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Building a Better Orono Together: Cultivating Organic Community Connection with University and Orono Stakeholders Final Report

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“Building a Better Orono Together: Cultivating Organic Community Connection with University and Orono Stakeholders”



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Fall 2012-Spring 2013

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Prof. Robert Glover

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1.1 Introduction

The story of the town of Orono Maine in many ways starts with a river. In the days of early settlement, it was the waters of the Stillwater River that buoyed the lumber industry and the booming mills along its banks. Presently, as the industrial heyday fades and the community adapts to a changing reality, the river plays a new role, that of separation. The University of Maine, the largest employer within the town, resides on an island, separated from the downtown Orono area by the Stillwater with just one bridge crossing to connect them. This geographical distance creates friction when attempting to define Orono as the college town that it technically is. It is common to see overlap and integration between the town and university with no clear distinction where the campus begins and the town ends. But with over a mile spanning between the University of Maine and downtown Orono, this intimate coexistence is clearly impossible in the traditional sense, a challenge faced by both communities.

Geographic distance is not the only challenge stunting the growth of university and community connection in Orono. Historically, tensions have existed between academia and municipalities as universities isolated themselves in elite “ivory towers” of intellectual endeavors and remained detached from the town communities around them. This led many to perceive the academic institutions as “large, powerful, non-taxpaying entities that soak up city services and provide little in return” (Martin et al 2005). Though this trend is reversing itself, there is still clear disjuncture between “town and gown” that proves just as difficult to surmount as any geographic barrier.

Taking into consideration the challenges and history outlined above, this study seeks to understand ways in which the town of Orono and the University of Maine can pool existing knowledge and resources to improve the community as a “college town”. Utilizing literature discussing the dynamics of a college town and drawing from towns comparable to Orono, this study looks at satisfaction, importance, and knowledge and the frequency with which different demographics utilize aspects of the downtown Orono. Staff, faculty, student, and resident stakeholders are the demographic groups analyzed. In addition, the survey examines feelings of “connectedness” with the community of Orono and asks open-ended questions what aspects of the downtown respondents feel are adequate and which they feel need to change.

Research will be done in a way that utilizes and respects the knowledge and strengths of both the community and university partners in the framework of action research. According to this framework, understanding this relationship in a way that is inclusive and goal orientated is crucial in creating sustainable notions of engagement that change the culture of disconnect between town and gown. This understanding is more easily facilitated thanks to “a growing movement within higher education to tackle [economic, political, social, environmental, and health-related] issues through direct collaboration with community partners” (Glover and Silka 2013). By melding the voices and perspectives of university and community partners equally and taking all input seriously, action research generates organic understanding and comprehensive expression of needs in an inclusive manner.

Utilizing data from multiple stakeholders and riding this wave of enthusiasm for university community partnerships, this study hopes to gain insight from the ground. The larger goal is to identify steps that can be realistically undertaken with existing resources through

organic university-community collaboration at all levels. The findings presented to the stakeholders at the end of this project will ideally reflect ways the university and community can transcend traditional partnerships to construct not only treetop solutions to these challenges, but also grassroots approaches that facilitate cooperative ties now and in the future.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study examines topics which have an underlying theoretical and conceptual component: namely, what makes a good college-town compared to other municipalities in the United States, the nature of university- community partnerships, the history and importance of such relationships, and the method of research known as action research as compared to other approaches. This section of the paper will address these conceptual questions before moving on to a review of existing literature conducted on these topics.

University-community relations have a complex trajectory in the United States that is best understood within the historical context of the American university. Institutions of higher education were formally founded beginning in the early 1800s with a specific focus on societal needs such as training teachers and religious leaders. The general goal at the time was to create “enlightened citizens”. This lofty goal found grounding and purpose in 1864 with the Morrill Land Grant Act. Federal land was given to states to create public institutions charged with the mission of serving the needs of the communities, particularly in the area of agriculture and mechanical arts (Primary Documents in American History 2010). From here, the university model evolved over the course of the 20th century. An emphasis on university missions for the public good prevalent in the early 20th century lead to productive and engaged universities centered on scientific research and connected to centers of political power throughout the country. Trouble arose during the 1960s and 70s, as the university’s interests began to diverge from the “public good,” catering more towards private projects with increased disciplinary specialization. University research, and the intellectuals producing it, became increasingly inaccessible. Scholars produced academic studies riddled with jargon only understood by fellow academics. Connections between university and the public sphere declined as universities continued to become isolated ivory towers of academic pursuits, with little consideration of public good or interest (Engagement, 2012). As urbanization increased, universities sought to put up higher walls and stronger gates to ward off the encroaching public, leading to separation and too often, resentment directed towards the institutions from the communities (Martin et al 2005).

Currently, this animosity surrounding the elite and reclusive culture of the university has been identified from within and outside of the institution as a problem, one that could be addressed through the formation of university-community partnerships (Boyer 1996). Thanks to the human and intellectual capital and other resources at the university’s disposal, universities have a unique opportunity to work with the communities in which they reside for the mutual benefit of both parties. Thus a movement to increase community engagement and service learning has arisen within the university with great promise and potential (Glover and Silka 2013). The “engagement turn” in higher education is fueled by a desire to reinvigorate civic learning that moves beyond textbooks and classrooms to active engagement in the real world. Proponents aim to build off of students’ inclination towards service to expand the democratic and

civic capacities of university youth (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement 2012).

When dealing with issues of university-community partnership, questions arise regarding how these relationships can be constructed and implemented in ways that utilize and respect the knowledge and abilities of all parties. How do we ensure that this movement moves beyond the current tension and animosity to bring down the walls with mutual involvement and incentives, and why is this approach so important for success?

To properly address these questions, it is essential to recognize the power dynamics that are present in partnerships depending on the position and status of each player involved. Too often, we fail to acknowledge the potential these dynamics have to skew and control the relationship. A partnership that works for the benefit of just one stakeholder further undermines the mission of improving university-community relations by placing hierarchical constraints on the exchange (Glover & Silka 2013). Thus, it is essential to see the benefits of utilizing all strengths that stakeholders bring to the table equally in order to successfully and innovatively address social issues facing the university and communities (Martin, Smith, & Phillips 2005).

One model of research that innately allows for equal participation among all stakeholders is that of action research. This method varies from pure or applied research. Pure research is performed solely for the sake of advancing knowledge in a particular discipline. This is a very exclusive form of research, because information is generally exchanged within the discipline. Applied research is conducted for the sake of determining an outcome that may have a useful application. This is slightly less exclusive, because the research done is intended to contribute to a specific problem that may be faced by societies, communities and individuals. This research moves beyond a model of pure “knowledge creation.”

Action research is different than each of these because it requires a democratically inclusive partnership between the researcher and the subject, which recognizes and builds off of the needs and expertise of both the research subject and the researcher. In fact, the categories of “researcher” and “subject” become increasingly blurred in the context of such partnerships. A democratically inclusive partnership is one that encourages social change through research. By researching in this manner, the researcher works to create links between the research, the execution of the research, and the application of the results. Yet they also build bridges between research institutions and the various communities with whom they engage (Greenwood and Levin 2007).

Action research is commonly done in an interdisciplinary manner. This means exactly what it sounds like; people from various academic fields of study utilize their expertise and skills within a single research project. This is beneficial because it creates an extensive, multi-dimensional, and holistic solutions to a given problem. However, interdisciplinary research can be very time consuming, inefficient, and can often identify more problems than it solves. Also, it can be difficult, particularly in the current academic atmosphere, to find researchers who are willing to participate in this type of research. Yet, in that the goal of action research is to empower communities, the nature of the problems they face is rarely confined to a single discipline or research specialty.

The goal of action research is to increase the ability of the involved community to control their own destinies effectively within a sustainable environment. Therefore, an important aspect of our research, and of action research in general is engagement. Engagement means the responsibility of being informed, being socially active, and connecting with people. There are three types of engagement, according to Ben Berger, a political scientist at Swarthmore College: political engagement, social engagement, and moral engagement (Berger 1999). Social engagement involves giving one's attention and energy towards social groups and networks; such as a bowling league. Moral engagement is similar to social engagement, except the focus is not purely social, and instead involves moral reasoning and follow-through; such as participation en masse at a church. Political engagement involves attention and energy being focused towards political issues and processes, which could be fulfilled by donating one's time to a political campaign. (Greenwood and Levin 2007; Stringer 2007).

Part of the philosophy of action research is to ensure that all stakeholders have a 'voice' that is not only taken into consideration, but also actually involved in the research process. Pure and applied research typically create a power dynamic between the researcher and the community, where the community feels as though their needs and ideas are subordinate to those of the researcher. Action research attempts to create a relationship that is aware of this power dynamic between the researcher and the community, and additionally takes advantage of community-based knowledge (Glover and Silka 2013). When properly implemented, this process is reciprocal in nature, and mutually beneficial.

These forms of partnership can be utilized in many ways with different stakeholders. What is most pertinent here is how they can be used to facilitate the growth of a better college town, an idea that should be further defined and explored. College towns often have distinct demographic and societal characteristics and features that create a unique community opposed to towns without universities or colleges. There are often youthful and diverse populations that provide a well-educated workforce and little industry. In addition, college towns afford access to a variety of cultural opportunities and other amenities that are typically only found in larger urban areas (Gumprecht 2003).

One important consideration to keep in mind when defining a college town is the extent to which the university influences and shapes the culture of the town. There are many cities and other areas that have well established institutions of higher education and possess other characteristics of a college town, but the culture of the town is cultivated by forces other than the university (Gumprecht 2003). We will now examine in greater depth the existing research literature on university community partnerships, college towns, and action research.

3.1 Literature Review

In order to delve more deeply into university-community partnerships, it is essential to review and understand existing literature on the concept of a college town, town-gown relations, and methods of research with a focus on action research. There is extensive literature that addresses each of these topics, often with quite a bit of overlap. Therefore it is necessary to narrow the scope of the literature review to include only literature that addresses these topics in a way that is relevant to a research project being conducted in the town of Orono, by University of

Maine students. Literature included in this category addresses issue specific to land grant institutions, rural settings, and towns with a dominant university influence.

3.2 What is a “College Town?”

Blake Gumprecht defines a college town as, “any city where a college or university and the culture it creates exert a dominant influence over the character of the community” (Gumprecht 2003, 1) This definition does not include every city or town that contains a college, but for the purposes of this study, which focuses on Orono, Maine; it is sufficient. College towns that fit this definition typically have a few unique demographic trends that set them apart from otherwise similar cities. These trends are the basis for the diverse and unconventional economic, social, and political environment that many college towns offer.

First and foremost, the median age of the average American college town is about ten years younger than that of a similarly sized town. Also, college town residents are far more likely to hold college degrees than their non-college town residing counterparts. College town economies rely much less on manufacturing, and more on education, than their counterparts, whilst typical college-town family incomes tend to be relatively high, and unemployment rates tend to be relatively low. The two most sizable population groups in college towns (students and professors) are very transient, and far more likely to rent or live in group housing, i.e. fraternity/sorority housing or shared apartments (Gumprecht 2003).

These demographic trends tend to make college-towns areas that promote social growth and personal discovery. The businesses that do well in college towns reflect this trend, and include coffee shops, bars, bookstores, pizzerias, bike shops, health food stores, vegetarian restaurants, and stores that specialize in, as Gumprecht puts it; “the cultural kitsch of the 1960’s.” College-towns also attract houses of worship aimed at serving the spiritual needs of college students. Greek life remains another important facet of the American college town, although nationally, membership in both sororities and fraternities is declining, and some schools have banned such organizations due to concerns with exclusionary policies, excessive partying, and hazing (Reisberg 2000; Gumprecht 2003).

The characteristics Gumprecht notes above are reflected in rankings of the country’s best college towns. For instance, one online source known as “E-Podunk” created a statistical index of the country’s “best college towns” by first breaking up communities by size and using a weighted statistical index to rank the college towns on factors which capture the vibrancy in the arts, culture, economic innovation and technology, area history, and cost of living. Unlike most indexes, this study does not assess the quality of the colleges and universities, nor does it ask the students to “rate” their college town. As they state, “...the index deliberately ruled out the stereotypical ‘sleepy campus town.’ We wanted to find college towns with vibrant arts scenes, commitment to intellectual growth and strong economies. These are places where alumni want to live and where employers want to locate” (Epodunk.com 2013). While the quality of a college town is in part a function of the university or college that resides within it, even more important are the ways in which the vibrant intellectual life of the university is reflected back into the community.

College towns in the United States differ from college towns in Europe and abroad. In America, universities were first constructed and then large populations followed, whereas in Europe, universities were placed in already existing metropolitan areas. The United States has more “college towns” than any other country. In America, cities emerged after colleges had already been established. College founders believed that, “a quiet, rural setting, away from the evils of city life, was the only proper environment for learning” (Gumprecht 2003). American towns and cities came to be defined by these universities. The opposite is true in Europe, where colleges were established post-urban development. Intellectuals tended to gather in cities, and over time universities materialized. Thus, it is fair to say that the American university affected the physical structure of the town and its character or culture. Glover and Silka note that in an effort to foster research and teaching that addresses society’s complex challenges, many higher education institutions have initiated partnerships with communities (Glover and Silka 2013).

3.3 University-Community Relations

The Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 utilized federal land to create new institutions charged with a public purpose specifically surrounding agriculture and education. Over the years this evolved into a broader public mission. The act provided resources and allowed leeway for institutional entrepreneurs seeking to develop “true” research universities (Mayfield, 2001). The Morrill Act helped to create coordination and entrepreneurship that would be essential for the formation of research universities and for the relationship between the universities and the communities they reside in. In the early twentieth century the American university shifted away from practical societal needs towards a more comprehensive model based off of the German higher education system. From this model the university’s public purpose involved training bureaucrats, agricultural research, and a more collective perspective focusing to better serve the state rather than the individual. Mark R. Nemeck discusses how at this point in American university history the state universities sought to avoid the partisan politics and bickering of local political influences by keeping the process closed to those outside the academic community.

There are several points of tension between college towns and universities. One of the biggest issues is the erosion of family housing and the prevalence of “student ghettos,” which are areas with a high concentration low-rent student housing, which tend to be unsightly and prone to disrepair. Drinking and partying can also lead to tension between towns and universities, with both sides acting to curb these activities. Universities will often extend disciplinary policies to apply to activities off campus, while towns will enact “zero-tolerance” policies for noise complaints and underage drinking (University of Delaware Messenger 1999). Furthermore, colleges tend to face resistance to geographical expansion, particularly when it involves buying up new land, because they pay no property taxes, which can hinder town and municipal attempts to expand their tax base (Gumprecht 2003).

Martin and Smith present several case studies are presented depicting successful innovative university-community partnerships. Over the years, there has been a shift from a government to a *governance* perspective. The governance paradigm encourages the creation of innovative partnerships between the government sector, the private sector, and the non-profit sector in order to harness the collective energies and strengths of all partners. This shift in the paradigm focuses on the potential of all partners and stakeholders. It is based on the assumptions that social issues can only be addressed through collective and innovative efforts of multiple

stakeholders (Martin and Smith 2003). Community-university partnerships allow collective action and research to be conducted based off of community social needs. This type of collaborative and innovative research allows inclusive results which add to the generation of knowledge. That being said not all academic researchers agree. Glover and Silka point out that some researchers believe community engaged research obstructs real intellectual work and distracts academics from disciplines (Glover and Silka 2013).

It's natural to think of ways that the university, faculty, and students can become more connected with the surrounding community. However, Bruning, McGrew and Cooper take an opposite approach. They investigate how to get community members more involved with the university. Their results found that "community members who have attended a campus event in the past six months had a significantly more favorable impression of the university than those who had not attended an event" (Bruning et al. 2006). This pokes holes in the conventional wisdom that says a university has to go out into the community to engage with it.

In order to improve relations between universities and communities, different tactics have been employed. The two main strategies for improving town-gown relations have been (1) increasing student access to community resources and (2) providing university expertise to the community. These strategies and much of the effort towards better university-community engagement have been one sided. A third form of engagement, which has not been explored as extensively, is as follows, "research should examine engagement from a community member's perspective and determine what benefits are accrued when members of the community are provided access to a university" (Bruning et al. 2006).

Bruning, McGrew and Cooper found in one study that, when asked the open-ended question, "What is the 'one thing' you would like to see the university do?" the number-one response was that they wanted the university to "invite" them onto campus. Community members want to be engaged on campus. If townspeople are involved with what is happening at the university, they are more likely to have a favorable view of the university and, as a result, the two will become more engaged. University representatives in rural communities interact with a smaller group of citizens than in urban areas. Because of this, many in the community will associate "the university" with a particular individual.

Power relations between a university and its surrounding community can hinder engagement, especially if a university is a powerful force in its community. If the university "dominates" its community partners, it can lead to dissatisfaction among residents in the area. As Prins notes, "Several studies illustrate how university representatives' institutional power and expert status allow them intentionally or unintentionally to influence the partnership agenda, to make demands of community residents... and to expect community partners to adopt their suggestions" (Prins 2006, 342). Therefore, it is important to make sure the community voice is not lost in university-community partnerships. This can be done by involving citizens in decision-making and planning that may have an effect on them.

3.4 Social Research

Many studies examining university-community relationships utilize the framework of "social research," which is often performed in communities located near universities. Social

research uniquely combines facts and ideas in a structured, systematic way to answer questions about how the social world works (Neuman 2007). Framing something as tenuous and variable as the social world in a scientific way avoids personal anecdotes and skewed or biased portrayals in the media and pop culture. If done properly, social research uses data, collected quantitatively or qualitatively, to support or reject theory. Thanks to this constant connection with theory and the collection and application of systematically collected data, social research is able to tell stories of how things operate, understood in a structured, scientific format (Neuman 2007).

The theories that social research so heavily relies upon refer to a systematic construction of concepts that organizes knowledge to help a person understand the social world. These theories are built, debated, and altered over time with the work and collaboration of different scientists and researchers. This collaboration between researchers of different disciplines is called interdisciplinary research, or interdisciplinary investigation, and functions to counter the complex challenges that often arise from single-disciplined, specialized research. (Silka et al. 2013) Often, researchers are meant to make moral, legal, or ideological claims about the source of the problem or issue in the social world that the researcher is addressing (Neuman 2007). Essentially, a social theory is a way of framing one's way of thinking so as to increase one's awareness of the interconnectivity and structure of the social world.

In his discussion of social research, author Laurence Neuman outlines two main dimensions or approaches of social research, basic (or pure) and applied. Basic research is used to advance knowledge, to support or refute theories for purely conceptual and scientific purposes. Applied research on the other hand is meant to address a specific concern and through theorizing and data collection aims to suggest recommendations and solutions to the problem (Neuman 2007).

A subset of applied research that is most relevant to the topic at hand is the idea of action research. According to Neuman, action research emphasizes the power innate in the creation and proliferation of knowledge and thus argues for the use of this knowledge to enact and structure change. Continuing with the emphasis on power, action research sees the importance of maintaining healthy power dynamics among partners in the research process, meaning that community knowledge and voices are heard with equal weight and respect as those of the researcher. Often, the direction of action research leads to political awareness, action, and engagement in the community, making this form of applied research politically charged with no emphasis on neutrality so that it can be used towards as a inclusive means to a community changing end.

Greenwood and Levin view action research in a slightly different way. They argue that action research is an entirely separate discipline from applied research, because it does not accept the separation of thought and action characteristic of pure and applied research (Greenwood and Levin 2007). This split between theory and action is attributed to a current dysfunction in the social sciences, arising from the disengagement of researchers, which causes a failure to effectively interact with the more engaged actors (people who work to implement social change). The disengagement of the researcher from the actor can dampen the translation of social *research* into social *action*. (Greenwood and Levin 2007).

Action research aims to fix this problem by engaging the researcher and the subject, and making sure that both parties are allowed to have input in the research process. By departing from the traditional power dynamic, where the research subject is subordinate to the researcher, an action researcher can achieve a much more involved status in the community than a traditional researcher. An involved role in the community allows the research done to play a more significant part in utilizing social change in the community (Greenwood and Levin 2007).

Thus far existing literature on the subject on community-university partnerships has shown to create positive interconnected relations that benefit both the community and university as a whole. Universities across the United States and around the world have given social research increasing priority when doing research projects in their surrounding communities, partially in response to criticism that they were not extending enough of their extensive resources to help these communities. (Silka et al. 2013) Though not all scholars believe in the action research process, this research project will utilize action research methods in hopes of generating results that will be useful for the town of Orono. This study will not be useful if it does not address issues that are important to the university *and* the town, therefore the research must be conducted in a way that prevents the researchers from losing sight of the goals put forth by community partners.

4.1 Study Design

This study is an attempt to examine some of the ways in which the challenges posed by the geographic and institutional distances discussed above could be addressed in the context of the town of Orono. Using the principles of action research, this study aims to illuminate ways in which the University of Maine and the town of Orono might collaboratively and innovatively work together to address potential issues raised in our findings. The project is part of a year-long collaboration between the students in *POS 364-365: Practicum in Engaged Policy Studies* and Orono Town Planner Evan Richert and Town Manager Sophie Wilson. The study will conduct survey and focus group research among Orono residents, university students and faculty to determine the ways in which they would like to see the town grow and develop. Ideally, we would like our presentation to reflect ways in which the town and the university can utilize existing assets to engage in this process of growth and development together, in a true spirit of community engagement.

4.2 Research Methods

This project employs survey research methodology. The online surveys examined the preferences of 1) students, 2) university faculty 3) university staff, and 4) Orono residents. These are obviously overlapping categories and adaptive survey techniques ensured that each individual response is tailored to the demographic characteristics of the respondent. The surveys ask questions about perceptions of Orono as a “college town” with a focus on the Orono downtown area. These ask about various dimensions of Orono and ask respondents to rate their satisfaction, the importance or salience of this dimension of Orono, the frequency in which they partake in this dimension of Orono, as well as general knowledgability. In addition, open-ended questions utilize “text box” answers to enable respondents to share their views in greater detail and depth.

In addition, the study employed qualitative focus groups with University of Maine administration and staff, as well as Orono merchants and business-owners, drawn from members of the Orono Village Association. The purpose of these focus groups is to gain a more nuanced perspective of the opportunities and challenges associated with making Orono a better college town from those actively engaged in this process. These sessions were instructive in enabling us to think about existing capacities of the town of Orono and the University of Maine, as well as measures and strategies that had been employed in the past, or were currently in the process of being developed.

It is important to note that we should be hesitant to generalize too broadly from the results of this survey. The survey instrument has not been statistically validated and thus, findings cannot be generalized beyond this study. Furthermore there was a discrepancy in the wording of questions regarding satisfaction with the town of Orono. Students, faculty, and staff who were not residents of the town of Orono were asked how satisfied they were with Orono *as a college town*, whereas residents were asked how satisfied they were with Orono *as a place to live*. While these two questions are very similar it is possible that they could have been construed differently, therefore creating a possible source of error. The survey leaves room for bias and misinterpretation in responses because most of the questions are self-reflective. Individuals may have held deep-rooted biases and opinions that they may not be aware of and the survey does not affectively filter these out. The survey may have presented bias in that we only presented limited categories for specific rankings concerning: satisfaction, knowledge, frequency, and importance.

The focus groups for this project were more constrained than we had initially planned. Originally, we had intended to conduct focus groups with students as well. Due to difficulties in recruitment and scheduling, we had to forego the student focus groups (although the feedback gained from the open-ended text box surveys provides a rich source of data regarding student perceptions and suggestions for the future).

Despite these shortfalls, this research project is very comprehensive in its findings. It brings to light many issues in the relationship between the University and the town of Orono. We hope that further research is conducted in a similar manner, being sure to include community partners and stakeholders as much as possible.

The rationale for these methods was driven by the outcome the study hopes to achieve. Rather than simply prescribe the types of interventions deemed necessary to improve Orono from on high, this study takes seriously the idea, embedded in social research methodology, that stakeholders themselves possess crucial policy-relevant knowledge. As such, the research process aims to draw out ideas and suggestions which could positively shape Orono's collective future. We hope that the end result of this project is a more comprehensive picture of the preferences and desires of these varied stakeholders, as well as a sense of what concrete steps can be taken in the near, immediate, and long-term future to achieve these goals. The human subject research component of the project began early in the Spring 2013 semester and all survey results and interviews were finalized by the middle of April 2013.

5.1 Findings

The survey utilized a variety of mechanisms to ensure the highest response rate possible. To attract University of Maine respondents, the survey was distributed widely via the “FirstClass” message boards, as well as directly to faculty and staff within the various colleges at UMaine. To solicit town populations, the survey was advertised on the Orono town webpage, various local email listservs, the *Orono Observer*, *The Penobscot Times*, as well as the online community blog *Marsh Island Express*. The response rates broken down by demographics are listed below. In what follows, we will highlight key findings, trends, and relationships that we have deemed significant and useful towards our research question of university and community cooperation to improve Orono as a college town. We will first look at these demographic groups individually before moving on to discuss the ways the broader trends and findings of this study.

5.2 Survey Responses and Demographics

In total, there were 808 participants in the survey. As the numbers below clearly, the core of the responses come from those with a formal university affiliation (largely due to the lack of a centralized means by which to contact those outside the university). However, nearly 100 participants having no formal affiliation to the university at all participated.

Total survey responses: 808

Survey Demographic Breakdown:

- 522 University of Maine students
- 110 University of Maine faculty
- 127 University of Maine staff
- 242 Orono Residents
 - 93 of whom are unaffiliated with the University of Maine (i.e. they do not attend or work at the University).

Below, we first look at the general trends regarding satisfaction across our four key demographics. Then, we move to examine what factors might be driving that satisfaction or dissatisfaction, as well as examining variation *within* different demographic groups.

5.3 Satisfaction among University and Community Stakeholders

Figure 1: Student Satisfaction with Orono as a College Town



Figure 2: Faculty Satisfaction with Orono as a College Town

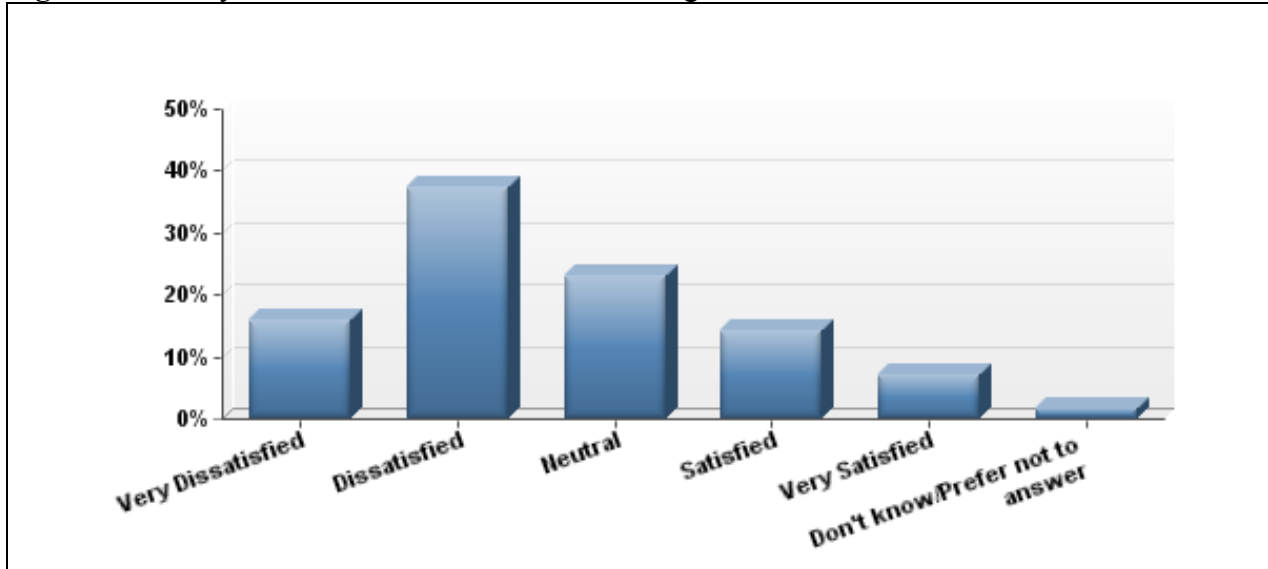


Figure 3: Staff Satisfaction with Orono as a College Town

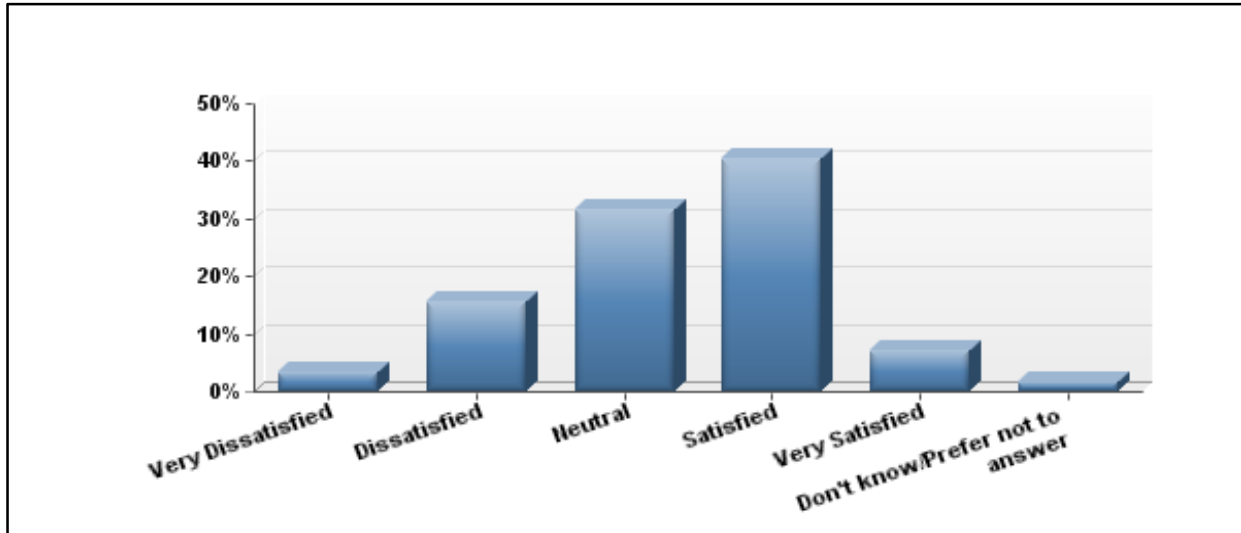
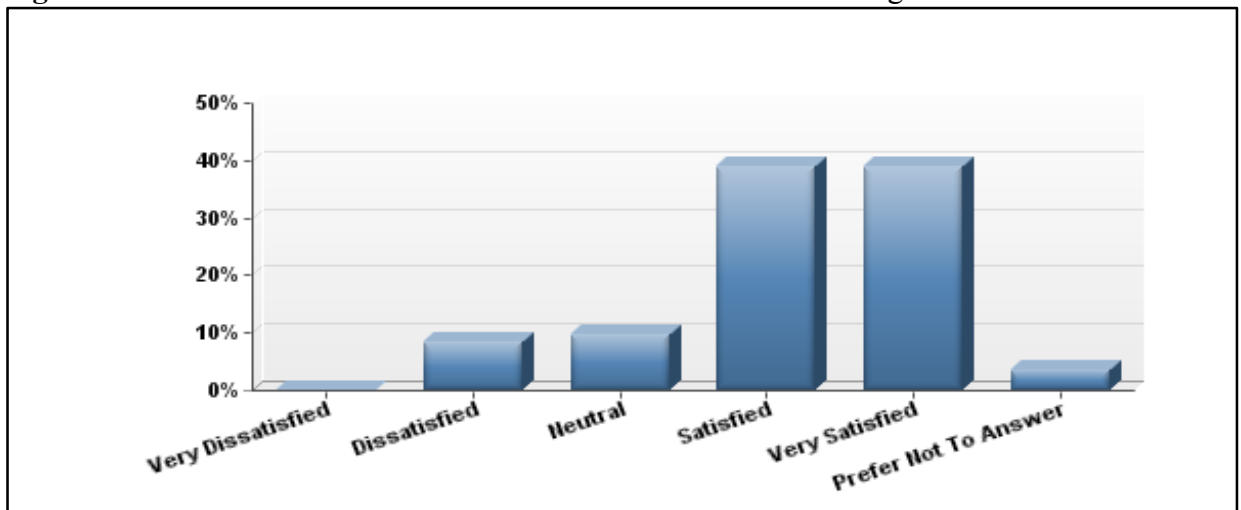


Figure 4: “Unaffiliated Resident” Satisfaction with Orono as a College Town



In general, what we see here is a degree of satisfaction that varies significantly depending on the nature of one’s relationship to the University. Many students are quite satisfied with the university. However, a significant (and vocal) majority are either dissatisfied or neutral.

Among university faculty, a substantial majority are dissatisfied with Orono as a college town—often referencing other college towns in which they have lived and worked and citing the ways that Orono fails to match up. While faculty are by far the most dissatisfied group, the fact that they are referencing far more affluent college towns such as Berkeley and Ithaca as their baseline for comparison may explain this high level of dissatisfaction. In addition, one’s residency within Orono is highly correlated with satisfaction. Faculty who reside in Orono are far more satisfied than those who live in outlying areas and commute. While we should hesitate to read too much into this (as their choice of residency may be based on underlying preferences), it does suggest that those who choose to live in Orono have a substantially more positive

interpretation of the community itself. This could be due to greater familiarity and appreciation of that which the community has to offer.

Staff is a broad category which would include professional and classified staff as well as administrative positions. Most staff view Orono quite positively. Although “staff” is probably the most varied category in terms of age. When we “drill down” to break out these results across age, we see significant variation across age groups. Over 60% in the groups 25-34, and 35-44 express neutrality or dissatisfaction. Among those 55-64 we see very high rates of satisfaction.

Orono’s “unaffiliated residents” (i.e. those who do not work at or attend the University) are by far the most satisfied demographic, with nearly 80% expressing either satisfaction or high satisfaction. And interestingly, this is a demographic which does not show the same age-related trends as “staff.” Here, the greatest expression of dissatisfaction comes from the oldest residents.

In the comments about ways that Orono could change or improve, many residents expressed an emphatic belief that Orono should *not* engage in significant changes to accommodate needs of the students, feeling that this would diminish or hollow out what makes Orono special to them. For example:

“The Town fathers have created a student ghetto in the north side of town and it is no longer an attractive place for a professional person to live.”

“I’m concerned that some people want to make it into Orono-landia, when in my opinion, it’s pretty nice the way it is.”

5.4 What is Driving Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction?

In conducting this study, one of the core areas we wanted to address were the factors which were *driving* satisfaction or dissatisfaction with Orono as a college town. A previous study commissioned by former University of Maine President Bob Kennedy, and executed by the Office of Institutional Studies attempted to this in 2008. The survey asked faculty and staff, as well as students, about their preferences for the proximity of certain area businesses. However, the study failed to make any attempt to capture the perspectives of community members without formal ties to the University of Maine. In addition, the survey asked very detailed questions about specific types of businesses—proximity to a hair salon, proximity to an office supply store, etc.

In thinking about the design of this study we wanted to build upon this previous work in numerous ways. First, the absence of direct solicitation of community input is flawed and opposed to the theoretical underpinnings of this study—the importance of community perspectives in action research, and the desire to forge enduring and reciprocal university-community partnerships. In addition, we wanted to frame the categories from which participants would choose in a broader way, so as to capture greater depth in what stakeholders felt was needed and move beyond simply a specific type of business or store. Economic development is a key component, perhaps *the* key component of a quality college town, as so much else depends on a vibrant economic base. Yet the literature shows quite clearly that factors such as culture, heritage, aesthetics, outdoor recreation and a variety of other factors are crucially important as

well. In framing the categories in this way, we lose a bit in terms of specificity. We tried to overcome this inherent obstacle with the inclusion of open-ended text box questions in which participants themselves (rather than the researcher) could provide that specificity.

In addition, we wanted to measure not only satisfaction but *salience*. A respondent may be dissatisfied with their proximity to a 24-hour convenience store, but not consider that overly important as a dimension of college town. Thus, our survey also asked questions about the importance or salience of these dimensions. This enables not only to see trends with regard to levels of satisfaction but also assess which areas of dissatisfaction are the most essential to address.

Table 1: Students—Satisfaction with Different Dimensions of Orono as a College Town

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Don't know/Prefer not to answer
Entertainment & Nightlife	7%	22%	40%	24%	3%	4%
Dining & Restaurants	5%	18%	25%	40%	10%	1%
Artistic and Creative Expression	5%	20%	47%	20%	2%	7%
Historical Sites/Area Heritage	3%	15%	57%	15%	1%	9%
Outdoor Recreation	3%	13%	30%	38%	13%	4%
Shopping	9%	29%	39%	19%	2%	2%
Events/Festivals	6%	23%	42%	20%	3%	5%
Public Transportation	6%	14%	36%	28%	8%	8%
Overall Appearance	6%	21%	32%	33%	6%	2%

Question: How satisfied are you with the following aspects of the Town of Orono?

In trying to assess the key findings across these different dimensions, one method is to look at combined salience and satisfaction. To do so, one looks at the areas that are of highest importance (by calculating the combined percentage of those responding that something is important or very important) and the combined levels of satisfaction (again calculating the combined percentage of those saying that they are satisfied or very satisfied).

Table 2: Students—Importance of Different Dimensions of a College Town

	Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Very Important
Entertainment & Nightlife	4%	5%	12%	33%	45%
Dining & Restaurants	1%	4%	13%	35%	46%
Artistic and Creative Expression	4%	15%	27%	28%	26%
Historical Sites/Area Heritage	5%	23%	37%	23%	11%
Outdoor Recreation	1%	3%	14%	38%	43%
Shopping	3%	9%	29%	35%	24%
Events/Festivals	2%	5%	20%	31%	42%
Public Transportation	3%	7%	15%	21%	53%
Overall Appearance	1%	1%	14%	35%	49%

Question: “How important do you consider the following aspects to be to a quality college town?”

Table 3: University of Maine Students: Salience & Satisfaction

Category	Combined Importance (% important and very important)	Combined Satisfaction (% satisfied and very satisfied)	Difference
Entertainment & Nightlife	78	29	-49
Dining & Restaurants	81	50	-31
Artistic & Creative Expression	54	15	-39
Historical Sites & Area Heritage	34	12	-22
Outdoor Recreation	81	42	-39
Shopping	59	21	-38
Events & Festivals	73	17	-56
Public Transportation	74	34	-40
Overall Appearance	84	43	-41

Ideally, what one would want is for the areas ranked of the highest importance to have the highest levels of satisfaction. Yet the “disjuncture” between salience and satisfaction can also tell us quite a bit. By simply examining the difference between salience and satisfaction, those areas with high negative values can tell us the areas that are very important to respondents, but also for

which there is low satisfaction. We can then rank those categories to gain a sense of the under-addressed areas of concerns for different populations. We do this below.

Ranked by Highest Disjuncture Between Salience and Satisfaction (Students)

- 1) Events and Festivals
- 2) Entertainment and Nightlife
- 3) Overall appearance
- 4) Outdoor recreation
- 5) Public Transportation
- 6) Shopping
- 7) Historical Sites and Area Heritage
- 8) Artistic and Creative Expression
- 9) Dining and Area Restaurants

University Faculty

Table 4: Faculty—Satisfaction with Different Dimensions of Orono as a College Town

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Don't know/Prefer not to answer
Entertainment & Nightlife	10%	23%	46%	17%	1%	4%
Dining & Restaurants	13%	25%	25%	32%	5%	1%
Artistic and Creative Expression	10%	31%	25%	25%	3%	5%
Historical Sites/Area Heritage	4%	13%	53%	19%	0%	11%
Outdoor Recreation	2%	9%	25%	39%	19%	7%
Shopping	14%	31%	33%	17%	0%	5%
Events/Festivals	6%	22%	44%	22%	3%	3%
Public Transportation	6%	17%	36%	26%	3%	13%
Overall Appearance	11%	26%	27%	31%	4%	1%

Question: How satisfied are you with the following aspects of the Town of Orono?

Table 5: Faculty—Importance of Different Dimensions of a College Town

	Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Very Important	Don't know/Prefer not to answer
Entertainment & Nightlife	2%	0%	13%	36%	48%	2%
Dining & Restaurants	0%	0%	3%	33%	64%	0%
Artistic and Creative Expression	0%	0%	10%	30%	59%	2%
Historical Sites/Area Heritage	5%	16%	34%	25%	16%	3%
Outdoor Recreation	0%	10%	20%	33%	36%	2%
Shopping	0%	11%	25%	41%	21%	2%
Events/Festivals	0%	2%	21%	44%	33%	0%
Public Transportation	0%	3%	12%	27%	58%	0%
Overall Appearance	0%	0%	7%	42%	50%	2%

Question: “How important do you consider the following aspects to be to a quality college town?”

Table 6: University of Maine Faculty: Salience & Satisfaction

Category	Combined Importance (% important and very important)	Combined Satisfaction (% satisfied and very satisfied)	Difference
Entertainment & Nightlife	84	18	-66
Dining & Restaurants	97	37	-60
Artistic & Creative Expression	89	28	-61
Historical Sites & Area Heritage	41	19	-22
Outdoor Recreation	69	48	-21
Shopping	62	17	-45
Events & Festivals	77	25	-52
Public Transportation	85	29	-56
Overall Appearance	92	35	-57

Ranked by Highest Disjuncture Between Salience and Satisfaction (Faculty)

- 1) Entertainment and Nightlife
- 2) Artistic and Creative Expression
- 3) Dining and Restaurants
- 4) Overall Appearance
- 5) Public Transportation
- 6) Events and Festivals
- 7) Shopping
- 8) Historical Sites & Area Heritage
- 9) Outdoor Recreation

University Staff & Administration

Table 7: Staff and Administration—Satisfaction with Different Dimensions of Orono as a College Town

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Don't know/Prefer not to answer
Entertainment & Nightlife	5%	20%	42%	25%	4%	5%
Dining & Restaurants	4%	21%	20%	40%	14%	2%
Artistic and Creative Expression	2%	14%	50%	28%	3%	3%
Historical Sites/Area Heritage	4%	7%	57%	22%	3%	8%
Outdoor Recreation	3%	8%	29%	44%	13%	3%
Shopping	7%	36%	32%	19%	4%	2%
Events/Festivals	7%	16%	39%	26%	5%	8%
Public Transportation	6%	6%	30%	38%	12%	8%
Overall Appearance	8%	13%	32%	37%	10%	1%

Question: “How important do you consider the following aspects to be to a quality college town?”

Table 8: Staff and Administration—Importance of Different Dimensions of a College Town

	Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Very Important	Don't know/Prefer not to answer
Entertainment & Nightlife	0%	4%	16%	37%	39%	3%
Dining & Restaurants	0%	1%	10%	26%	60%	1%
Artistic and Creative Expression	0%	5%	15%	33%	47%	0%
Historical Sites/Area Heritage	0%	16%	28%	37%	16%	1%
Outdoor Recreation	0%	4%	7%	26%	60%	1%
Shopping	1%	6%	21%	36%	34%	1%
Events/Festivals	1%	4%	7%	41%	44%	1%
Public Transportation	0%	0%	9%	19%	71%	1%
Overall Appearance	0%	0%	4%	39%	55%	1%

Question: “How important do you consider the following aspects to be to a quality college town?”

Table 9: University of Maine Staff & Administration: Salience & Satisfaction

Category	Combined Importance (% important and very important)	Combined Satisfaction (% satisfied and very satisfied)	Difference
Entertainment & Nightlife	76	29	-47
Dining & Restaurants	86	54	-32
Artistic & Creative Expression	80	31	-49
Historical Sites & Area Heritage	53	25	-28
Outdoor Recreation	86	57	-29
Shopping	70	23	-47
Events & Festivals	85	31	-54
Public Transportation	90	50	-40
Overall Appearance	94	47	-47

Ranked by Highest Disjuncture Between Salience and Satisfaction (Staff & Admin)

- 1) Artistic and Creative Expression
- 2) Events and Festivals
- 3) Overall Appearance
- 4) Shopping
- 5) Outdoor Recreation
- 6) Entertainment & Nightlife
- 7) Public Transportation
- 8) Historical Sites and Area Heritage
- 9) Dining and Restaurants

Unaffiliated Orono Residents

As noted above, when Orono residents who are unaffiliated with University were asked the question, “Overall how satisfied are you with Orono as a place to live?” there was an overwhelmingly positive response. 80% of respondents either said that they were satisfied or very satisfied. However, when it comes to the question “How satisfied are you with the following aspects of the Town of Orono?” the residents are quite dissatisfied; across the board there was low satisfaction levels, with the highest being outdoor recreation at 60%.

Table 10: Orono Unaffiliated Residents—Satisfaction with Different Dimensions of Orono as a College Town

Question	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Don't know/Prefer not to answer
Entertainment & Nightlife	1%	10%	54%	27%	4%	4%
Dining & Restaurants	1%	13%	23%	44%	15%	4%
Artistic and Creative Expression	4%	9%	43%	32%	8%	5%
Historical Sites/Area Heritage	1%	9%	59%	22%	3%	6%
Outdoor Recreation	3%	1%	18%	49%	27%	3%
Shopping	3%	34%	37%	22%	3%	3%
Events/Festivals	3%	5%	49%	33%	8%	3%
Public Transportation	3%	8%	37%	32%	13%	9%
Overall Appearance	9%	42%	16%	22%	8%	4%

Question: How satisfied are you with the following aspects of the Town of Orono?

Table 11: Orono “Unaffiliated Residents”—Importance of Different Dimensions of a College Town

Question	Not at all Important	somewhat unimportant	Neither Important nor Unimportant	Very Important	Extremely Important	Prefer Not To Answer
Entertainment & Nightlife	10%	15%	26%	41%	4%	5%
Dining & Restaurants	0%	7%	8%	58%	23%	4%
Artistic and Creative Expression	5%	4%	13%	52%	23%	4%
Historical Sites/Area Heritage	7%	9%	33%	33%	17%	1%
Outdoor Recreation	2%	0%	11%	31%	52%	4%
Shopping	5%	10%	30%	38%	15%	2%
Events/Festivals	1%	7%	16%	57%	14%	5%
Public Transportation	2%	5%	24%	35%	31%	2%
Overall Appearance	2%	0%	6%	43%	42%	6%

Question: How important do you consider the following aspects to be to quality of life in Orono?

Table 12: “Unaffiliated Orono Residents”: Salience & Satisfaction

Category	Combined Importance (% important and very important)	Combined Satisfaction (% satisfied and very satisfied)	Difference
Entertainment & Nightlife	45	31	-14
Dining & Restaurants	81	59	-22
Artistic & Creative Expression	75	40	-35
Historical Sites & Area Heritage	50	25	-25
Outdoor Recreation	83	76	-7
Shopping	53	25	-28
Events & Festivals	71	41	-30
Public Transportation	66	45	-21
Overall Appearance	85	30	-55

Ranked by Highest Disjuncture Between Salience and Satisfaction (Orono Residents)

- 1) Overall Appearance
- 2) Artistic and Creative Expression
- 3) Events and Festivals
- 4) Shopping
- 5) Historical Sites and Area Heritage
- 6) Public Transportation
- 7) Dining and Restaurants
- 8) Entertainment and Nightlife
- 9) Outdoor Recreation

5.5 Analysis Across Different Demographics

Here, again, the faculty respondents are somewhat the outlier (particularly once we look at those areas with the highest disjunctures between salience and satisfaction). While some applaud Orono as a friendly place to work and raise a family, other faculty are quite critical, even defeatist, suggesting that the inability to create a college town lies in community hostility to change and making the downtown area attractive to students and outsiders. One remarked:

It is the least "university town" of any university town I've seen. It doesn't seem friendly to students or community members wanting to hang out in a cafe or coffee shop, nor does it have the kind of funky businesses I associate with a university town. It is too bad.

In addition, the faculty respondents differ in terms of the areas deemed “high-salience, low-satisfaction.” For instance, all other demographic groups expressed great satisfaction with the variety of casual dining restaurant options that exist downtown, many of which have opened relatively recently. In fact, among staff, students, and residents dining was an area in which a majority of respondents in all three categories were satisfied or very satisfied. Yet for faculty this was one of the most significant areas of concern with a high disjuncture between salience and satisfaction and text-box responses which lamented the lack of upscale options, ethnic food, vegan and vegetarian options, etc.

Though less of an area of dissatisfaction for students, many indicated a desire for a greater variety of options such as an organic food store, a late night coffee shop and bookstore, and restaurants that serve non-American food.

I am generally satisfied with Orono. That being said, a grocery store would make Orono an excellent and self-sufficient town. A successful grocery would probably need to carry everything (i.e., junk food), but even one that remained small, selling meats, fruits, vegetables, and breads, may be able sustain itself within the market of Orono. I believe there are student groups (e.g. Students for Sustainable Agriculture, MPAC) that would be willing to help grow and provide food and services in support of such an endeavor.

Even with the faculty as an outlier, there are a number of shared trends across different demographics. Outdoor recreation, unsurprisingly, is an area that is of high interest across all demographics. This would include things such as trail networks, hiking, winter recreational

sports, canoeing and rafting, and so on. Yet in general (with the exception of students who may simply be unaware of some of the local opportunities), satisfaction was quite high.

This was particularly the case among residents not affiliated with the university. *Outdoor recreation*, was considered an area of high importance, but also one in which there was high satisfaction and knowledgability; it is also the aspect of Orono in which unaffiliated residents frequent the most. Outdoor recreation is something that Orono needs to capitalize on so that all demographics can be aware of what the town offers and reap the benefits. When asked, “What do you like about the downtown Orono area?” one resident responded,

I like that it is relatively quiet, safe, not noisy and disruptive to local residents. I also like that it is walkable. I also like its proximity to the river and to the trail along the river. I also like the fact that the downtown does not encroach seriously on residential areas. I would not like to see its foot print expand in that way.

Across every major demographic there was concern with “overall appearance.” From the text-box responses, we can get a sense that this means different things to different people. Respondents were dissatisfied with the availability of green space and patio outdoor seating available at downtown businesses. Others spoke of how it was unfortunate that an area in such close proximity to the Stillwater doesn’t use it more effectively (i.e. businesses and venues which overlook the Stillwater). For some, this meant the overall appearance of downtown buildings and businesses (both internally and externally). In other instances, “overall appearance” referred to the state of neighborhoods where single-family homes had been converted to rental properties, primarily populated by students.

Numerous text box responses indicated that the lack of comfortable outdoor space in the immediate downtown area where people could be together (from space to sit in the park, to outdoor dining, to public benches, etc.) is a major concern. This was particularly the case among University of Maine students. Data from the open-ended text box questions suggests that students would like to see more community-university partnered activities. For instance one student suggests a community garden and another suggests university sponsored concerts held in the downtown area

Among those residents who are unaffiliated with the University of Maine, data suggests that *overall appearance* is the most important aspect to the town of Orono (85% importance). However, overall satisfaction with the town’s appearance is very low (with only 30% saying they were satisfied or very satisfied). In the text box responses to our survey Orono residents made some suggestions on how to better the town’s appearance. One resident wrote,

I strongly feel that Orono needs to develop more storefronts to improve the overall "town" feel. Farmington and Belfast spring to mind as good examples, with storefronts (and apts above) lining both sides of the main street. It helps make those towns feel cozier and more inviting. So many people drive through Orono on Hwy 2, but from that perspective alone (i.e. not driving on Mill St.) Orono doesn't look particularly stunning.

Artistic and creative expression was of relatively high salience to all groups except for students (though even here, 54% of respondents ranked it as either important or very important). Again, this is a somewhat vague category. Respondents cited many specific things seen incorporated in other nearby locales such as Bangor or Belfast—community art shows, music festivals with broad appeal in the downtown, public art and murals, artistic performances such as poetry-readings or plays, and so on.

There is obviously some overlap between the category of “artistic and creative expression” and “events and festivals.” This category was in the top-three “high salience-low satisfaction” results for all demographic groups except for faculty. This was the most significant gap between salience and satisfaction for the category of students. Data suggests that student lack of awareness of existing events and festivals may be a factor here. Another problem may be that current events and festivals are geared towards a different demographic than college students. One student wrote, “I think that Orono is missing festivals appealing to college students. Having the UMaine community connect more with the Orono community would help this problem.”

One topic that came up across all demographics was the lack of a space in the downtown that could function as a “hangout” that is not a restaurant or bar. As one resident respondent said, “Orono desperately needs a good cafe with internet and good coffee open in late afternoon/evening.” Students, faculty, staff, and residents all expressed frustration that such a space does not exist in the late afternoon/early evening hours. Without it, many who would frequent the downtown as a space to work or socialize, simply don’t.

Based off of the data, students believe *public transportation* is very important for a ‘good college town’, however students seem dissatisfied with public transportation as it presently exists in Orono with only 13% of students using public transportation “all of the time” or “most of the time,” a percentage which shrinks to 8% when we limit students to those living on-campus. Half of the student sample population perceive themselves to be knowledgeable or very knowledgeable. When given the opportunity to make suggestions on how to improve downtown as a college town many students mentioned the distance between downtown and the university. One student wrote, “I think the biggest problem is that downtown is an awkward distance from campus...” The perception of distance between the university and the town is an outspoken problem for students. Another student adds, “lack of connection with the town is the fact that you have to cross a bridge to get there.” The fact that overall most students rarely utilize public transportation suggests that current public transportation services have not decreased the perceived distance between downtown Orono and the University of Maine. A few specific requests of students were to (1) have buses running later into downtown Orono and Bangor, (2) create a more student oriented transportation system to decrease local traffic and encourage more students to utilize local transportation and (3) add bus stops on College Ave to decrease ride time into downtown.

Both faculty and university staff/administration who saw public transportation as essential to a quality college town (with 85% and 90% ranking it as important or very important). In addition, both groups ranked themselves as being knowledgeable about public transportation options. What is interesting to note then is how infrequently these groups used public

transportation in Orono. The percentages of those responding that they used public transportation “all of the time” or “most of the time” were largely in line with relative low numbers expressed by students. They were as follows:

- 3% for faculty who were residents of Orono
- 9% for faculty who were not residents of Orono
- 4% for staff or administration who were residents of Orono
- 11% for staff who were non-residents of Orono.

Text box responses suggested that their reasons may be similar to those of students. For instance, one faculty member wrote that the area needs “...better transportation--it is faster for me to walk to campus than take the U transport.” Among these demographics, there may also be the issue of stigma—the idea that public transportation is a service that exists only for students and other low-income individuals to use, and staff do not want to break that stigma.

Lastly, our data show that many think all of the university demographics (students, staff, and faculty) feel that entertainment and nightlife is a very important component of a good college town. And in general, they are unsatisfied with nightlife in Orono. Of course, different age groups have different conceptions of what entertainment and night life mean. Among faculty and staff, this might mean a theatrical performance or an art gallery hosting an open house (both were mentioned in text-box responses). For graduate students or students of drinking age it might be a more extensive choice of bars or a dance club. According to student self-analysis overall students of all ages rarely enjoy their nightlife in downtown Orono. Numerous student text box responses indicate that there is a demand for more entertainment and nightlife geared towards students under 21 (a movie theatre, a bowling alley, a coffee shop). Also cited was the lack of transportation from the university to downtown past 10 pm.

Notably, lack of nightlife and entertainment was much less of a concern to residents unaffiliated with the university, perhaps because this is an older demographic. In addition, “nightlife” may conjure up images of the now-closed Curva Ultra Lounge or a similar establishment, enterprises which can lead to rowdy student behavior that is precisely what they do not want to see in the downtown.

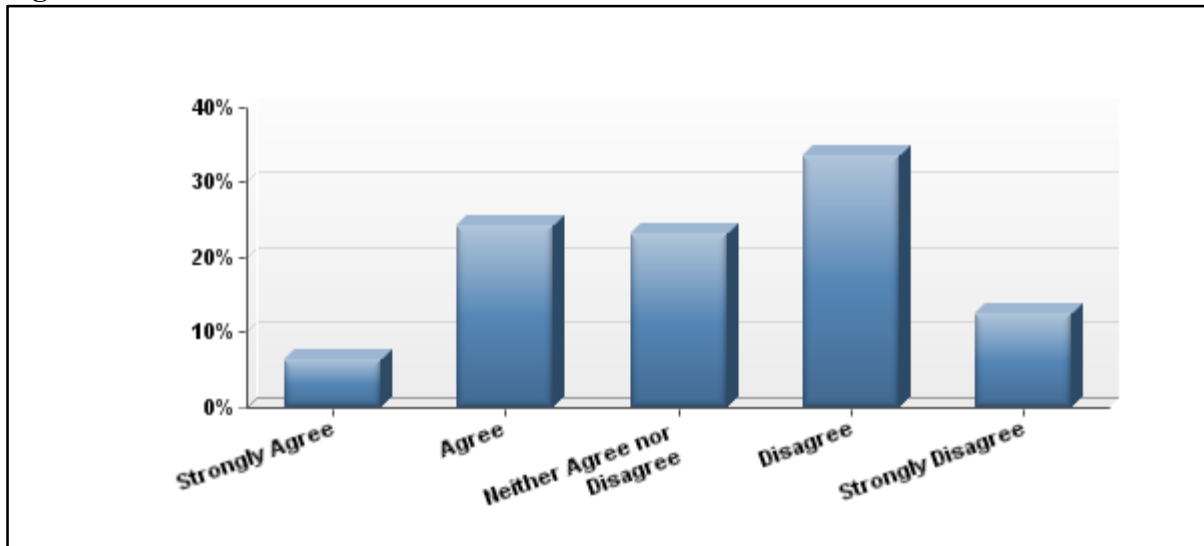
6.1 Additional Demographic Breakdowns and Analysis

Having discussed some of the major findings across the different groups, we will now examine in greater detail the variation *within* these different groups, as well as more abstract questions such as feeling of connection to the community, before moving to some suggested “next steps” which the university and community could take together to address these areas of concern.

Connection to the Community

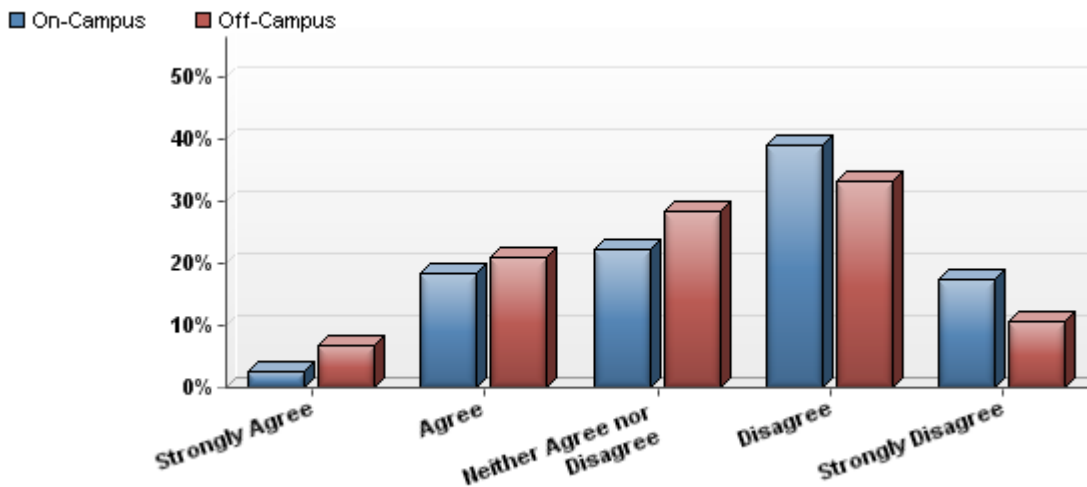
One of the areas which we were interested in learning more about was the sense of connection to the community of Orono among university stakeholders and perceptions of connection to the University among community stakeholders. Turning first to students, our data shows a negligible difference between satisfaction of students who live on-campus compared to those who live off-campus. Overall students who live off-campus seem to be slightly more satisfied or neutral. However, students who live off-campus are likely to have a higher sense of “connection” to the community of Orono, regardless of their satisfaction with it (see below).

Figure 5: Student Connection to Orono



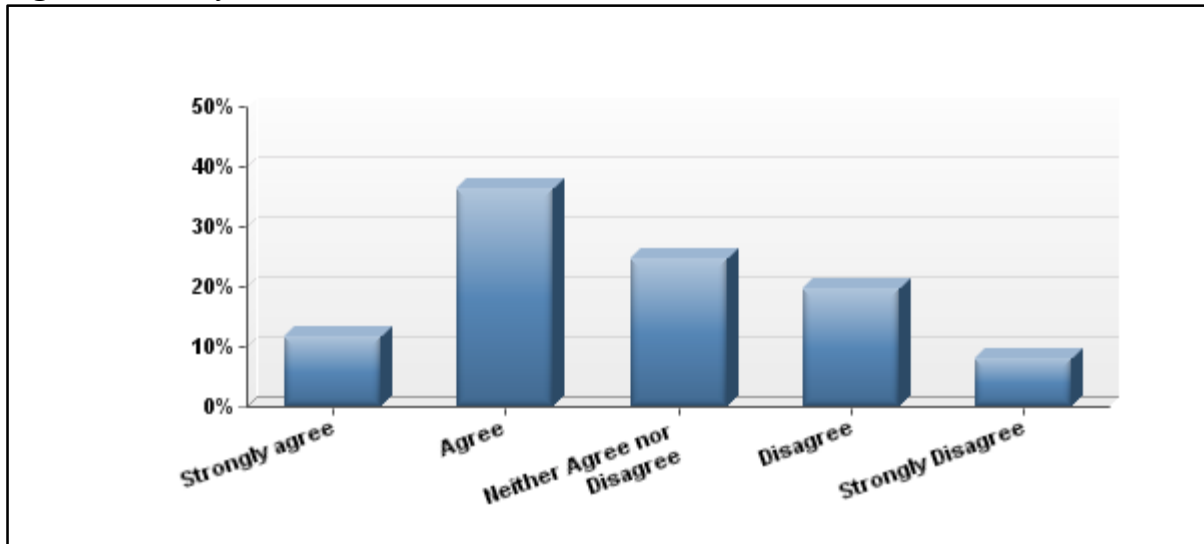
Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "As a University of Maine student, I feel a connection to the community of Orono."

Figure 6: Sense of Connection to Orono Among On and Off-Campus Students



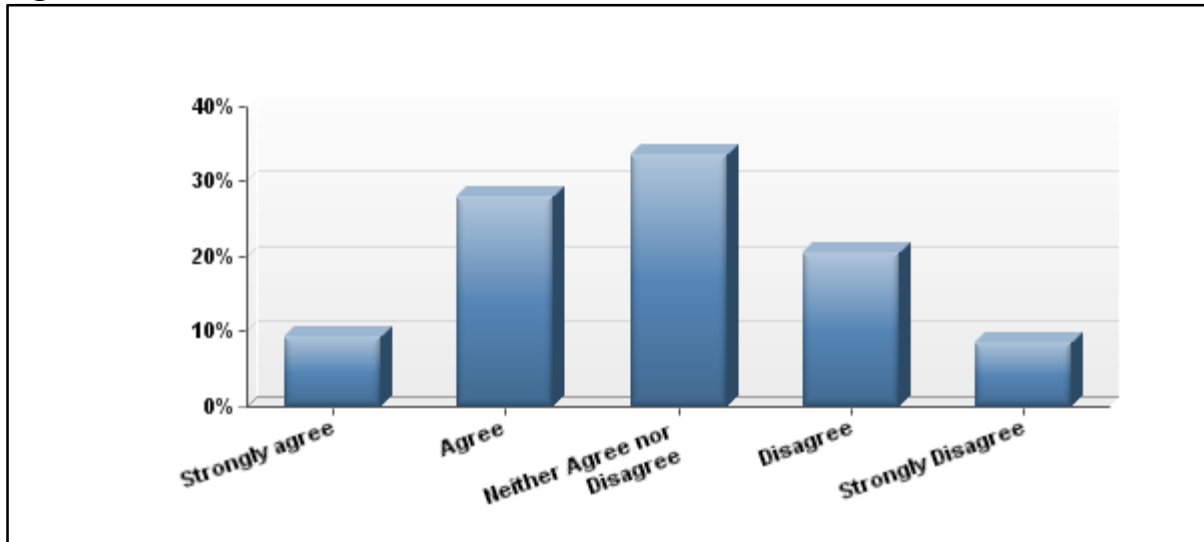
Students were asked the question "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "As a University of Maine student, I feel a connection to the community of Orono." As is evident in the graph above, students living off campus were slightly more likely to feel a sense of connection to Orono (4% more likely to strongly agree and 3% more likely to agree). Those living on campus were significantly more likely disagree or strongly disagree with the idea that they had a connection to the community of Orono (7% more likely to strongly disagree, 6% more likely to disagree).

Figure 7: Faculty Connection to Orono



Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "As a University of Maine faculty member, I feel a connection to the community of Orono."

Figure 8: Staff Connection to Orono

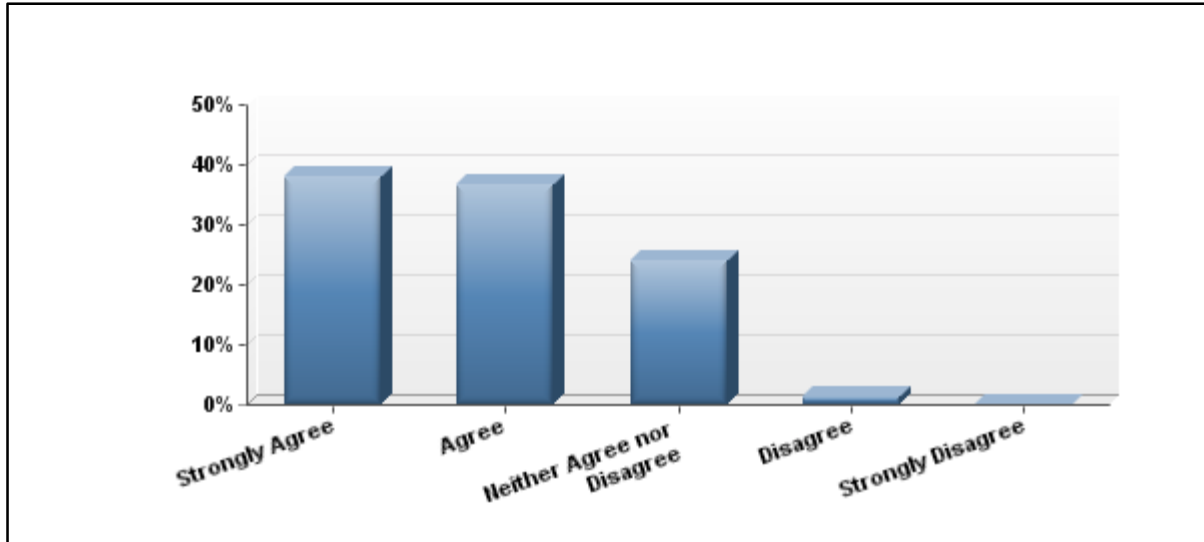


Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "As a University of Maine staff member, I feel a connection to the community of Orono."

While faculty and staff have stronger senses of connection to the community, we still see a significant percentage who do not (nearly 30% of respondents in both cases). Their stronger sense of community could be due to the fact that many of these individuals have been long-term residents within Orono and are homeowners with children in the Orono school system. What is notable, however is that they do not view the downtown area as a place to connect and interact in a professional sense. For instance, a survey question directed only to faculty asked them, "Do you view the Downtown Orono area as a place to connect and interact with your students?" Overwhelmingly, 82% of faculty answered "no," suggesting a rigid boundary between the

community and the university as places to engage formally or informally in socialization and/or education.

Figure 9: Unaffiliated Resident Interest in Knowing More About University Events & Services



Question: To what extent do you agree with the following? "I am interested in learning more about services and events offered on the University of Maine campus."

We approached the question of “connection” from a slightly different angle when surveying Orono residents who were unaffiliated with the University. Rather than asking them about their connection to the community, we asked them the extent to which they were interested in knowing more about University Events and services. Only one respondent disagreed with this. In addition, this is a clear area of need. In an earlier question 52% of residents expressed limited to no knowledge about university services, and 30% expressed limited to no knowledge about university events.

Residency and Non-Residency in Relation to Satisfaction

One of the key trends we kept noticing across these demographic groups was the significant difference in perceptions between those who were residents of Orono and those who were not. In a few instances, the differences between resident and non-resident populations were so stark that it seemed incomplete to present only the aggregate result of the populations as a whole.

Figure 10: Satisfaction with the town of Orono: Students

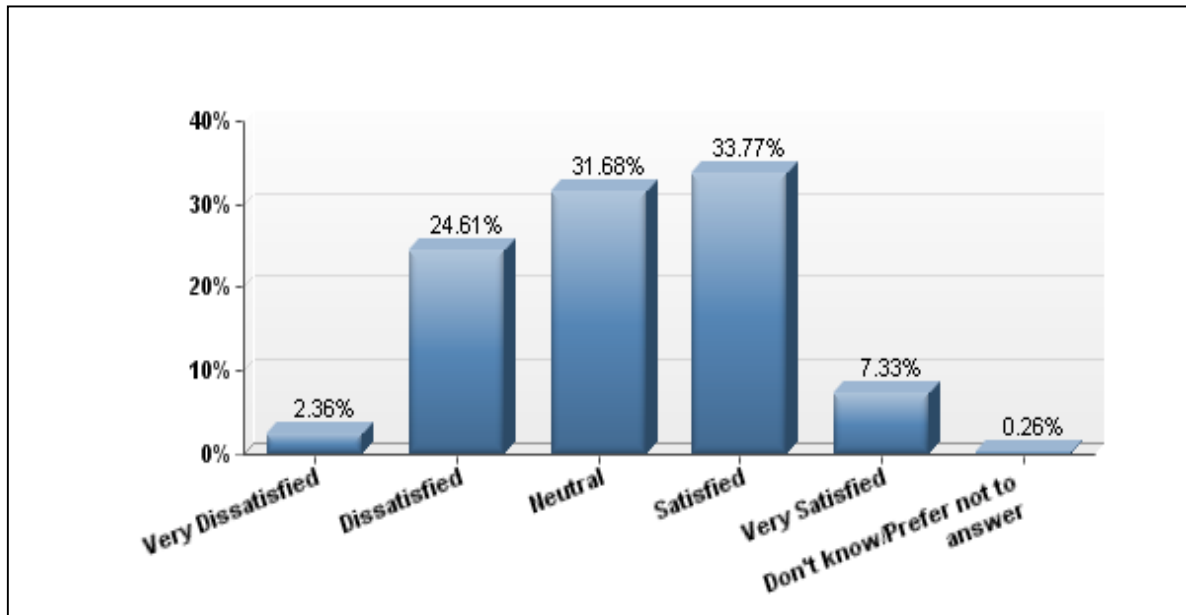
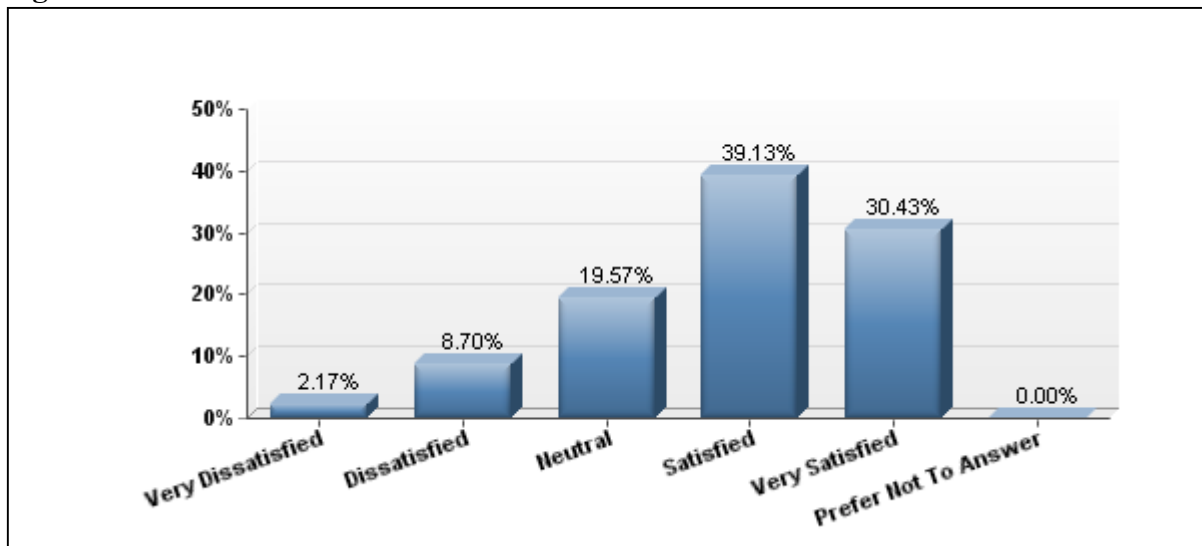


Figure 11: Satisfaction with the town of Orono: Student Residents of Orono



Above, we see the difference between students as whole (including both on-campus and off-campus students) in relation to those students who are residents of Orono. Nearly 70% of student residents of Orono report that they are “satisfied” or “very satisfied with Orono, relative to just over 40% of the student population as a whole. Again, this is a problematic statistic to interpret. It is possible that students that live in Orono choose to do so because they like the characteristic of the town. However, it is also likely the case that those in Orono gain a better sense of what it has to offer and grow to appreciate it more. This is a trend which becomes even more pronounced when we look at faculty.

When analyzing faculty, it became apparent that we needed to break down the demographic by Orono residents and non-residents, due to the large discrepancy between the two groups reflected by the graphs below. 81% of resident faculty are satisfied or very satisfied while 54% of non-resident are dissatisfied and 23% neutral

Figure 12: Faculty Orono-Resident Satisfaction with Orono

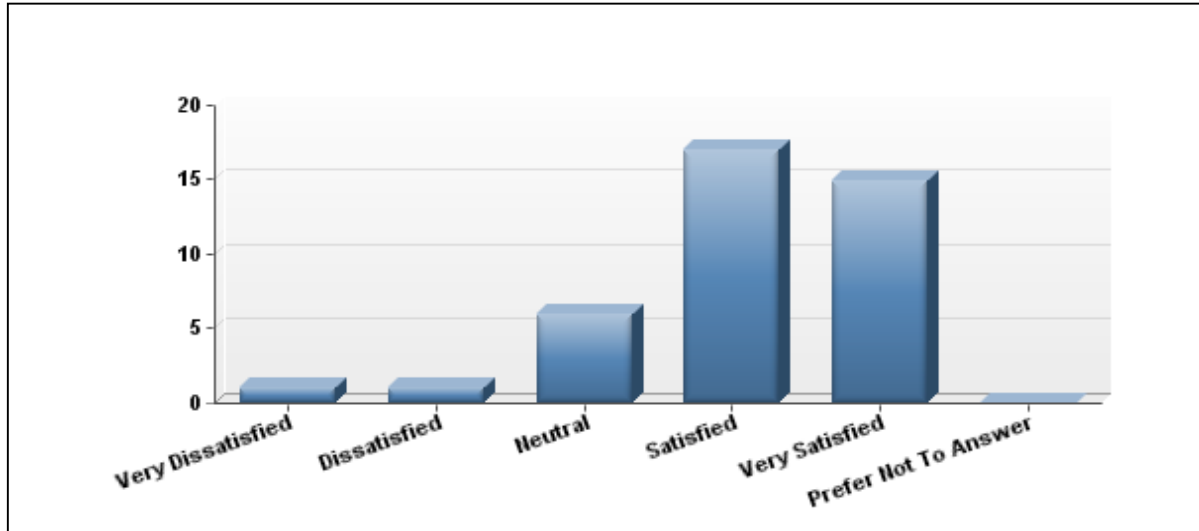
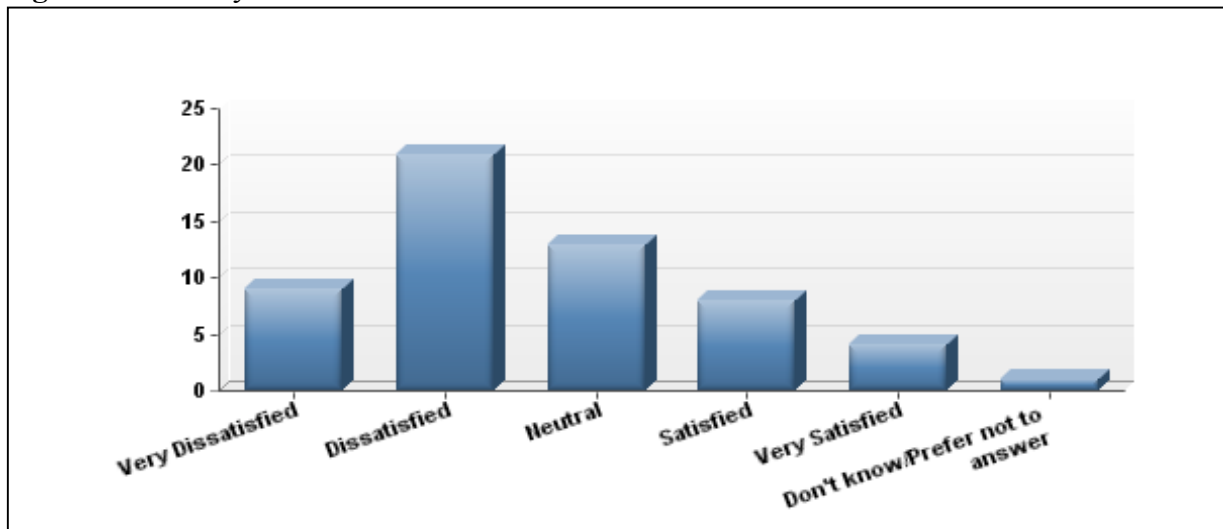


Figure 13: Faculty Non-Resident satisfaction with Orono



As mentioned earlier in the report, when examining the open-ended text box responses, many faculty were comparing Orono to other prominent college towns in which they had either worked or lived such as Ithaca, Burlington, and Ann Harbor, which we could possibly account for the lack of satisfaction. Though clearly, this comparison to other college towns does not affect resident faculty satisfaction as greatly.

However, another key finding was the fact that residents and non-residents both had similar levels of knowledge and rankings of importance regarding several categorical aspects of the town of Orono. This would suggest that the level of dissatisfaction we see in non-resident

faculty does not come from low value or little knowledge of the town, but quite possibly residency itself. As with students, those who decide to reside in Orono end up appreciating the qualities of what the town has to offer to a much greater extent than those who live in outlying areas and do not establish roots in the town.

The biggest disjunctures in satisfaction between resident and non-resident faculty are as follows:

- Outdoor Recreation (85% satisfaction resident, 40% satisfaction nonresident, 45 point difference)
- Dining & Restaurants (54% satisfaction resident, 24% satisfaction non-resident, 30 point difference)
- Artistic and Creative Expression (50% satisfaction resident, 13% satisfaction non-resident, 43 point difference)

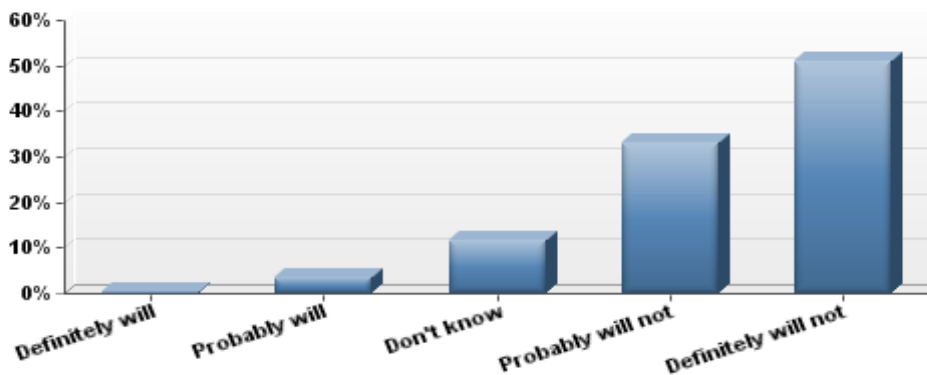
It is important to note that even though this disjuncture shows a great difference between the two groups, this is not to say that the resident faculty are extremely satisfied. With the exception of outdoor recreation, most categories were about or lower than half. As a frame of reference, Dining & Restaurants and Artistic and Creative Expression listed above are ranked in the top three highest satisfaction for resident faculty behind outdoor recreation. The satisfaction only gets lower from there.

Post Graduation Retention of Students

This is perhaps the most troubling finding in relation to students. Among those surveyed, 85% of student participants state that they will not stay in Orono after they graduate. As we move into the open-ended text box responses, we see students repeatedly saying that the lack of a young professional environment in Orono creates the perception that Orono is a place to study, party, and not a place to start a profession. For instance, one student wrote,

There aren't many businesses that attract college graduates. It seems like the town is mainly there to supply students with pizza, alcohol, and other fun things. While Bangor is close, I would think that something like an insurance company or engineering firm would do well in Orono because of all the potential interns and such. Unless it's to teach, there isn't any incentive to stay in Orono post-graduation.

Figure 14: Student likelihood of staying in Orono after graduation



Among the younger professional demographics and even some of the older students, there's a desire for a youthful energy downtown that they feel to be lacking. Students seem reluctant to stay because their social circles leave the area and they see no new social circles to join. Younger faculty and professionals are reluctant to settle in Orono because they see no groups of young professionals with whom they could interact, and no real settings in which they could meet such people. Housing also an issue—there are low cost rentals for students, older homes for potential purchase—but very little in between.

Thus we see a high percentage of the younger demographics (professionals, young faculty, and graduate students) settling in outlying areas. This issue came up as a major area of concern in our focus groups as well as meetings with town officials. It is difficult to sustain a strong sense of community, and a loyal customer base for businesses, when students, faculty, and staff are living in outlying areas and only passing through Orono on their way to work or school.

7.1 Next Steps—Thinking about the Future of Orono as a College Town

At the forefront of the discussion of where to move forward in the push for Orono to make Orono a better college town is the need to improve the relationship between the university and the community. The answer must start there if there is to ever be any cohesion in building Orono as a college town. From this lens, we offer some short term and long term steps that the university and town can take to move forward in their shared goal of helping Orono be a better college town. These steps can be categorized as: an integrated university-community service learning partnership, increased artistic and cultural opportunities, diminished borders between the town and university, and adaptive business models to appeal to the needs of both those associated and not associated with the university.

At the root of all we have provided is the need to improve the lines of communication between the university and the town, and for publicity on both ends to be improved as well. This issue has been the root cause for much of the poor relationship between the university and the town in the past. In interacting so extensively, we often found instances in which university and community stakeholders appeared to be working towards a shared goal, yet inadequate communication seemed to lead to counter-productivity. This is a challenge that will need to be addressed if more ambitious longer-term collaborations are going to be feasible. One such example of this is the University's Bear Bucks program. In conducting a focus group with university officials, they expressed frustration that community businesses were not utilizing a program that, to the university seemed to be in community best interests. Upon meeting with business owners and asking why they had not taken advantage of BearBucks. Businessowners quickly replied that the fees associated with the program sliced their profit on any given sale by roughly ten percent. In theory, this debit account set up on student's MaineCards seems at first like it would be a good idea, however, in this instance inadequate communication has resulted in an effort that is serving neither side's interests.

An Integrated University-Community Service Learning Partnership

One plan to integrate the community with the university, improve relations, and improve the town as a college town is to integrate the curriculum of university classes with the needs of the town. Art and New Media classes could work on artwork to be displayed in the downtown area or assist a business with their website design. Engineering classes could use the town's problem areas as case studies to give them practical, real-world problems and solutions.

Businesses could contact Innovation classes to assist them on more creative problem solving and

improvements on their business models. The list of ways students can partner with the town for practical purposes in their class work, rather than learning simply from a textbook and professor, is long. Such “service learning” approaches require little in the way of money; they do however require time, energy, and patience. Yet the rewards of such collaboration can be significant. Students gain practical experience and develop a sense of connection to the community; community partners gain resources and labor that they would otherwise lack. The University fulfills its mission as a land-grant institution and works to combat negative perceptions of distance and disconnect from the community.

Further, there are many service opportunities in Orono that go unnoticed by students and student service organizations due to a lack of knowledge of these opportunities. We recommend these community partners that have service needs work more closely with the Bodwell Center for Student Volunteerism and the student service organizations to expand on the yearlong service force that is available to them as well as the surge of volunteers during both Fall Welcome Weekend and Maine Day. One other short-term idea is to incorporate more benches and spaces for interaction into the downtown; this could be accomplished during fall welcome weekend when the University has the ability to offer 4800 hours of service to the town. Respondents across all demographic groups expressed concerns about the appearance of downtown. While a wave of volunteer labor such as this is limited in the *types* of activities it can undertake, short-term projects such as these could potentially address some of these concerns. This will encourage and improve closer relationships with the community and assist the students in better understanding and fixing its needs. Through this relationship and workforce the issue of the appearance of the town can be remedied.

Increased Artistic and Cultural Opportunities

Throughout every demographic of our survey we found that the town of Orono is lacking in the category of “Artistic and Creative Expression.” This notion is one that is very vague and open, so we turned to the text box data for an idea of what participants meant and wanted in the town. The idea of an “art gallery” and “amphitheatre” are not short-term goals and are for the most part not feasible at this time. But a cheap and easy solution to this issue is the idea of “parklets,” which could also provide more green space in the downtown area. A parklet is a small space, ranging in size from that of a parking space to that of several, that serves as an extension to the sidewalk in a town or city allowing for artistic and/or green space. It would be a relatively cheap solution to place these parklets at various places in downtown Orono for use by students and community members. An idea is to make the space available and accept proposals for the use of the space, thus allowing students, faculty, or residents utilize the space for their artwork, music, free speech, etc. for a specified period of time.

On top of more individual artistic opportunities, it is important to improve on opportunities for the community at large. In order to do this, we recommend hosting more cultural and artistic events sponsored by the town or university at venues owned by both parties. Speeches, plays, and concerts put on by students or sponsored by the university can be hosted in venues such as Webster Park (during the warmer months) and the newly purchased St. Mary’s church space for indoor events. Similarly, the university has many venues that community organizations can use for their events, tapping into the younger audience. In a similar vein, there was a call for more festivals and events by our survey participants. In thinking about the events they do already happen in the downtown area, we recommend better publicity; content the appeals to all residential, university, and age demographics; and more events during the warm months of

the academic year, such as September, October, and April. We are aware of events that do happen in the summer months and during these months just listed, but the key is improving the publicity for such events to attract all demographics there.

Diminished Borders Between the Town and University

In the minds of many students at the university there is this perception of the downtown area as being too far away from campus to easily visit, especially on foot or by bike. In reality, though, the distance from the University Mall to Mill Street in downtown is only a little over one mile. This perception needs to be combated by both the university and the town in order to improve communication and the relationship between the university and the town; there are a few related measures would like to see implemented. An issue causing the disconnect between community and town organizations and the university is the notion of the university as an “amorphous blob” that is difficult for find an access point to. As seen in our survey responses and our focus group with the Orono Village Association, community members are not always sure who to contact in regard to questions, suggestions, or complaints that they have. As of right now, some town organizations (such as the Orono Village Association) collaborate with Liz Downing, the Senior Director of New Student Programs, as the *de facto* liaison between them and the university, but this relationship is incomplete, does not include many other community members, and is individual. In the hypothetical case of Downing being gone from the University this relationship would dissolve, thus it needs to be institutionalize by the University at large. To this end, we recommend an institutionalization of this liaison role between the town and the University. Specifically, we see it potentially falling under the jurisdiction of the recently hired Associate Dean for Community Engagement, due to start in August of 2013. However, the University is a large entity with an extensive infrastructure. There are many different ways in which such an entry way into the University of Maine could be conceived and devised

There are also a few related physical measures that can be accomplished in the short and long term (short of filling in the river or moving either location closer). First, we could start with the short term in that the town needs more branding. It needs to improve its own branding to apply to its physical locations as well as extending that brand onto the University. Likewise, the university must work with the town and businesses to extend its branding out into the downtown area. This branding should range from logos in and around stores to Orono street and entrance signs. Essentially, the two need to collaborate in their image to make it seem as though both are a part of the same unit so as one moves from one to the other it is fluid and the transition seems non-existent.

Adaptive Business Models

Throughout our data, there was a significant amount of satisfaction overall with the dining and nightlife available in downtown Orono, but the data also showed a contradictory desire for more variety in these options. Due to the lack of specificity of what this means, we cannot offer any specific steps to take in the aspect of dining options. But we would like to point out this desire to entrepreneurs and potential business owners who may want to capitalize on providing more diverse options before we delve into a specific need voiced by all demographics.

There were many factors of dining and nightlife that our survey participants voiced were missing in the downtown Orono area. These were a lack of an 18+ venue for students in the late afternoon and evening hours, a lack of anything besides busy restaurants open in these same hours, and a lack of a “coffee shop.” The town of Orono is lacking a quiet indoor environment

in which people can study, work, and socialize during the late afternoon and evening hours, and more specifically, the town is lacking any establishment in the evening and late evening that caters to those under 21 years old. This could be addressed by a non-franchise coffee shop being opened in the downtown area, either by a new business or an adaptation of an already existing business in the downtown.

Another opportunity that all demographics show is a significant desire for a more permanent grocery establishment in the downtown area, whether it's a more permanent location for the farmer's market or a full grocery store. We recognize that this is a very expensive end, and requires extensive infrastructure and money that the downtown area does not currently have, but it is something to recognize and take steps towards. The use of existing resources to improve the farmer's market is a good initial step that we recommend. Though we do not have any concrete solutions to this matter, the town leaders, merchants, and town as a whole should keep this in mind and look towards a way to meet this need.

8.1 Conclusion

This project has been centered around engaged research. The “engagement” in engaged research represents a commitment to sharing and reciprocity with community partners. As students of the University of Maine, we worked to define the purpose of this project jointly with community stakeholders. This project has enabled student learning beyond campus walls, potentially creating a continuous relationship between the University and the town of Orono. This study has brought the light the need to continue to foster this relationship for many years to come.

As you can see from our suggestions thus far, we don't necessarily need to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on initiatives to revamp the downtown to improve its college town feel. Communication and reciprocity can enable the University and the Town to work together as a cohesive unit and to blur the boundaries between where one ends and the other begins. This will be an ongoing project, but it is one which is already well underway (and of which this collaborative course is an example). The more these two entities work to align their strategies and foster communication, the greater the benefit for all parties involved.

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