal contact with faculty	3.89	2.8%	5.1%	28.1%	28.6%	35.5%	434
Financial aid package (grants, loans, Work Study)	3.89	1.6%	6.7%	25.4%	33.9%	32.3%	507
Merit scholarships	3.88	1.6%	5.3%	28.1%	33.1%	31.9%	495
Student/faculty ratio	3.88	0.8%	5.1%	28.5%	36.3%	29.2%	487
Dining services	3.88	0.0%	4.1%	30.6%	38.6%	26.6%	458
Personal contact with students	3.83	2.7%	4.8%	30.7%	30.7%	31.1%	437
Location	3.79	3.2%	10.8%	23.4%	28.7%	33.8%	529
Social networks	3.78	1.8%	5.5%	33.3%	32.2%	27.3%	454
Personal contact with admission staff	3.78	3.0%	6.6%	30.9%	28.8%	30.7%	437
Web site	3.75	3.1%	8.7%	27.4%	31.7%	29.1%	508
Open House or Accepted Student Day	3.72	3.9%	7.2%	32.5%	25.6%	30.9%	363
Residence halls	3.71	0.2%	6.3%	36.0%	36.9%	20.5%	458
Campus diversity	3.65	1.9%	10.2%	32.2%	33.0%	22.8%	482
Personal contact with alumni	3.58	4.9%	12.2%	32.0%	21.7%	29.3%	369

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, Personal contact with alumni appears at the bottom of this table, the corresponding mean (3.58) 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. ***Further, please take into consideration that COVID-19 impacted the format of spring and summer admissions activities: Admitted Student Days, New Student Orientation, and other spring and summer admissions activities were conducted remotely during 2020. This may have an impact on student ratings.***

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>
Application process	4.19	97.6%	286
Academic programs	4.18	99.3%	296
Campus activities	4.13	97.9%	283
Athletic/recreational opportunities	4.12	96.7%	274
Parent's preference	4.10	93.7%	270
Campus tour/visit	4.08	97.6%	247
Overall value	4.08	99.0%	286
Teacher recommendation	4.06	95.6%	251
Transfer/AP credit available	4.05	97.3%	256
Campus atmosphere	4.02	94.5%	290
High school counselor	4.01	94.7%	244
Campus safety	4.01	96.1%	282
Undergraduate research	4.00	96.3%	270
Total cost	3.99	92.1%	291
Email communications	3.98	95.8%	289
General reputation	3.96	97.3%	295
Honors program	3.94	94.5%	254
Size of school	3.92	93.6%	296
Buildings and facilities	3.87	93.5%	291
Commitment to sustainability	3.86	97.3%	258
Study Abroad program	3.85	94.2%	243
Personal contact with students	3.84	93.7%	255
Merit scholarships	3.83	91.4%	280
Financial aid package (grants, dining services)	3.81	88.8%	286
Dining services	3.81	94.3%	261
Personal contact with faculty	3.79	91.3%	242
Location	3.76	84.1%	295
Campus diversity	3.74	89.7%	273
Social networks	3.73	93.2%	251
Student/faculty ratio	3.73	90.4%	271
Open House/Accepted Student Day	3.71	89.6%	211
Personal contact with admission	3.67	87.9%	247
Personal contact with alumni	3.67	83.9%	230
Web site	3.66	85.7%	286
Residence halls	3.65	91.8%	256

Out of State			
Factor	Mean Rating	“Good” or higher %	<i>n</i>
Campus safety	4.31	98.6%	219
Application process	4.27	98.2%	223
Athletic/recreational opportunities	4.23	98.6%	214
Campus atmosphere	4.23	99.6%	230
Campus tour/visit	4.20	95.5%	178
Undergraduate research	4.18	98.6%	214
Campus activities	4.17	99.1%	226
Commitment to sustainability	4.16	97.0%	199
Academic programs	4.15	98.7%	232
Overall value	4.15	97.7%	221
Study Abroad program	4.13	97.4%	194
Size of school	4.12	98.3%	234
Email communications	4.11	96.0%	223
General reputation	4.10	99.2%	236
Student/faculty ratio	4.06	98.6%	216
Personal contact with faculty	4.01	93.2%	192
Honors program	4.01	95.5%	179
Financial aid package (grants, dining services)	3.98	95.5%	221
Dining services	3.97	98.0%	197
Buildings and facilities	3.96	97.8%	228
Merit scholarships	3.95	95.3%	215
Parent's preference	3.91	88.3%	205
Personal contact with admission	3.91	93.7%	190
Teacher recommendation	3.89	94.2%	171
Total cost	3.88	90.3%	227
Web site	3.87	91.4%	222
High school counselor	3.87	94.3%	175
Transfer/AP credit available	3.84	93.9%	179
Location	3.83	88.5%	234
Social networks	3.83	92.1%	203
Personal contact with students	3.81	90.7%	182
Residence halls	3.79	95.5%	202
Open House/Accepted Student Day	3.75	88.2%	152
Campus diversity	3.53	85.6%	209
Personal contact with alumni	3.44	81.3%	139

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 633 new students on whom the preceding results are based, 413 are represented in the graphs below.¹
- 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.
- 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.)

¹ Why the difference? 220 of these 633 students did not respond to these items or did not provide a comparison school.

Comparison schools indicated by at least 6 students

UMaine New Students (<i>n</i>)	Comparison School of Interest
38	University of New Hampshire
23	University of Southern Maine
16	University of Rhode Island
13	University of New England
13	University of Vermont
11	Husson University
11	University of Maine Farmington
10	Unity College
8	Merrimack College
8	University of Connecticut
7	Roger Williams University
7	Thomas College
6	Maine Maritime Academy
6	Wentworth Institute of Technology
6	Worcester Polytechnic Institute

The following 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.
- 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, Campus Diversity, and Buildings. When compared with public out-of-state and private schools, however, UMaine is rated less favorably on these same considerations.



