



DATE: Jan. 10, 2024  
TO: Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs  
FROM: Samantha Warren, UMS Director of Government & Community Relations  
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RE: **UMS Report on Transcript and Diploma Requests/Outstanding Accounts**

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In 2022, the Legislature enacted [Public Law 2021, Chapter 538](#), which limits the ability of Maine's colleges and universities to withhold academic records from students with outstanding accounts. Consistent with the law, that same year the University of Maine System (UMS) adopted [a uniform policy](#) that details the process by which Maine's public universities will release records upon the request of those who still owe money for services rendered.

Pursuant to this policy, in 2023, UMS released **697 student transcripts/diplomas requested by those with past due balances**. The most frequently cited reasons for record requests included that the individual planned to transfer to another institution or was applying for a job. A breakdown of requests by UMS university is on Page 2.

The U.S. Department of Education recently announced that it was following the lead of Maine and other states and through rulemaking that goes into effect later this year, will ban institutional withholding of academic records associated with courses paid for with any federal student aid. UMS has reviewed the federal rule and determined our existing processes and policy, as well as Maine law, are already aligned. However, our System remains concerned about state and federal policy that limits our ability to ensure students meet their financial obligations to our public institutions, though we recognize that individuals are more likely to be able to discharge their debt if they can secure a door-opening degree and work.

As of December 2023, there are 16,482 current and former students with academic record holds because of past due accounts. Collectively they **owe \$60.7 million to Maine's public universities**, with an average outstanding balance of \$3,682. It should be noted this is a \$22.5 million increase in the total amount students owe UMS from Jan. 2022 when the legislation that led to P.L. 2021, Ch. 538 was heard by your Committee.

This significant debt to our public universities challenges UMS to meet contractual obligations to employees and maintain tuition affordability so that high-quality postsecondary education and its proven power of social mobility is accessible to all Maine people. It also reflects the incredible financial need of UMS students, nearly half of whom qualify for need-based federal Pell grants. Our **System encourages the Legislature to continue meaningfully increasing State appropriation to UMS and to fund a last-dollar promise program to allow Maine students with demonstrated financial need to enroll in a UMS bachelor's degree program without paying out-of-pocket** for tuition and fees,

as proposed by LD 512 (as amended).

**2023 Records Requests by Students With Outstanding UMS Account Balances**

	Request (Balance <\$2,500)	Request (Balance >\$2,500)	Due to Job App	Due to School Transfer	Due to Financial Aid App	Due to Military	Other Reasons Given
<b>UMaine</b>	117	136	80	133	46	5	64
<b>UMA</b>	77	28	32	0	1	1	100
<b>UMF</b>	54	11	36	9	1	0	19
<b>UMFK</b>	42	15	4	6	8	0	39
<b>UMM</b>	12	3	3	12	1	2	0
<b>UMPI</b>	27	9	15	30	1	1	9
<b>USM</b>	126	40	14	28	1	0	123
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>354</b>

**Students With Academic Record Holds Due to Outstanding UMS Accounts\***

	Students With Holds	Total Owed	Average Owed
<b>UMaine</b>	6,095	\$32,400,860	\$5,316
<b>UMA</b>	4,810	\$6,894,397	\$1,433
<b>UMF</b>	1,408	\$4,657,126	\$3,308
<b>UMFK</b>	700	\$1,867,915	\$2,668
<b>UMM</b>	720	\$1,988,373	\$2,762
<b>UMPI</b>	713	\$1,974,968	\$2,770
<b>USM</b>	2,273	\$10,899,779	\$4,795
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16,482**</b>	<b>\$60,683,422</b>	<b>\$3,682</b>

\*As of December 22, 2023.

\*\* The total column reports students only once (i.e., if a student had non-zero account balances at multiple UMS institutions, they are reported once under each institution and only once in the total).