



Moving to Maine: Details from Dunn Hall

The University of Maine

Department Communication and Journalism

J-IDEA Committee



INTRODUCTION



This document is intended to help inform your decision to move to Maine and enroll in the M.A. or Ph.D. program in the Department of Communication and Journalism at the University of Maine. Choosing to attend graduate school is a significant life decision and there are important considerations that will influence your experiences during and after your program. Here you will find important information about housing, transportation, and cost of living, addressing the following questions:

- What is the cost of living and how do I plan for a monthly budget that will cover all of my expenses? Importantly, the funding offer includes the stipend for 9 months, tuition, and partial health insurance but the total stipend amount is not likely going to cover your major expenses, so you will need to plan for additional sources of income.
- How will I find and secure housing?
- What are my transportation options in this rural area?

The Justice, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (J-IDEA) committee, composed of current faculty and graduate students, created this document as part of our commitment to promote transparency and access to information. While this document will likely be useful for all graduate students entering this program, this was designed specifically for international students who may need additional, cross-cultural information to inform the graduate school acceptance decision.

DISCLAIMER

If you find yourself generating questions that this document does not answer, please reach out to the Graduate Student Coordinator for further clarification on certain aspects and questions.

Additionally, if you'd like to review this document as solely text, please use the link below to be guided to a PDF that is also screen reader accessible.

Link: <https://cmj.umaine.edu/graduate/>

NAVIGATING THIS DOCUMENT

To navigate this document, everything that is underlined is a clickable link.

Pages that have a “button” are clickable links as well.



LIKE THIS!

If some links do not work from the button, the links are in the bottom of the page

Lastly, the Zillow and Apartments.com images are links. Feel free to click them!,

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COST OF LIVING

*All in USD

[CONVERSION CALCULATOR](#)

STIPENDS

*Subject to change. Refer to the [Graduate School](#) to learn more

* Received the last weekday of the month paid in 9 installments during the year from September - May

PhD **\$20,000** for 9 months (about \$2,000 a month)

MA **\$17,000** for 9 months (about \$1,700 a month)

ANTICIPATED MONTHLY BILLS

Priority: Monthly Rent

PhD **\$900 - \$1,200**

MA **\$700 - \$1,000**

Priority: Health Insurance

*If not covered by family

PhD **TBD**

MA **TBD**

International Student Insurance

Priority: Phone Bill

*This depends on phone company

Straight Talk **\$35 - \$60** /month

Google Fi **\$20 - \$55** /month

Mint Mobile **\$15 - \$30** /month

*Many phone plans also have wifi plans

Priority: Wifi

ACP Program Can deduct \$30 from monthly wifi bill

GoNetSpeed **\$55 - \$70** /month

*Need landlord approval for installation

Spectrum **\$50 - \$70** /month

*Many wifi plans also have phone plans

COST OF LIVING

*All in USD

CONVERSION CALCULATOR

ANTICIPATED MONTHLY BILLS

Priority: Groceries

\$ - depends on least to most expensive

Walmart \$

IGA \$\$

Hannaford \$\$\$

Target \$\$\$

*This depends on grocery store and how often you will shop during the month

Campus Food Pantry:
Black Bear Exchange

If Needed: Heat

- Depends on heating company that landlord uses
- Heat is more expensive during the winter months

If Needed: Electric

- Depends on electric company that landlord uses
- Electric is more expensive during the summer months

If Needed: Water

- Depends on water company that landlord uses
- Water costs depends on personal use

If Needed: Childcare

- Depends on childcare provider fees

If Bringing a Car: Gas

- Depends on the gas station, how often you will need gas, and car tank size
- About \$30 - \$50/month to fill entire tank

SOURCES AND CONSTRAINTS

*Student Visa / Summer Teaching

Funding/stipends are not given by the department during summer break. International students should note that their student visa limits their options for summer work. During the summer, teaching assignments are available, but not guaranteed. Students should think about acquiring a summer position to pay monthly bills or save throughout the school year for summer expenses.

International Student Employment FAQs

HOUSING

Off-Campus

This section of the guide addresses the questions on almost everything you may need to know when it comes to finding and securing housing. This section includes what to expect when it comes to renting in Maine, common requirements that Maine landlords have for their tenants, what it would look like to live off campus versus on campus, and common rental scams to avoid. This section is a great place to start when it comes to exploring your options with renting around the University of Maine, however more research may be needed!

What To Expect When Renting in Maine

Finding a good rental property is one of the most challenging aspects of moving to a new school, so please consider these resources to help you make that step.

For cost, [BestPlaces.net](https://www.bestplaces.net) provides general information about housing in Orono and rough estimates on the cost of rent, but understand that this is meant to give you a general idea of rental costs and each rental situation is different. **Rent usually includes trash, water, and sewer services and tenants are usually expected to pay for their own internet, heat, and electricity.**

- Internet providers include Spectrum and GoNet Speed
- Electricity is usually provided through Versant Power
- Heat will be determined by what the landlord already has set up, prices vary



HOUSING

Off-Campus

Leases: A Quick Guide

Before signing a lease, note it is common and a best practice to plan to tour apartments before you finalize the agreement. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, many landlords now offer virtual tours. Their websites will state whether or not they offer this service. When considering a rental, find out whether the unit is furnished and how big the space is. Additional questions to ask the property manager during these tours (don't be shy):

- What utilities are included in my rent?
 - What requirements do you have from prospective tenants, such as income and credit score requirements?
 - How much is the security deposit and when would that be due?
 - Is there an application fee?
 - Is there laundry in the building or nearby?
-
- If my application is approved and I sign the lease, how and when can I pick up the keys to my unit?
 - Is off-street parking available, and does it cost extra?
 - Are pets allowed and are there any extra fees?
 - Where does my trash go?

Understanding the length and timing of leases (and apartment availability) is also important. **Student-centered** apartment buildings begin leasing units in late fall, so available rentals usually fill up before admission decisions are released. You might look on Facebook to take over someone's lease (subleasing) or sign a lease for the following year when you are already in Maine.

Non-student centered apartments and houses are more flexible and generally become available 3 months-1 month before the current lease holders give the landlord their notice to vacate. These options are great if you are looking to sign a lease before you come to Maine. In general, **leases are for 12 month periods**. Sometimes landlords will allow for 3, 6, and 9 month leases at higher monthly rates. Rent is commonly due at the first of the month, and if paid after the first of the month, late fees of around 4% may be charged. If rent is not paid, eviction proceedings may begin. [Pine Tree Legal](#) is an organization of lawyers that help with eviction cases and offer sliding scale fees for their services.

HOUSING

Off-Campus

Rental Landscape

A handy resource to get you started looking for off campus housing is the [UMaine Virtual Renter's Fair](#) website. This website contains the information for some of the largest student centered rental complexes close to the University.

There are four major apartment buildings along Park Street which is south of the campus. These units are generally already furnished with couches, chairs, beds, and desks. The apartments can offer roommate matching services which helps if you do not know anyone at UMaine yet! Undergraduate students primarily live at these apartments, but you can select to try and live with mostly graduate students in the survey you attach with your rental application



[Orchard Trails](#) Spans across 12 buildings, offers 4 bed 2 bath apartments

[The Reserve](#) Offers 3 bed or 4 bed units, where every room has its own attached bathroom.

[The Ave](#) Offers studios, 1 bedroom apartments, and shared units up to 5 bedrooms

These units fill up fast, and generally have renters sign their leases in November before the lease date would start. Leases generally start August 1st.

There are other apartments close to campus as well which tend to be less student-focused. These apartments are more traditional in the sense that they do not come fully furnished and do not generally offer roommate matching services.

Stillwater Village apartments offer 1, 2, and 3 bedroom options. [Cross Properties](#), [KC Management](#), and [SI Associates](#) own many units and rental houses across the Orono and Old Town area. Old Town is a bit farther out than Orono, however there is a bus line that runs on Main Street. If you are interested in living in the greater Bangor and Brewer area [Maine Real Estate Management](#) would be a great place to start!

HOUSING

Off-Campus



How To: Finding Off Campus Housing

Many incoming graduate students prefer to live off campus as this kind of housing allows them to cook their own meals, have their own room, and create community if they chose to have roommates.

Before you begin looking at properties, requesting tours, and paying your first month's rent, there are a few things you should know and keep in mind such as your rental application and possible application fees.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Application

1. If you were to fill out an application, most are done online and the fee is paid electronically.
2. Fees can range from \$45 to \$50. Some rental properties that are privately owned might not require an application or a fee.
3. Be sure to ask the person you are in contact with if this applies to the property you are looking at.

Apartment Tours

1. If you don't meet the requirements, property owners will say no to you touring.
2. Some tours can be done virtually on websites like [Zillow](https://www.zillow.com) or [Apartments.com](https://www.apartments.com).
3. If you find an apartment on Facebook or Craigslist, it will be best to tour it in person.
4. It is important to tour the property in person to see the correct layout to know where your furniture will go and if it is the best fit for you

IMPORTANT TO NOTE

It is important to never submit an application and/or fee if you have not toured the apartment. Depending on the property, you may be able to tour without filling out a rental application. As the University of Maine is in a more rural part of Maine, many property owners do not list their apartments on any online platform and use sign postings and/or word of mouth.

If needed, you may have to walk around town and look for "for rent" signs posted in lawns. An action plan to find these apartments is to sign a sublease that goes for a few months and spend that time looking for these apartments in the greater Orono and/or Old Town area.

HOUSING

Off-Campus

CREDIT SCORES

IF THIS IS DONE, THEN



ITS TIME TO SIGN A LEASE!

- ☒ Potential property in mind
- ☒ Rental application filled out (if applicable)
- ☒ Apartment toured
- ☒ Met all the requirements

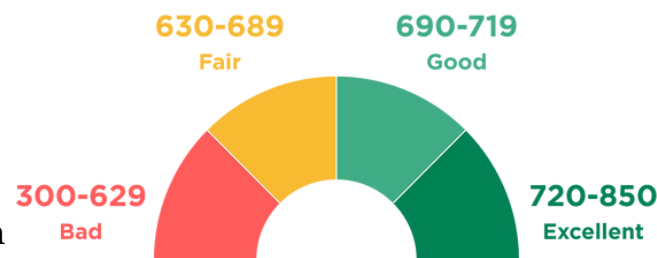
Most leases are for one year, so the day you move in will be the day you move out or re-new the following year.

You should read the lease carefully as it is a legal contract that outlines when you would need to re-new (if you so choose) the lease, when you need to provide a notice to vacate, if you can have pets, etc.

Rental Requirements: Landlord “Wants” and Needs

OFTEN REQUIRE:

- A background and credit check when you apply to the property
- The most common rental requirements include a 650 credit score
- An income that is 2x the amount of rent per month
- No prior felonies or evictions



NO CREDIT SCORE?

Landlords understand that many international students do not have credit scores and most graduate students do not meet the income requirements. If this is the case, they may require that a guarantor co-sign your lease.

A guarantor (often a family member or friend) signs a document accepting responsibility for paying rent if you do not. If you are planning to have a guarantor, be sure to ask your landlord/property manager what the guarantor's requirements should be. Sometimes, in lieu of a guarantor, you can pay a double security deposit.

HOUSING

Off-Campus

WHAT IS A SECURITY DEPOSIT?

Most rental properties require a security deposit, which is a payment (usually the same amount as your monthly rent) that you make prior to moving in that the landlord can use to pay for damages to the apartment while you live there.

After you move out, the landlord will inspect the property and use the security deposit to pay for any major damages (holes in the walls, cleaning fees, broken appliances, etc.) that occurred. Landlords generally have 21 days to return your security deposit with an itemized statement detailing what they deducted from the deposit if applicable. To avoid being charged, it is important to inspect the property when you move in and document any damages that already exist.

WHAT ABOUT PETS?

Pets are only allowed in some rental properties; make sure to check with your landlord to make sure your pet can live in their property.

If you have a pet, you will likely have to pay a higher security deposit and/or a monthly “pet rent.”

PARKING & ROOMATES

If you have a car, you’ll want to ensure that the rental property has parking (free or for purchase).

Almost all rental properties have limits to how many individuals can live in the unit and will typically provide this information in the listing.



HOUSING

Off-Campus

Rental Scams

FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

U.S NEWS & WORLD REPORT

While not common, it is important to be aware of the possibility for online rental scams. Rental scams occur when scammers copy existing rental property information and post these rentals as if they own them.

“Red Flags” to keep an eye out for:

- The photos listed with the property have an “MSL watermark,” which is an indication that whoever posted the photo does not have access to the original photo of the property.
 - The listing details are vague
 - The listers don’t want to show you the place before renting or they keep delaying scheduling a showing.
- They move quickly towards finalizing an agreement before getting background information from you.
 - They do not live in or are currently out of the country.
 - The asking price does not reasonably compare with others you’ve seen, usually lower than other properties listed.
 - There is an urgency to their need for payment or they want you to wire them money.

In Maine, common rental scams include people stating they live out of state and want you to just drive by the house or apartment and then sign the lease. Further, many Facebook rental scams include fake accounts posting pictures of nice and cheap apartments without providing an address. They request you direct message them for more information and then phish for your private information or money.

Best Practices for Renting

1. Protect your personal information and never pay for your rental with cash, wire transfers, gift cards, or cryptocurrency.
2. If you are renting from a private landlord, always make sure the person you are speaking with owns the property. You can check to see who owns a property at [Penobscot County Registry of Deeds](#).
3. Check online review sites like Google Reviews and Yelp to see if there is available information about the rental company and what, if any, reviews they provide.
4. If you notice a possible scam, report it using the contact information provided on the FTC website listed above.

HOUSING

On-Campus

Most graduate students find off-campus rentals to be the best, most cost-effective option for housing. However, there are some options for on-campus housing.

These options tend to be more expensive and less private than off-campus rentals. Both Stodder Hall and Family Housing are on or within walking distance of campus.



Stodder Hall

Provides on-campus housing for graduate students.

This is dorm-style housing - students who choose this option usually have a single room with a bed, chair, and small refrigerator, freezer, and microwave. Residents of Stodder Hall share a communal bathroom and kitchen.

Single bedrooms are currently listed from \$7,774 to \$9,214 per academic year, although additional costs may apply for the summer. Utilities are included.

Family Housing

Available for UMaine students with families.

These one and two bedroom apartments are located about a mile from campus in Old Town, Maine. They are unfurnished.

Prices are currently listed at \$881 per month for a one-bedroom and \$1,010 per month for a two-bedroom apartment, but please contact the university for the most updated information. Utilities are included with rent.



TRANSPORTATION

Towns

The University is a rural campus, meaning that it sits near or between several small communities.

Maine is a large state with a low population density, so it is car-centric, meaning most people rely on a car for transportation. There is public transportation and it is free to students.

There are several nearby communities that students call home:

Orono site of University of Maine, is a 10,000-resident town

Old Town a nearby town with 7,500 residents

Bangor the nearest city, has 32,000 residents

Public Transit

Public transportation is by bus but be aware that buses stop running from campus shortly before 6:00 pm, which is not convenient for grad students

Graduate classes for CMJ are mostly in the evening, running from 5 - 7:30 pm because most graduate students are TAs who teach during the day)

Black Bear Orono Express

Bangor-Orono public transportation

Community Connector

Bus service



Personal Transit

If you are planning on bringing a car or buying one and do not have a valid U.S. driver's license, you will need to obtain a Maine license.

1. Be aware, Maine has an excise tax for registering your car, which also requires a car inspection for safety and emissions.
2. If you have a car, you will need a parking permit for campus.
3. You can use Uber, Lyft, or taxis but it is not affordable on any regular basis to do so and is not recommended.

CONCLUSION



To reiterate the introduction, choosing to attend graduate school is a significant life decision. However, moving to a new city, state, or country can be an even harder choice as the process has multiple elements. With this document of resources, the J-IDEA committee hopes to take some stress off of your shoulders when it comes to you making your final decision to join us at the University of Maine.

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