# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction/ Summary of Results</th>
<th>Page #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Questions

1. Why did you choose USM? ................................................................. 4
2. What were your expectations before coming to USM and how does that compare with the reality now that you are here?..5
3. Tell us about your experience with academic advising at USM; distinguish between advising in the academic departments, or advising in the Advising Services office. 9
4. We are interested in hearing about your transfer transition. What was the best part of the process?.................................. 12
   What about the process could be improved? ...............................
5. Is USM helping you with getting your academic needs met? How easy/difficult is our system to navigate? ...................... 15
6. Do you feel connected to USM? Academic Life? Student Life? .............................................................. 19
7. Are there services USM should offer to transfer students that would improve their experience? .................................. 22
8. What are your educational goals while at USM? How well do you understand your role in achieving these goals? ............... 25
9. Do you participate in student activities outside of the classroom? Why/why not? ...................................................... 27
   Tell us what student activities you would participate in, offered at USM? ......................................................
10. When looking for information about USM, where do you find your information? ................................................... 29
   (i.e. ask other students, advisors, faculty, staff, go to website, check brochures, flyers, etc.)
11. Additional comments/suggestions? ......................................................... 30
TRANSFER STUDENTS: Focus Group Sessions

Introduction

Based upon a request from the Office of Transfer Affairs, a series of focus group sessions were scheduled to obtain feedback from students about their experiences transferring to USM. Approximately 800 transfer students were sent email invitations to attend a focus group session at one of the campuses (Portland, Gorham, or Lewiston-Auburn). A total of 25 students responded to the email; however, due to various winter weather conditions, only 16 students actually participated in the sessions.

Regarding the demographics of the students who attended the sessions, there were fourteen females and two males. Four transferred from community colleges in Maine, one from a University in Maine. Eleven transferred to USM from a university campus out of state. There were no transfers to USM from out-of-state community colleges represented in these groups.

The purpose of the focus groups was to seek objective feedback about USM’s services and programs, particularly as they apply to students who have attended other colleges and universities, with a goal of improving or adapting these services and programs for future students who transfer to USM.

Eleven questions were asked the USM transfer students during each of the focus group sessions. Students were informed that their names and individually identifying information would not be attached to their responses. Each student gave a response to each question, and their responses were documented (or paraphrased) after each question, and in some cases students were directly quoted. The responses were grouped by in-state transfers (transfers who attended a previous college in the state of Maine) and out-of-state transfers (transfers who attended a previous college that was not in Maine), in order to determine if major differences occurred within each transfer group.

Summary of Results

Certain themes were expressed frequently by the students who attended the focus group sessions. 1) A common complaint from transfer students was about being able to obtain information about courses that are only offered occasionally. Several students feel that they cannot graduate at their expected time due to inadequate course information given to them. 2) Another complaint from transfers was regarding the orientation day. Although some students felt that the orientation was okay and somewhat helpful, most students believed the day was degrading or a waste of time, it was catered toward new students, and group advising sessions did not fit their situations. 3) There were a variety of feelings expressed about departmental advising services. Some transfers had to find themselves a good advisor because of the poor advising in their major; while others felt lucky that they had a faculty advisor who seemed to care. 4) The last theme that came up often during the focus group discussions were the feelings of disconnection to the university community; that is, most felt academically connected (in the classroom), but not socially connected to the USM community at-large.
Focus Group Questions and Individual Student Responses

1. **Why did you choose USM?**

**In-state transfers:**

- Liked the science program, “small as it is.” Very good science department.
- Closest to home; financially independent from parents and USM was a better buy.
- Location was first choice. (response of 3 students)
- Program that student wanted was at USM at a reasonable price.

**Out-of-state transfers:**

- Left previous college for financial reasons: too expensive; from Brunswick, so location a factor as well as finances; intended to stay one semester, now has been here for 3 years.
- Suspended from previous private school; had to go somewhere while waiting to get back in, so here at USM. Does not intend to stay. Not happy here.
- From MA; attended a state school, “to get as far away as possible from parents.” The previous school was too big, no sun, and missed New England culture. Here at USM because it was same type of school, but smaller; attracted to Linguistics program; likes Maine.
- Chose for mostly financial reasons, but also USM was best geographically.
- Transferred from “a really small town in Washington County—I am sick of rural area.”
- Temporarily living in the Gorham dorm right now. At my home away, Walmart is over an hour away, here it is just 15 min. Kind of nice that things are close by the college.
- Close to home and family, and paying in-state tuition.
- This is the local university, and have been here once, then went out of the country to another university, then returned to USM after being dissatisfied with the foreign university.
- Wanted to leave Maine, but not too far, but away from parents and Maine. Chose a “rich school,” but I am not a rich person; so didn’t fit in; wanted to transfer to Bowdoin or Bates because “USM has such a poor reputation to those who live here – it is everyone’s last choice.”
- Ended up choosing USM because it has rolling admission; planned on “taking a course or two” while await admission at Bates. Ended up staying at USM because it is “cheap, easy, and can live at home. Been here 5 years.
2. What were your expectations before coming to USM and how does that compare with the reality now that you are here?

In-state transfers:

Expectations before coming to USM?

- Wanted to get in there and get going.
- Expected USM to be more exciting, more in depth, more research projects available for undergraduate students.
- Needed to make up classes at USM that didn’t “transfer equally” from the community college; SMCC misinformed him about which classes to take, telling him all classes would transfer because of the agreement between the institutions, but they didn’t.
- Ended up dropping classes at SMCC in CHY, realizing too late that they wouldn’t transfer to USM.
- Expected USM to be more caring and concerned about the progress of the students it transferred in; expected more one-on-one help and attention.
- Expected anonymity; expected to be “ignored” on such a large campus.
- No preconceived expectations.
- Expected USM to be “at least up to par with local community college, but is not.” Paying more, so student should receive more, though community college does not have Spanish.

Reality now at USM?

- Science departments at USM are severely underfunded.
- Students at USM have too many “missed opportunities” in research.
- CHY department has lost some of its top people with no replacements and little funding for equipment and resources.
- Original expectations not met; professors state office hours, but they are just for show, actually are not available to the students when they say they will be; doesn’t feel welcomed by professors – feels like students (not just me) are burdens to the workloads of professors; professors adequate, but feel entitled; not friendly to students, don’t say hi when meeting on campus; professors don’t offer academic help as needed.
- Instead of being ignored or feeling anonymous, feels as though she matters; USM “feels small,” very “hands-on;” she calls professors by first name here; at previous school, was taught by T.A.’s and classes often cancelled; here at USM there are actual professors who care about the students.
• Loves professors at USM; pleasantly surprised by USM in all aspects.

• “Highly, highly disappointed with her department at USM, budget cuts and costs have gotten out of control; hiring freezes especially have affected her department, which is strapped for professors; all adjuncts now float in and out of the department, though the student has had none (adjuncts are for lower levels only), still has serious problems with the one tenured professor, with whom I must take all the major courses. Student petitions brought another professor in, but that professor also left soon thereafter. Students with different learning styles and academic needs have no recourse, no options but to work with this one professor. Can’t avoid this person. Unacceptable at a university level.”

Out-of-state transfers:

Expectations before coming to USM?

• Transferred from a state school, so expected much of the same, only in a New England location.

• Very low expectations about USM: in Maine, USM is viewed as “a last choice,” “a fail-safe choice” for a college/university to attend while one is in high school.

• Very low expectations-(from a private college previously).

• No expectations coming in to USM.

• From huge western state school “with huge classes and T.A.’s or recitation classes;” expected the same of USM. I assume most schools and colleges are about the same.

• Expect that USM is similar to where attended at a private college. Expected a lot of involvement from students in the classes, and expect good quality professors.

• Expected small class sizes; professors very helpful through e-mail or outside of class.

• Lowering my expectations, having come from another university as far as quality of teaching and learning; USM has a terrible local reputation; from what I heard.

• High expectations: could finish bachelor’s in less than 5 years (will be 3 years when graduate).

• Wanted to be immersed in the student body.
Reality now at USM?

• Hated USM orientation – she is not a freshman, doesn’t need “mass advising” (was sent to a regular orientation, being told that it ‘was the same as the transfer orientation,’ which now offends her, since that statement was a lie and has now led her to expect more lies from offices and staff at USM as a result of “that one blatant lie.”) The whole orientation process was offensive and annoying, and she could not get her needs met without attending the entire “painful” day, and then being signed up “for courses [she] didn’t need, by advisors who didn’t understand working with transfers.”

• “No individual advisor, which transfer students need, to understand the context of their coursework within the framework of those courses which did transfer, those that didn’t, and those that they now need for their majors or to graduate. USM classes are scattered in five different locations, from Sanford and Saco, to Bath/Brunswick, LAC, and Gorham, as well as Portland Campus. Sometimes no rhyme or reason to the locations, depending on a student’s major. Very confusing for a transfer signing up for courses and planning a course schedule. Had no idea about what the prefixes meant before the course numbers. Almost signed up for a course in Bath and then another in Saco right after. What does a student do with no car? How does one take courses required for major on campuses that don’t have bus transportation to them? Not told prior to admittance about this anomaly at USM.”

• “Thank God for very talented individual advisors in certain departments! They helped where regular advisors didn’t. Finding a good advisor is tough.”

• Many phone calls were made to several offices to learn the ropes at USM, and to find “someone who cares” at USM.

• From the low expectations of USM in high school, the student was “pleasantly surprised” when he arrived here. USM professors are “more qualified and helpful” than those from his “very expensive and exclusive” school from which he transferred; very “one-on-one;” getting academic needs met; been here for three years since his transfer.

• USM has “huge class sizes” compared to the private college previously attended (this student is a business major); professors “don’t seem to care.” Student signed up 2 weeks before classes; had his prerequisites met to attend classes, but “information not recorded for the administrative assistant to see prior to start of classes,” so AA dropped him from 3 of his 4 courses even before he could attend or get a hold of his advisors to have them speak to AA. Had to choose (and pay for) classes he didn’t want. Can’t wait to transfer out of USM.”

• From “no expectations” to “pleasantly surprised;” student was pleased with small classes and very attentive staff and professors who care about their success, and has cell phone numbers of her professors who are available when needed.
• From huge state school to here…. “okay” with USM (political science major); only planned to stay a semester and stayed now 2.5 years.

• Disappointed in USM, even more below the standard than what he had thought it would be.

• “Not happy”….there are three of us in my dorm room; both are freshmen. They are not pleased with me (being a transfer student) in their room.

• Welcome Transfer Orientation was “poor” – didn’t want to learn about “welcome to college,” but rather “welcome to USM;” just a sign-up for classes would have been better and wouldn’t wasted so much time.

• Expectations about small classes were true for the most part. USM has a few issues; some faculty are happy if you are interactive in their class, some faculty would rather talk and not listen to the students.

• Here 5 years now, majoring in chemistry; “mostly incredible professors, who are good mentors who reach out to students….but I hear which professors to avoid. I try not to take courses with “bad professors.”

• “Most departments seem to have pretty good faculties; after all the bad things said about USM by the locals. The linguistics major found her professors “attentive and much better than she had thought they would be.” The school has lots of policies, however, policies are not communicated clearly to students, who then feel frustrated with USM. Example: immunizations held up his/her registration; had to wait almost a year to get into the courses s/he required to graduate as a result.

• Registration: not happy with advising. Was told what courses to take, then when tried, was told to take other courses. Certain courses can’t be taken together; others can’t be taken because they are not offered in a 3-4 semester time span; USM registration process has caused problems and it has taken longer than expected to get the courses needed. I know of at least 15 students who can’t graduate when they need to because they were not told of these restrictions and policies.

• Can’t meet goal of getting more immersed in student body; has to work; lives off campus; can’t afford housing on or near campus, so travel is expensive and takes more time; as a result, cannot be a part of the USM culture.
3. **Tell us about your experience with academic advising at USM; distinguish between advising in the academic departments, or advising in the Advising Services office.**

**In-state transfers:**

- Never have used Advising Office; seeks help from departmental advisor, who is “honest, open, up front, with an open door policy-- not always needing an appointment."

- Professors have been somewhat supportive; but recently “screwed over” by USM regarding CHY courses here – needed a course that is only offered occasionally, but no one told me, and I didn’t know enough to ask the question. Wishes an advisor had been more helpful in this type of matter.

- Both advising services and departmental advisors appear to be fine. Both were impersonal, and just doing their job.

- (Business major) “If you are lucky enough to have your last name begin with the right letter, you will get great advising; the other advisor not so great;” business department “needs faculty advisors and not set department advisors who really don’t have appropriate advising experience.”

- Department very helpful; understands that now you cannot pick your own classes without help of advisor because of changes in PeopleSoft; feels sad about this change and lack of autonomy for the student.

- “One tenured professor who is my advisor; is very rushed, hard to reach for appointments; great advisor for major, but has no idea about other requirements and courses this student must take; had to take another 5 credits beyond what her advisor told her just to graduate – advisor never told her. Then another student said she was missing 15 credits because of not being told by advisor. Advising could be a lot better here. Don’t these professors know that what they do or don’t do reflects upon the reputation of the whole university?”

- Was “never told that certain classes were offered only every other year, if even then. Took years to get certain required courses. Very disconcerting and impossible to plan or finance for such a long time.”

- Very little experience with Advising Services office; picks her own classes.

- “Never been to Advising Services. Have always used a departmental advisor. I thought Advising Services office was just for freshmen or undeclared majors.”

**Out-of-state transfers:**

- Objected at previous college the... “whole passing the buck thing” – “go somewhere else to find the answer to your question.” Student is happy that it hasn’t happened yet at USM for him.
• It took me ... “an entire semester to change majors because registrar at USM had used all [the foreign university] credits, along with USM’s to figure out my GPA for transfer purposes and then had denied the transfer to the new major because of a low GPA; it took the intervention with vice-president of the university to get the registrar to see that the GPA had been calculated incorrectly; still registrar would not admit her mistake, but did allow me into the new major.”

• On orientation day, I had “crappy faculty” who was “supposed to advise but sat in a corner reading a book instead of advising; very uninterested in students, brisk and abrupt.

• “Department advising pretty good if on the right side of the alphabet; hard to get appointments, no drop-in’s, which doesn’t work if there is an emergency, like the prerequisite problem I had when first entered; was very frustrated because couldn’t see the advisor in a timely manner and lost the opportunity to take the courses needed for that semester.

• Departmental advising services are “stellar.” (in the Social Work department)

• “Loves (linguistics) departmental advising; very supportive and helpful – “smoothed the way for the transition into USM; the advisors are the professors, so “their feedback is even more important because they know the students and can tailor their advice appropriately.”

• “Political science department gave fine advising, I think. No issues have come up yet.”

• “Departmental advising was good in my first major of athletic training; but now majoring in psychology and advising seems fine. No complaints and needs are met, but doesn’t have extensive needs in the first place.”

• Communications department professors were very helpful, for the most part; very patient, “since I am pretty much a very indecisive person and need a lot of assistance.”

• Changed major from art to linguistics specifically because ...“no one was ever available to advise or help students individually in questions of advising in the art field.”

• Student requested new departmental advisor who “never helped pick out a single course; had to hunt him down to get RAN #’s for four and a half years, but does research with him;” student’s own independence helped but had to figure out WebDSIS on own and consults others in other departments when needed help in advising and coaching in DSIS.”

• Department advisor “is superb;” first appointment received 3 hours of help; current advisor is different, but “equally as fine.”
• “People are retiring in our department and they aren’t being replaced. Who are students to go to for appropriate advising?”

• I have seen a few faculty advisors that treat students as “pains in the a....”; “actually tell students to get out of their offices.”

• One student had four advisors over three years; started out in English, transferred to art immediately. Departmental advisors let students know that advising is a hassle to them, too much trouble.

• This student knew what she wanted, so when she had a departmental advisor who doubted that she had a plan that would work, she moved on to a new advisor. She said that she realized that some students are not that strong and don’t know what they want....but this student was not going to… “remain stuck with poor advisors.”

• Some departmental advisors are not good; many students say that in the language departments, the advising is “especially poor.”

• Has developed better relationships with chosen professors and use them for informational advising, than those assigned as departmental advisors.

• Advising services OK.

• Happy now that I don’t have to deal with the “Advising Services” advisors who “do not understand the needs of transfers.”

• No experience with Advising Services office. (response from five students)

• Could be “more thorough – nice, kind, but gave out little advising; Office of Advising Services is misnamed: should be called helpful USM services, they try to help you but don’t give real good advising.”

• This student expected a concrete level of guidance and that wasn’t given at Advising Services.

• Found one specific advisor to be excellent in Advising Services; this advisor used the degree audit to help this student “immensely.”

• Always thought Advising Services was “hardly ever available” when I needed them. I didn’t get to know the value of advising services until started working for the department to do the orientations. Now sees what they do. “They are excellent.”

• “Undeclared students get much better advising than those with department advisors.”

• “No memorable experiences with Advising Services.”
4. We are interested in hearing about your transfer transition. What was the best part of the process? What about the process could be improved?

**In-state transfers:**

- Fast application and acceptance procedure.

- Smooth advisor at orientation, so OK.

- If she were “a kid out of high school,” she “would have been put off by all the things that I had to learn to get started: WEBDSIS, e-mail, classes on 5 campuses, etc.”

- USM agreements with SMCC streamlined the path for transition.

- “Transfer students shouldn’t have to go to freshman orientation.” Very big inconvenience...waited from 7 a.m. to almost 2:30 to get registered, with all the little freshman asking questions, with their parents “fluttering around.” Didn’t finish registering until 3:45. Way too long a day with too little information of interest to a transfer student. Was told by Advising Services that “one orientation is the same as the other; all sessions are the same,” but I learned from his transfer friends that that information was not true.

- There should be a lot certain days for transfers to meet with advisors individually, not *en mass*; more face time with departments as early as possible.

- A better transition process with admissions; “no one else answered their phones” – and this person called many departments – “everyone seemed to be away for the summer;” no VM’s on people’s phones. However, admission would answer all questions and provide direction when no one else available. Courses transferred seem to be arbitrary. Example: Calculus at 300 level was not acceptable for SWO, which “only accepted dummy math.”

- First accepted at Orono, which sent her a “teeny-tiny pin number” which she threw out when she didn’t intend to attend UM. Then had to produce that exact same number for USM because USM uses the same pin number as Orono. She was never told. Wished she had been told that everything is at the system level and must be saved, no matter the campus; this information is not intuitive and yet is important to know.

- Transition could be improved organizationally. Otherwise OK.

- Orientation itself was fine. Didn’t feel that it was that helpful. “Why not make orientation worth the time to attend? Make it worthwhile.”

- Improve transfer advising; given wrong folder and ended up with wrong professor in wrong room for wrong department, so advising at orientation was useless.
• Transfers want to get right into the departmental major.

**Out-of-state transfers:**

• Didn’t have a good transition; didn’t want to transfer; left previous college for financial reasons and didn’t want to leave previous academic program.

• We (two students) skipped out on the orientation, 2 different times. We showed up, saw “lots of bureaucratic stuff going on” and decided “not to be cluttered with meaningless stuff.” Walked around campus with our moms and families. Later returned to sign up for classes.

• According to a few students, Advising Services is assumed to be poor, because they see undeclared, freshmen, and those not connected to a department.

• Departmental advising is the best --because we wanted to be connected with our major.

• I realized that Advising Services has trained advisors who really care; have the big picture in mind, thinking about your entire college experience and career. I have learned that departmental advisors often don’t care about the student and consider advising a waste of their time.

• Get the word out: “If a student doesn’t have a good departmental advisor, go to Advising Services.”

• “The Transfer Affairs office is great.”

• Transition was “smooth”. (response of two transfers)

• Transferring was not really positive; USM didn’t accept any classes from his private college; now needs “tons of courses;” has too many electives as a sophomore.

• “Transfer orientation was excellent.”

• Ability to meet new friends; has made many friends on their floor in the dorm.

• USM does a pretty good job sending out information – to schedule things, to inform students of changes and current affairs.

• “New student orientation was excellent.” Had been out of school for about seven years; met President at orientation and really enjoyed the process.

• I never had orientation, was not told about the orientation process at all upon acceptance. Knew no criteria for taking classes. Had no experience with transition. Told to go to departmental advisor.
• I think USM “needs to stop sending transfer students to freshman orientation; transfer students don’t want to know about the risks of alcohol, shopping, managing their money, STD’s. Been there; done that. I would rather miss all of orientation than to attend a freshman orientation all over again. Sends a poor message from USM to the transfers that they really don’t matter and can just fit in wherever it is convenient for USM to stick them in the institution.”

• “Hard to get integrated into student life; USM should promote student organizations early and often; perhaps get transfer students to mingle with each other as well as the student body at large”

• “Student ID at USM seems to be the social security number, no matter how many times the student does not want to give it out; departments all tell students same thing: Just for this department, we need your SS#; previous school had a number (not SS#) used consistently throughout the entire school; why can’t USM do the same? Number on the ID cards are too long to memorize and too useless; can’t these numbers be changed to something more memorable and useful? “

• “When transferring courses into USM, kindly stop routinely stamping ‘elective’ on all the courses taken outside of USM; they must be worth more than just an elective.”

• Would like even better opportunities for transfer students to meet and talk with one another... “I am fortunate to live in dorms; others complain that there is no way to meet one another. Wants to feel like I belong here at USM.”

• Perhaps before first day of classes, have transfer class welcomed (single them out from the other newly arriving students); show them around USM; introduce them to one another.

• Do not start orientations at 7 a.m. Way too early, especially for those who have traveled to get to the campus. Bump back into the day, time-wise, perhaps starting at 10 a.m.

• Follow-up could be improved: USM is not much help for new transfer students.

• Nursing school should give their own orientation, was never told about the specialized immunizations and needed to know that because classes were held up because of that missing fact. Students have to get their own help from the school, at first thought she was “stupid because she spoke Chinese,” then realized many of her classmates were having trouble keeping up with classes too, but no help or support.

• No orientation to Nursing Clinicals: (responses from two students)

  1) at the time student registers for clinical, student doesn’t where, when, who is the instructor, nothing. Only have a number and get randomly assigned.

  2) right before clinical starts, student learns where, when, and with whom.
3) no time to plan.

4) two clinicals per semester: sometimes clinicals fall on same day at same time because no one can know ahead of time. Really difficult to find child care, plan for family needs, adjust to work and class schedules. Little thought of student needs in this process.

5) with this “chaotic process, students panic,” talk to advisors, and are told by the advisors “to resolve [the inevitable] conflicts on their own.”

6) students are told to contact their colleagues by advisors, so it is now a matter of practice for students to send out “blanket e-mails” to everyone to find substitutes and different clinicals that meet their needs, and avoid advisors.

7) why doesn’t the nursing school create a clinical system that functions instead of leaving it to the students to set it up on their own? This student has gone into chat rooms on the web. Students from other schools have never experienced such a process in their clinicals.

5. **Is USM helping you with getting your academic needs met? How easy/difficult is our system to navigate?**

**In-state transfers:**

- The philosophy that “What you put in, you get out... is not true at USM for me. I put in a lot of energy and effort but don’t feel others around him on the staff or in departments are doing the same.”

- In-depth advising really needed for transfer students on what classes to take. Students must be told that “not every class in the catalog will be taught every semester, or even every four years.” Advising at orientation said which classes would be offered, but no advice on how to plan strategically with those classes that wouldn’t be offered each semester. Transfer students need help in “picking up the pieces of their previous courses, integrating them with currently available ones, to get through their major in as speedy time as possible.” Biology should have “more class availability;” courses often not taught, though listed in the catalog.

- Getting academic needs met at USM is difficult; not enough availability of people to teach the courses; courses aren’t being offered when needed for majors; this practice forces students to stay for summers when they don’t want to, or to wait semesters or even years to graduate because of lack of availability of certain required courses. Students run out of money and time. Finally give up and leave.
• “Easy – is an old pro now, but had to ask a lot in the beginning.” USM is difficult at the beginning, when you first get here, it doesn’t give the feeling of being student friendly.

• Doesn’t feel advisor met my advising needs; huge problems in the Language department.

• Certain classes are rarely offered and students aren’t told until it is too late to do anything about it. Departments MUST make information about availability of classes (or lack of) to incoming transfers because their majors and financial plans depend upon availability of classes in a timely manner.

• Spanish department lacks someone to help this student in their major, professor doesn’t want to teach, little or no guidance. Head of language department should be a clearing house, helping students discover how their majors can employ them after graduation, how courses can be offered in their majors in a timely manner, how departmental advisors can be improved (or removed).

Navigating the system?

• Financial aid is very helpful, but....difficult to get funds in timely manner.

• The work study process should be clearly explained: how to get it, what it is, what it means to a student at USM. I actually missed out on a work study job in BIO that I really wanted because I didn’t know how to apply (federally) for work study money or even if I could. No clear information was given to me.

• DSIS is “very helpful.”

• USM system very difficult to navigate; difficult, in my experience, to get wants and needs met at this university, compared to other universities and colleges.

• It’s been OK. I am happy to be transferred, because I can figure things out from previous experiences. Feel bad for brand new students with no experience of colleges at all.

• Has never been to career services office; has small children, so difficult to find time to navigate the system. Wants to learn about jobs after graduation. Difficult to discover help on this topic at USM.
Out-of-state transfers:

Getting academic needs met?

- No more different than any other campus – every school has its own culture and way of doing things.

- Great; academic needs being met; interesting subjects, classes, professors (political science); “to get beyond USM, though, who helps the students? Professors? USM? Is there a department that advises students for graduate school or job placement?”

- “Not getting academic needs met; class system doesn’t work; courses needed for major are often offered at conflicting times, or on campuses too far away from courses also needing to be taken, or not offered at all – the professors don’t seem to make themselves available to teach at times other than what THEY choose.”

- Must be more graduate school planning, more advising for beyond USM (seconded by two other students.)

- Yes, my basic needs are being met.

- In my other school, the advisors signed you up for all of your classes, we picked a couple of electives, but that is it, because of the amount of requirements to take; but here at USM, I get to choose for myself. I just hope I choose the right courses...no way of knowing here if there is a pattern to follow, or just randomly take the courses you want.

- “USM is helping with my academic needs.”

- Like some departments: two people on sabbatical leave this semester; courses aren’t available; no one around to teach the courses that majors need.

- Hard to get the courses you need to graduate in the major.

- Experienced “one excellent faculty member” who served as a mentor. This professor asked questions such as: “What do you want to do (in life)?” and then listened to the answer and worked with the student to offer options and help me refine and achieve my life plan. That is “the gold standard for advising” that is what I call real advising. From what I hear, this kind of advising is RARE here at USM.
Navigating the system?

- Now OK, but transition to USM’s systems was hard and not intuitive.

- “Why is the computer lab NOT in the library on Portland’s campus?” Very inconvenient to get books or periodicals, and “then have to truck them to the computer lab to use with a computer; makes you want to not use the library; too inconvenient and distant from the main campus.” At my previous campus, the library and the computer lab are close together.

- “Internet crap here is horrible; WEBDSIS? Main Street? PeopleSoft? Not user friendly, any of them.”

- Problems with DSIS crashing at registration.

- Could do better with WebDSIS – is not user friendly.

- DSIS is a good resource, however everything can be improved.

- “Manhattan” (from my other school) is better than “Blackboard.” Easier to operate, can message classmates easier, as well as teachers, clubs; Blackboard is “cluttered” and not as user friendly as Manhattan.

- “Website is terrible to find anything; layout is horrible; Google helps more for USM website searches than does the USM website!”

- Degree audit is “very difficult for a student to understand,” and is not “user-friendly for students’ needs.”

- Cost of printing “is high at USM.” Professors expect students to download or print “volumes of information from labs and at home, not mindful of the cost to the student.”

- USM is lucky to have so many journals and academic resources on line without having to go to the library.

- Plans on going to grad school; has no idea if any USM services can help.
6. Do you feel connected to USM? Academic Life? Student Life?

In-state transfers:

Feeling connected?

- In a sentence, “no, I don’t feel connected at all, USM is not what I really envisioned.”

- Very connected in classes; most classes are with the same group of people (in my major) and so they move *en masse* as a group, not so much socially, only academically connected.

- Was feel somewhat connected, when first arrived; felt more connected because of academic and social activities; now not so much; couldn't succeed in classes AND also participate in any social activities, which also demanded so much of the student’s energy.

Academic life?

- I expected “more sound direction with curriculum scheduling... better advice on what to do as far as options when courses are not offered that are needed for one’s major.”

- Worried at SMCC about what would transfer to USM. I thought, “If CHY doesn’t transfer, what else won’t? What other courses have I taken at SMCC that I will have to take again?”

- Connecting by sharing in classes, but setting up social events would make discussions and projects easier.

- Does not feel connected: only feels connected in the classroom, nothing else.

Student life?

- “Not warm here at USM; not comfortable. USM is specifically a commuter college; while there is a student center, it is not conducive to congregating and sharing with fellow students; it is not warm and inviting, and feels like a junior high school cafeteria; faces on other students look so miserable and stressed; no one connects. Student center very different at SMCC; student body more energized and lively; wanting to make social connections; here everyone overworked and lacking sleep; not very sociable. I expected more friendly atmosphere with others.”

- Wishing now that he had gone to Bowdoin, which “was courting him at SMCC;” chose USM “based on its marketing -- deceptively marketed” as lively and sociable. USM is not. Three campuses divide and separate the student body; USM is specifically a commuter school. Student body has lives away from campus and has no need to connect.
Not in activities now, so less connected to student body.

Happy academically, and because a lot of students move from one subject to another; but no time for USM student life, and therefore feels disconnected from the university as a whole.

Busy person (works and goes to school), no time for lots of socialization. Doesn’t live in dorms, so how else to feel connected? A centered place to socialize with others (before and after classes) on campus would help, a place to come and go just to touch base with other students would be nice.

Out-of-state transfers:

Academic life?

“Virtual connections -updates in e-mail and on-line resources really helpful.”

Somewhat more connected academically; OK socially, but [social life] very separate from academics.

“Many students in USM classes are noticeably and outrageously rude to other students and professors; seem disinterested and uninvolved, like they were still in high school; very immature; hard to accept while at USM; wonders why professors or other students don’t say something or why these students aren’t weeded out of the academic system instead of dragging it down; ruins it for others who are serious.”

More connected academically than otherwise...especially with relationships with professors in my department.

Feels “different than most students here, smarter than most.” Most USM students “don’t seem to realize their intelligence, behave immaturity in classes; it is disgusting. There doesn’t appear to be any code of conduct, ethics, or respect that all students must follow.” At my previous college, students are expected to act in a respectful and professional manner even if you disagree or have a formal complaint. Here at USM, most students act immature.”

“I feel connected; see and attend classes with different people from all walks of life coming to campus; feel good.”

“Sort of a hermit and prefers it that way so able to get my schoolwork done, and I pay for school with a job. I am connected to the academic work, not to university life or other activities.

Student feels disconnected socially, but connected in the classroom and to my academic life.
• USM is helping me get needs met. Professors especially help. However, I noticed that if a student didn’t have strong idea of what they need, not much help would be provided. At USM, student has to be a strong self-advocate to succeed. Not every student is and they fail.

• Definitely feels connected to USM; student’s academic life has grown “quite a bit.”

• Feels connected academically, but not to the student body. Wonderful professors, some students helpful, but only sees in classroom setting.

Student life?

• Lives in dorms and yet doesn’t feel connected – students at USM very cliquish; doesn’t get invited to their activities, or when I do, often feels the invitation is out of obligation rather than genuine desire to get to know me or my talents; PIRG is the only student organization I can name. Are there others?

• “Socially, it is hard to get involved at USM; maybe it’s a transfer thing.”

• USM seems to be “all Maine;” wishes USM had more world-centered service and other type organizations – perhaps connecting to schools in other parts of the US and world; “state school is cheap,” I realize that’s why I’m here, but “had hoped for a more transcendent experience,” less “Maine oriented.”

• USM activities are not “casual interest things;” “activities either consume you or you don’t get involved at all. Classes are the primary social-student life.

• “Student governing board has many egos but not many students involved; USM needs more student leaders, those who have ideas and get motivate others to implement them; governing board now just has egos arguing with one another to bully others into following them; great turn-off; student activities need more guidance from knowledgeable and interested faculty and staff.”

• “Events in the private college previously attended included poetry readings, bands, concerts, comedians; here at USM, the big social thing seems to be a ‘cookout’ which invites you to have food by yourself and then leave because it is too embarrassing to talk to someone you haven’t met before. It is not easy to connect to students when you have not lived here previously.”
• Hard to attract USM students to do things. Students often join an organization just to build a résumé, not to genuinely contribute, so the attitude in an organization is poor (note: USM Republicans/Democrats).

• Doesn’t feel as though I “fit-in or belongs.”

• Saco Island is not really a “campus.”

• “Shared miseries of parking” on all campuses. Limits contact and connectedness on many levels.

• “Event planners don’t take into consideration the large number of non-traditional, non-typical students at USM. Many students work when not in class so they can get the money to attend USM. Plan events that run longer, like 10-4, instead of 10-2 – that would help because students have to factor in the time to travel from one campus to the other by bus (even worse in cars) in order to attend many events. Students are often on one campus, attending class, researching, or in labs, when events they want to attend are on another campus; or events take place only on a Tuesday or Thursday, yet many students may have all their classes on these days (or other combinations) and therefore are not free to attend – they can’t go back and forth freely. I used to feel disconnected, but now more involved. Started with entry into one student group. Then another. Then became student senator; then orientation leader for Advising Services; then served on Board of Student Organizations to help change the system.”

• Fairly easy system to navigate; other large universities can be much more difficult to navigate.

• Gets academic needs met at USM, but academic system is not easy to navigate (nursing major); not fair to students.

• “Getting a job on campus can get a student connected to the university. I was lucky to get a campus job, and it is a nice balance between classes and work. But, I know from many students, there are not many jobs on campus for students, all the departments want work-study students, but don’t give other students a chance to work. My previous school had lots of campus jobs for students; even if you didn’t have financial aid.

• “I do like USM, but not involved with traditional student body; has my own family; I am much older that most students (early 30’s), but OK with that.”

7. Are there services USM should offer to transfer students that would improve their experience?

In-state transfers:

• “There should be a section – a whole office with staff -- devoted exclusively to transfer students (and not others) from advising, to financial aid, to work study needs, to orientation (one orientation session is not the same as another to a transfer student).”
• Have one location that “guides transfer students faithfully with the desire to keep the student here and orient them efficiently and effectively from the get-go; to make it easy for them to orient themselves to their major, their courses, and a personal strategic plan that will keep them successful, not despairing.”

• “I would like to be bombarded with activities from the moment I set foot on campus. Then all I have to do is choose what to be involved in.”

• “There is no effort to put names of groups out there. Professors could post groups of interest to their majors in prominent places, both on and off campuses. Examples: lecture series or visiting experts in their field; lecture series on other campuses, even in other states; extra activities; club minutes; and so on.”

• “I had no orientation at community college at all; it would be helpful to have a Transfer Orientation (not a freshmen orientation) already in place at USM.

• “Departmental advising in departments is poor; students just sit around a table and pick out courses with no help or advice. I can do that on my own.”

• USM needs advisors who are “extremely competent,” people who have a real care about you one-on-one.

**Out-of-state transfers:**

• “The BSO activities and meetings should be better promoted. There are activities for everyone. The attitudes of students are ‘bring the organizations to me’ rather than the students genuinely seeking to offer themselves to learn from or serve in an organization. Awareness is the first step. Activities are accessible if students care to look and serve. Elections of all kinds, university, local, state, and national, are huge events on other college campuses; can’t escape it; very low key here; very academically driven; not many general interest groups at USM; Portland/Gorham/LAC time and location conflicts; very difficult to navigate; leads to apathy.”

• Totally would enjoy many activities, but unable to attend because of being on one campus, but activity is on the other and there is no transportation or there is a class conflict.

• Would like to see opportunities for transfer students to get together on a regular basis.

• “At previous school, lots of things in the mail, exciting, felt ‘attended to,’ here-- just 3 dry letters which ‘cut to the chase’...didn’t feel excited about coming to USM; Maybe if USM had been excited about ME coming to USM, then I would have felt more excited to be here.”
• Feels strongly about the idea of... “welcoming transfers in a formal way on the first day of classes each semester. Helps them feel like they at last belong and are included in the USM fold.”

• “I don’t live on campus, and many other transfers don’t either, so a general area for students to meet and talk with other students would be helpful. Residence students can connect with others in the dorm, but off-campus residence hinders student connections.”

• Include “touristy help” for those transfer students who have never lived in Maine.

• Have lots of seminars/events for every department major, which will offer options for majors in the job field after graduation. Not enough of these kinds of events for students.

• Put basic courses on-line.

• Tests from prior learning to get through core courses are really helpful.

• Transfer students already know what they are getting into; they have learned to ask for help, to recognize when departmental advisors are not meeting their needs, and had to learn where to find someone who can. It can be hard work and time-consuming if you don’t know where to go and who to ask.

• Lack of advising in the departments; advisors do NOT do their advising jobs.

• “I feel distanced from classmates who are younger; I wish USM would provide ways for students to get to know other students who have similar situations to mine as a commuter transfer student.”

• Maybe “virtual” is the way to go– like taking an on-line course in art, which I do. I like to connect with other similar students, but not always face-to-face. Connecting on your own time through the computer can be really motivating, and then you can set up times to meet others who have some similar interests.

• “I’ve never connected to other transfer students or other faculty.” No one asks me about my experiences or opinions in courses, but I share anyway...I want to be able to meet with staff and professors when registering.”

• “Do away with advising....no point....no good advice is given. You get your advice from other students who have been around longer.”

• “I believe student evaluations of professors is not taken seriously (not like my previous college); many students address very specific issues with instructors on these course evaluations, yet nothing changes. What is the point of students giving feedback, if it is not used at all? What are ways that students can express their opinions and it is given some meaning?”
8. What are your educational goals while at USM? How well do you understand your role in achieving these goals?

**In-state transfers:**

**Educational goals?**

- “My goal was to make as high a level of grades as possible.”
- “To successfully finish my college career.” (three student responses)
- “To study so efficiently so I cannot fail a course.”
- “To be able to find a career path after graduation.” (two student responses)

**Your role?**

- Originally carried a job and my classes; now just my classes and he is doing better. Wished someone would have advised him of this tip. It is difficult to do a good job on school when working many hours.

- “To take classes with non-tenured professors. Tenured professors make the students adjust to the professor’s needs, not the other way around. Tenured professors force students to do what they (the professor’s) want, not the other way around. I feel that taking the classes I need and having my educational needs met should be on my terms, after all I am paying for the classes. If too many professors treat me like I don’t matter, I will go someplace else.”

- “I observe USM students as extremely rushed. My role is ... to slow down, learn, research, gather knowledge, retain that knowledge, connect to the professors to learn from them on a one-to-one basis.”

**Out-of-state transfers:**

**Educational goals?**

- (Agreed by both in-state and out-of-state transfers): “to graduate with decent grades.”

- Graduate in May; will miss USM.
• Hopes to never stop learning and taking courses; USM taught me skills to start my own business, and explore my own philosophy.

• To get the degree and be a professional nurse; to do well “in every single class.”

• To get the degree and maintain a “good” GPA.

• To take different classes to get “a more widened perspective on the world.”

• The goal is to maintain my “A” average.

• To build relationships with professors for help in job procurement or graduate studies later.

• To challenge myself to look at things from a different perspective, not just my own.

• Mostly accomplished all my goals: learn a little bit about each subject – get a taste of everything – that is the role of college for a student; do undergraduate research.

    **Your role?**

• It is the student’s responsibility to achieve their goals. (all students agreed with this statement).

• Everything is the student’s responsibility, no one else can really help you get where you want to be; although good helpful guidance can help a student dramatically.

• Understand your own role clearly; college is a lot of work; must ask for help when one needs it.

• A student’s role ... “is intertwined with a dysfunctional registration and clinical system.”
    Everyone must figure out their own financial/graduation time frame, even though they are highly motivated, no one else can do that.

• Ninety percent is the student’s job to achieve these goals; ten percent is the professor’s; the students just “needs to use all the tools given to them.”

• No one helped me, I did it all myself; that is, figure everything out based upon information given to me. (two student responses)
9. Do you participate in student activities outside of the classroom? Why/why not? Tell us what student activities you would participate in, if offered at USM.

In-state transfers:

Student activities outside class - why/why not?

- Joined BIO CLUB “to get more in depth information about biology in the field and to get more acquainted with school and student body.”

- Hard to find out about student activities and lecture series at USM; had to go to three to four sites to finally get to the resources. Not intuitive to find at USM. Should be easier. At SMCC, any lectures like the “Bowdoin Lecture Series” was posted in same spot in departments every week...easy to spot and easy to peruse. Not true at USM. In fact, I think I would not have known about any lecture events if I was a brand new student. Information is hard to find here at USM, nothing to very clear.

- COA things (in dorm lounge)

- Accounting and finance society meetings (SIFE)...“for purpose of networking and to go to Boston and other locations to learn about NY Stock Exchange and other things... I know field trips are inconvenient and expensive, but it is a great experience for small student groups.”

- BSO “not goal-oriented; needs leaders who delegate and command and do not pontificate; too much talking and bullying, too little doing.”

- Student organizational groups need to be run by a faculty member or administrator, student groups that are led only by other students are a disaster in planning and following through with events. At other colleges, faculty lead and facilitate and the groups have the university oversight which really helps the group stay organized and respected. (several students agreed with this statement)

Would participate in, if offered

- Robotics Club

- Research opportunities

- Lecture series, scheduled regularly, like once a month, or once a week, with major speakers available from various fields. “I am thinking of going to the Bowdoin Lecture Series, offered every Thursday, with speakers from every field. I have gone there and they have a great lecture series!”

- A club for Seniors that a group of faculty would facilitate which would offer insight into possible graduate studies, to get the seniors thinking about what is beyond USM and what kind of preparation we need to go further in our fields.
• Career and professional services is too generalized and impersonal at USM (only good for resume preparation); doesn’t meet individual student or individual majors needs....maybe each department needs their own professional placement service and it own “club” to prepare their students.

**Out-of-state transfers:**

**Student activities outside class - why/why not?**

• GLBT meetings; frustrated because of two, sometimes three campuses and the conflicting activities on both, with inability to attend them.

• “Activities that are planned events are the only ways to meet other students.”

• “I like to be involved and kept busy: I am a cheerleader, in Circle K, PIRG, and the Psych Club.”

• Doesn’t participate in much. Attends what events I can; attends classes, works, would love to participate in “ski and ride” club, nutritional health courses, or “something else besides sports.”

• Don’t participate much in anything outside of classroom --because of the disorganization of the student organizations.

• Participates in “SNAPPLE” meetings (student nurse association).

• Full-time student; works full-time; family to care for; no time or energy, though wants to be involved at some level.

• Tries to attend lectures, if convenient for my schedule.

• I am part of the artist student union.

• “If there are opportunities at USM (not really sure what is out there), I have no time left to participate after studies and classes and family, unless there are events which are planned out and have a schedule...then perhaps I could arrange to attend a few activities.

**Would participate in, if offered**

• Linguistics meetings.

• USM has a lot of clubs, but “involvement in them is so low because they are so disorganized that it is not fun to join even the ones that already exist.”
• Not much advice for students “about what’s happening after college” – graduate school, work possibilities in the local area, etc. Wants to see more of these workshops to help students transition out of college.

• Hasn’t gone to career services, but “doesn’t hear good things from others about this service and doesn’t plan on going.” Could USM offer advice regarding “life after college” information in another location? Perhaps through each department?

• “Art class for dummies, crafts classes, something not as long-running as a continuing education course, but in a similar vein to get the right brain stimulated.”

• Offer classes and activities at times the students “can realistically attend.”

• “I wish many off-campus experiences could be offered course credit. So many experiences I have had outside of college are more valuable than the actual college classes.”

10. When looking for information about USM, where do you find your information? (i.e., ask other students, advisors, faculty, staff, go to website, check USM brochures or flyers, etc.)

**In-state transfers:**

• From various resources: other students, department advisors
• Storm Line, Free Press
• Website (4 responses)
• Posters
• Meetings with free food
• Other students

**Out-of-state transfers:**

• On-line is the first place where s/he goes for information, then faculty advisors, then other students.
• Website (3 responses)
• Asks his/her professors and R.A.’s. (2 responses)
• Internet (2 responses)
• Advisors and advising services in Payson Smith (2 responses)
• “Students at USM often disconnected from the mainstream of information; don’t tend to trust the information they get.”
• Call others
• E-mails
• Offices on campus

11. Additional comments or suggestions?

In-state transfers:

• USM wants as many students as it can get, getting as much tuition as possible, but they are not necessarily concerned about keeping the students it gets or giving these students the attention they need to succeed and flourish.

• USM says to the students: “We’ll accept you. Give us your money, then you are on your own. We won’t follow up on you in the same way we fell all over you to get you in.”

• The Biology and Chemistry Departments are “severely underfunded.”

• Equipment in labs break down daily; many lab facilities need to be replaced; poor facilities. USM cannot prepare students in sciences adequately. Professors are not to blame. Institutionalized underfunding of the science departments.

• “Science departments at USM should make every effort to have all students (undergraduate or not) in a research project, from sophomore level on up. It should be a requirement. Why else would most students go into sciences? Just to teach? No, most want to research when they graduate, or go on to graduate school to further their research they started in undergraduate school. USM must realize this fact, and facilitate the science departments to achieve this requirement, or else USM will not graduate top-trained science students, ready for the corporate research world.”

• Likes to work on website, but too hard to navigate. Better search engine is needed for USM.

• “SMCC’s website is a labyrinth of dead links, so USM’s looks pretty good!”

• “Astounded” at how little the restrooms at USM are cleaned...or the classrooms for that matter. “I always use the restroom in the Abromson Center because that is cleaned meticulously...likely for the community to see. Too bad they can’t see the inside of our classrooms and restrooms elsewhere. The elevators smell inside; hallways and stairs not cleaned regularly.”

• “Thank you for closing down Portland Hall; carpet on the walls, uncleaned and unkempt; unfairly run with unfair fees; for example: someone pees in the elevator and everyone in the hall has to pay a fee for the one who peed there. It was totally disgusting and totally unclean.”
Out-of-state transfers:

- A lot of changes are happening at USM: the new President; declining budget; the staff and faculty appear to be disconnected from students.

- Will be very proud to graduate in May.

- “I hope to graduate before tuition gets increased!”

- School and education are very important; instructors need more benefits; they have very important jobs in our societies worldwide.

- “In China, there are huge efforts to improve education and teachers because country sees the payoffs. In the US, many educators give up, there is poor spirit, little money, and poor image regarding the value of education. It is sad to see. In the US, everyone expects people to get an education, but they put little money into the education system.”

- “Campus Center in Portland is like no other I have seen on a college campus. Almost no one goes there. No parking, in the first place...it is all taken up by those at classes. Signs all water-stained; empty most of the time; looks and feels like a middle school cafeteria. Not inviting. No one of interest ever there. Desolate.”

- “Meal plan options suck. No real choices. If USM would put a little effort into the cafeteria and the environment, it would be a good place for students to meet other students for meals and socialize between classes. The whole place looks and feels like a high school.”

- “The Portland campus needs at least one dorm close to the campus. All of the dorms should not just be in Gorham.”

- “Every school/university is like a private governmental entity, a culture unto itself. USM’s culture is not leader-driven. I wish it was more interconnected, more interdisciplinary, with more people knowing more about the entire university instead of just their little closet-space of a department; that staff and professors could see themselves as part of a whole university culture, see that whole, be delighted to be a part of it, and offer help to students as if its little department were part of that whole entity.”

- “Staff and faculty do not seem to connect to anyone; everyone seems too hard-worked, tired, driven, doesn’t have or make time to connect. It is like they don’t like their jobs.”
• “Individual departments run very differently at USM... “not much leadership at USM to invite consistency and cohesion, some departments don’t communicate well with each other.”

• “It really matters what subject you are majoring in, what department you are in at USM; your experience will be very different with each department – almost like separate colleges in and of themselves;” Example: “school of business is very cut-throat, with few ethics, even to the people who work within the department, almost reflective of a corporate culture itself, certainly not of USM.” (several students highly agree with this student opinion)

• “Information not communicated well from top down. As a student, I know very little about the budget cuts...only what I read in the newspaper. Students are not connected well to one another and also not to the institution itself. It appears that there is little sense of shared loyalty and devotion to the institution.”

• “Not an integrated social scene...at USM; people don’t seem to care about others. In this focus group, it is very clear that many of us transfer students have had similar observations about USM.”

• “I don’t feel important here. I expect a higher level of service than I am getting.”

• “Too much red tape. One student that I know has a friend in a very important educational institution on west coast. Friend loves Maine and wants USM to benefit from a seven-figure donation he wants to make; however, when the friend attempts to connect to faculty and staff who could benefit from his donation, they treat him coldly and uninvitingly. Friend is seriously reconsidering his desire to give to USM. Wonders if gift would be appreciated. Wonders what is wrong with USM. That friend is one reason why I am participating in this focus group. To give such feedback. This USM culture is felt way beyond USM.”

• “At previous school, lots of activities: bingo, magicians, comedians, concerts – every weekend there is stuff going on (the activities are faculty organized). There is a schedule of events emailed to all students and signs posted everywhere for students to attend. It brings students together from all majors to have a fun experience. Students who work mingle with students who don’t work, and students who live on-campus socialize with students who live off-campus...it is a very integrated experience for all students. This is what I miss the most from my previous college.” At USM, the big events are Thirsty Thursday events (“horrible name that suggests drinking, and the game night is not fun”) I am willing to pay more for an Activities fee for a greater number of quality activities that speak of a university setting, not high school.”

• Would like to see more socialization events.

• USM needs “to aim for being consistently better and geared to the needs of college students--think classic university experiences, not drinking, sexing, or being entertained like high schoolers”.
• Parking needs “to be figured out and better managed. Traffic jams in the parking garage are terrible, and in the parking lots, people don’t care about your cars and think nothing of banging your car doors.”

• “Hiring freeze, especially in health services and counseling, has caused students much stress. For example, students can make only ‘same day appointments’ in these two places. That means they must call at 8 a.m. each day to see if there is an appointment available that meets the student’s schedule. If there aren’t, the student must call back the next day at 8 a.m., and so on. No way for a student to plan. Can’t schedule ahead. How stupid is that?”

• “Heating is a huge issue on all campuses at USM; especially in the old buildings. I sat in an art class where me and my classmates were literally ‘freezing’. No one came from facilities management, even though several people, including the professor, called. Finally the professor cancelled class because no one could concentrate. Yet, when we were leaving class, in this same building, many windows were open across the hall. I know why USM is in a financial crisis, they don’t do anything to correct a problem that has gotten worse every winter. In Maine, we have a lot of cold days, there is no reason for students to feel so uncomfortable in our classes.”

• “The appearance of USM is really bad, there is peeling paint in many classrooms, and floors haven’t been washed in months. I sit in a particular classroom every week and the same coke stain is on the floor every semester. Table tops are sticky and gross. I carry a handy wipe to class so I can wipe off the seat and desk surface; it is terrible. At my previous school, the classrooms were nice and clean and looked better than faculty and staff offices. Here at USM, it is the other way around.”

• “Some faculty and staff are so friendly and helpful and then there are others who act like students are a burden. I think the attitude of the USM faculty and staff really makes a difference if a student will stick around and finish their program. I know of several students who told me that they are not coming back next semester because of the poor attitude on campus. The faculty and staff attitude filters down to the student level like a domino effect.”