

DATE: January 12, 2026  
TO: Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs  
FROM: Samantha Warren, UMS Chief External & Governmental Affairs Officer  
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RE: **2026 Report on Academic Record Requests/Outstanding Accounts**

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The Legislature enacted [Public Law 2021, Chapter 538](#) to limit the authority of Maine's postsecondary institutions to withhold academic records (transcripts or diplomas) from individuals who had outstanding balances due to their college or university. Consistent with the law, the University of Maine System (UMS) adopted [a uniform policy](#) in 2022 that details the process for releasing records at the request of current and former students who still owe money for services rendered by Maine's public universities.

Pursuant to this policy, **UMS provided 885 transcripts and diplomas requested by individuals with overdue balances in 2025**, which is consistent with the number released in 2024 (887). The most common reasons given for the requests included that the individual was planning to transfer to another academic institution (234 requests), was applying for work (166), was applying for financial aid (40), or was pursuing military/National Guard opportunities (11), though more than half of the individuals provided no justification.

Nearly **one-third of requests came from individuals with an outstanding balance of at least \$2,500**. Consistent with State law and UMS policy, those with balances above \$2,499 are expected to enter into a mutually agreed-upon repayment plan before their academic record is released. The average outstanding balance of those who entered into repayment plans so they could access their academic records under the provisions of the law was \$4,749 across all UMS universities and \$7,184 at the University of Southern Maine (USM), \$5,722 at the University of Maine at Fort Kent (UMFK), and \$5,531 at the University of Maine.

Notably, **the law does not allow our public institutions to require any payment** before the record is provided. In many cases, individuals are not meeting their obligation to pay down their balance, even when installments are as low as \$10. For example, at the University of Maine at Presque Isle (UMPI), of the 28 accounts for which repayment plans were agreed to, 15 individuals made no payments, and nine made some payments but are currently delinquent. Meanwhile, at UMaine, of the 72 accounts for which repayment plans were agreed to, three individuals made zero payments, 37 made some payments but are currently delinquent, and 32 have made payments and are in good standing.

The total outstanding balance on accounts associated with individuals whose records were released under the law was \$1.04 million at UMaine, \$225,957 at UMPI, \$189,260 at UMFK, and \$144,572 at the University of Maine at Farmington.

As of Dec. 11, 2025, **\$45.1 million is owed to Maine’s public universities and nearly 20,000 students have academic record holds because of past-due accounts, with an average outstanding balance of \$2,268.** These figures do not include accounts that the university has written off.

This significant debt to Maine’s public universities challenges our ability to meet contractual obligations to employees and maintain tuition affordability so that high-quality postsecondary education and economic mobility are accessible to all Maine people. For example, \$20.9 million is currently owed by students to UMaine, where university leaders are working to address a projected \$18 million structural shortage for FY27, with all units asked to budget a 7% reduction in their expenses.

These outstanding balances also reflect the **significant financial need of UMS students**, more than half of whom are eligible for need-based federal Pell Grants. This is despite Maine’s public universities being the most affordable in New England and more than 22,300 UMS students qualifying for aid in the 2024-25 academic year, with the average package of scholarships, grants, and waivers students did not need to repay exceeding \$9,700.

UMS continues to **caution against State or Federal policies that further limit our ability to ensure students meet their financial obligations to our public institutions**, though we recognize that individuals can more easily discharge their debt if they secure a degree that opens doors to employment. Additionally, our System strongly **encourages meaningful and ongoing increases in State appropriation for UMS so that Maine’s public universities can maintain region-leading tuition affordability**, expand financial aid to students with the greatest need, fairly compensate our dedicated employees, and make strategic investments for the future — including to address \$1.8 billion in deferred maintenance.

## 2025 Request for Academic Records by UMS University

<b>UMS University</b>	<b>Individuals With Balance &lt; \$2,500</b>	<b>Individuals With Balance &gt; \$2,500</b>
University of Maine/UMaine Machias	161	117
University of Maine at Augusta	34	11
University of Maine at Farmington	70	12
University of Maine at Fort Kent	44	23

University of Maine at Presque Isle	88	30
University of Southern Maine	197	89
University of Maine School of Law	3	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>602</b>	<b>283</b>

### Students With Academic Record Holds from Past Due Accounts\*

<b>UMS University</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Total Owed</b>	<b>Average Owed</b>
University of Maine/UMaine Machias	7,051	\$20,858,693	\$2,958
University of Maine at Augusta	5,852	\$8,594,323	\$1,469
University of Maine at Farmington	1,567	\$2,743,415	\$1,751
University of Maine at Fort Kent	886	\$2,109,875	\$2,381
University of Maine at Presque Isle	1,976	\$3,727,589	\$1,886
University of Southern Maine**	2,874	\$7,055,221	\$2,455
<b>Unduplicated Total</b>	<b>19,881</b>	<b>\$45,089,116</b>	<b>\$2,268</b>

*\*As of Dec. 11, 2025. Excludes any account balances for Spring 2026 forward and accounts that have been written off.*

*\*\*This USM data includes the University of Maine School of Law.*