What Students Wish They'd Known About University of Maryland 
Prior to Enrolling as Freshmen

During the college decision process as a first-generation college student, I wish I had known about the resources and opportunities that University of Maryland offers to its students, such as UMD’s Career Center, the wonderful internship/job fair, and the amount of activities available on campus. I also wish I knew about the different fun activities that are available on and off campus. For many students like myself, having things to do during free time is an important part of life, and the activities I am involved in, including the exec board of the Iranian Students Foundation, are amazing. The college decision process would have been much shorter if I knew for certain that settling in and enjoying my college career at UMD would be smooth and easy. – Amir, Biological Sciences: General Biology, General Business minor (Parkville, MD)

The University of Maryland was my top choice when I was in high school. I had siblings who attended UMD, so I had some prior knowledge regarding the programs I was interested in. I wish I had more information about programs such as QUEST (Quality Enhancement Systems and Teams) that I could apply for in spring of freshman year of college. I really liked the Computer Science program because I saw the curriculum and I thought that the department put in a lot of effort in trying to make us students more well-rounded in all aspects of Computer Science such as programming, machine learning, artificial intelligence, networking and much more. The program provides a lot of options that students can choose from and that is an important aspect prospective students should think of when they decide which college to attend. – Amisha, Computer Science, General Business minor (Gaithersburg, MD)

When deciding on a college, I researched each school extensively looking at statistics that pertained to things such academics and extracurriculars, so going into and throughout the process there was not much about University of Maryland that I didn’t know. However, there are a few things I wish I knew about the whole process that I didn’t know before. College is my second home, so when selecting a college I looked for a place that felt like home. This is something that I wish I had done sooner in the process. I have found that I am the most successful where I feel most comfortable. I did not base my decision entirely on feeling, as UMD also offers so many opportunities for its students and has great academics. I think that much of my success is due to UMD being the perfect fit for me. – Anna, Biological Sciences: Physiology and Neurobiology, Humanities, Health and Medicine minor (CT)

As a biological sciences major, I knew that I would want to be a part of a research lab as well as work in a clinical setting, but I did not know just how perfect University of Maryland would be for that. There are so many research labs at the school, as well as government and private laboratories in the area, and hospitals or medical facilities. I knew
that UMD was a large school with thousands of students, but the Integrated Life Sciences (ILS) program created a smaller community within the larger UMD community, giving us each the personalized resources we need and a built-in set of friends! – Anjali, Biological Sciences: Physiology and Neurobiology (Laurel, MD)

In my college decision process, I was afforded many diverse options that made the stakes of this choice seem all the greater. There were a few things I wish I knew while making this decision that I could have ostensibly figured out on my own, and a few things that truly had to be experienced to be understood. Something that really stands out is my own lack of information about academic programs and the variations amongst them. I had no idea of the tracks in the computer science major, or the subdivisions within the biology major, for example. This would have alleviated my worry about a “generic” education that lacked the specialization I really wanted. Another example is knowledge about opportunities afforded to me at UMD, from a variety of research possibilities to the massive and diverse study abroad programs. Opportunities such as these are fonts of potential for students, and I wish I knew just how much Maryland excelled at offering them. – Cameron, Neuroscience (Bethesda, MD)

When I became a CMNS student, I learned that if I wanted to succeed in my courses, I would have to work with other people. I enjoyed collaborating with my colleagues when completing assignments and studying for challenging courses like chemistry and biology. The biggest thing I wish I had known was that I was not going to fully understand every concept taught in class. Coming fresh out of high school, University of Maryland was indeed a whole new academic setting. Unlike my typical classes in high school which seated about 25 students, my first-year science lecture classes were up to 200 people. I became so frustrated with not understanding certain topics because I was able to understand all the topics covered in my high school. It was at that point I realized that I needed to collaborate with other students and speak with my professors to better understand class material. – Charles, Biological Sciences: General Biology (Laurel, MD)

As a Maryland resident (from Montgomery County), I had had the misconception that University of Maryland was "just" a state college. In fact, UMD is an incredible research university, home to an equally incredible community of faculty, staff, and students. The sheer variety of labs on campus makes it easy to reach out to professors and find research that excites you; I was able to find not one but two labs in my freshman year that I was interested in joining, and the lab group I eventually chose to join is filled with incredible, intelligent people that I am glad to have met and work alongside. – Eirena, Biochemistry/English Language and Literature (Darnestown, MD)

There are a lot of new things I have learned since become a Terp that would’ve been great to know as an out of state resident before deciding to come to University of Maryland. I knew UMD was close to Washington, DC, but not that there was a campus shuttle bus that brought us straight to the Metro. There is so much to do and see there that doesn’t cost any money or costs very little. 200 people lecture halls are not as bad as they sound; I come from a small high school and I thought it would be nearly impossible to learn in that setting. However, with office hours, discussion groups, and amazing teaching assistants and guided study session (GSS) leaders, there are so many ways to learn in a smaller setting. Along with this, not all classes are that big. Even as a freshman, I was able to take multiple classes with fewer than 30 people. – Emily, Biological Sciences: General Biology, Spanish minor (MA)
I wish I had known more about the resources that I would have access to as a student. These include official resources like four-year plans, UAchieve, and Testudo, all of which can help better plan coursework to lead to greater academic success, but also things like the subreddit and PlanetTerp. These help me to get additional information about University of Maryland from a student’s perspective and are resources I didn’t learn about until later in my time as a UMD student. Additionally, I would point students towards things like Meet the Greeks and the First and Second look fairs, all of which are good ways to meet new people with similar interests. I have even taken and then taught a 1-credit student-initiated course (STIC) on the CS Coding Interview Process – Ethan, Computer Science/Mathematics (TX)

One thing I wish I knew about University of Maryland when I was deciding which college to attend was that UMD is a ‘target’ school for computer science. Before coming to UMD, finding opportunities was very hard since I went to a small private college, however, ever since I transferred, it has been tremendously easier. There are many career fairs which allow you to network with companies, and also lots of ways you can get involved - whether by joining a club or starting a new one. I think having diversity and representation from all backgrounds is essential because other students from my under-represented background will feel more included and be motivated to achieve their goals since they see that it’s possible. – Gerdin, Computer Science, Technology Entrepreneurship minor (Silver Spring, MD)

Having once been a more reserved person, I would have wanted to know that University of Maryland has helped me come out of my shell and develop some of the best relationships with the most awesome people. There is nothing like living in the campus dorms and constantly being surrounded by people who push you to be the best person you can be. I would have also wanted to know that the professors, especially those in CMNS, are so inviting and will do everything in their power to help you succeed through the more difficult classes. Not to mention, I would have liked to know about the many study places around campus and the amazing labs that really prepare you for working in an actual research lab setting. – Isha, Biochemistry, Spanish minor (Boyds, MD)

I wish I knew how easy it would be to meet new people and make friends. I attended a small high school with a total of 300 students, and I did not know what to expect coming to such a large university like University of Maryland and starting my college journey as a CMNS student. I am truly grateful for the numerous opportunities that the university provides for students to really immerse and engage themselves in the Terp community. From classes and research to clubs and intramural sports, there are so many ways to become involved on campus. I wish I would have known that, in my first semester, I would end up meeting such a diverse community of people – many of whom share the same interests and goals as me. – Jacob, Biological Sciences: Physiology and Neurobiology (Frederick, MD)

I wish I knew how much University of Maryland felt like a community among students. Prior to college I anticipated a competitive environment of students that were all vying for a better grade and opportunity. That was not even remotely close to what I found at Maryland. I found students that are compassionate towards each other. Even further, I have found that every fellow student I meet feels connected to one another, because we do all have something in common: we are all Terps. As a prospective student I did not really know myself as much as I do now. So really, if I could talk to my past self just before
college, I would assuage his fears and let him know how great the community of students is that he will be joining. – **Jake, Computer Science: Machine Learning/Mathematics (Monkton, MD)**

I knew that University of Maryland was close to home and cost efficient. What I did not know was that this campus brought diversity like no other - racially, socially, academically, etc. You can choose from languages to learn, explore majors/minors unique to our school, clubs that I would never have thought existed (like a Quidditch Team?!), and pick classes with professors that are dedicated to seeing you excel in all that you aspire to do. Above all, I wish I would have known of all the amazing and unique people on campus whose stories illuminate their dedication to doing what they love. This component of UMD is truly what motivates me, knowing that each day we help each other succeed as we move one step closer to achieving our goals. – **Japneet, Biological Sciences: Physiology and Neurobiology, Spanish minor (Marriottsville, MD)**

I wish I knew the wide variety of organizations that are available at University of Maryland as well as the raging pride that exists in College Park. In my freshman year, I tried out various activities and clubs to find my space at Maryland. By experimenting, I have grown to find a multitude of organizations that I am proud to be a part of and enjoy such as Beta Psi Omega (BPO) Professional Biology Fraternity and UMD Club Swim. Also, the pride that exists within College Park helped me to be more excited about attending school here and feeling a part of the community - the excitement that can be heard from the cheering and screaming of UMD students in the sidelines at football and basketball games makes me enthusiastic to be a Terp. – **Jenna M, Biological Sciences: General Biology, Spanish minor (Owings, MD)**

Following a student-led tour and a day shadowing CMNS students, I decided that University of Maryland was the perfect fit for me. I wish I had known was how quickly UMD facilitates bonding with other students and making connections with people in your major and programs. I joined a residence hall soccer team a week into school and became a marketing coordinator for TerpTHON at the first meeting. I have loved the University Honors program so much because the mix of people from all different majors and backgrounds creates a unique environment where we are able to work together to see things from a different point of view. UMD is one hundred percent not a competitive school, they emphasize the importance of academics while also making sure that students are not pitted against each other. One of my biggest fears coming to UMD was that I wasn’t going far enough from home, living only a thirty-minute drive away. College Park is perfect because while it is close enough to go home when I want to, it really feels like a college town, allowing students to get the true college experience. – **Jenna O, Biological Sciences: Cell Biology and Genetics, Public Leadership and Sustainability minors (Rockville, MD)**

University of Maryland has so much more to offer than I ever thought possible. From a frankly dizzying amount of courses to choose from to the amazing people it brings together, UMD is a treasure trove of people to meet, things to do, and experiences to have. I have learned so much about both myself and the world around me. The neuroscience course I took my first semester was without a doubt the most interesting class I had ever taken, and for the first time in a really long time, I felt excited to learn just for the sake of it, not for a test or a grade. UMD gives me the freedom to explore my passions and pursue my goals of medical school and a doctoral degree. I have met so many new, unique people
who each have their own ideas, values, thoughts, and experiences to bring to the table. College is ultimately what you make of it, and there are so, so many ways to make your own way here. – Jennifer, Neuroscience/Information Science (Boyds, MD)

Before attending University of Maryland, I was unaware of the feelings of social isolation I would end up enduring over my first few weeks. I wasn’t ready to leave my family and I desperately missed my high school friends. However, over the next few weeks, primarily by joining clubs and focusing more on bonding with my peers in the residence hall, I feel I truly found my place on campus and met groups of people I sincerely enjoyed being around. A facet of the UMD community that I do not think many people appreciate is the profound opportunity the campus offers to meet new people and explore new interests. Offering around 800 clubs and welcoming students from all over the nation and the world, the UMD campus provides a safe space for people who wish to explore any interests or hobbies. – Jibreel, Biological Sciences: Physiology and Neurobiology, Sustainability minor (Crofton, MD)

One thing I wish I knew when making my college decision was how easy it is to find undergraduate research opportunities here. I stumbled upon the Maryland Center for Undergraduate Research website and found two research opportunities - research is something most science majors are interested in and should at least try out for a semester. One reason students may be scared about coming to Maryland is the large classes. However, larger lectures allow for students to learn however they want to; students who do not like interacting with the class can take notes and listen, while others can be more active and ask questions. Additionally, the discussion and lab sections that come with the majority of lectures allow for that small classroom setting many want when looking at colleges. Lastly, I wish someone had told me that even though many kids from your high school may attend your college, you can still make other friends. They can be from your freshman year dorm, the clubs you join, or the peers in your classes. – Julia, Mathematics: Statistics/Biochemistry (Fulton, MD)

Many of the colleges that applied to had programs in physics, but only a few had programs in astronomy. I also realized that I wanted to attend a large university and stay close to home. These three things were most of what made me decide to attend University of Maryland. I am lucky that UMD ended up being a perfect fit for me, even though I didn’t know too much about it. The University itself and the College of Computer, Mathematical, and Natural Sciences have so much to offer (including our Observatory!), and I wish that I had known about these things when I was deciding which college to attend, as it would have allowed me to even more excitedly decide to attend the university and get the most out of my experience starting the first day that I arrived. – Katie, Astronomy/Physics (Silver Spring MD)

When deciding which college to attend, I wish I had known that the faculty at University of Maryland really do want to help their students succeed. Even though many of my introductory classes were lectures of over 150 students, by going to office hours and asking questions, it was relatively easy to make myself known. I also wish I knew about the incredible work ethic and academic drive present on campus. The libraries are always packed, and school is much more of a priority for everyone than I was expecting. I wish I understood that productive work paired with countless ways to have fun are ingrained in the culture of UMD. – Kevin S, Biological Sciences: General Biology (MA)
I wish I was more aware of the research opportunities on campus, namely avenues for funding and grant money. The fact that University of Maryland is willing to support undergraduate research through grants and scholarships is something to be proud about, and I wish I knew about it sooner. I have spent a lot of time conversing with various professors and have developed a strong rapport with a good number of them. I want admitted students to know the value of trying new things during college. I am willing to bet most students will opt to take COMM107 for their oral communication general education requirement, but I would encourage them to take THET285 instead. Most people shy away from the class because of the THET abbreviation, but it teaches students how to make their presentations more enjoyable and entertaining, a crucial skill that sets apart regular and terrific orators. – Kevin T, Biological Sciences: Physiology and Neurobiology/Economics, Non-profit Leadership and Society minor (Columbia, MD)

Part of what I wish I knew going into school here was that the campus starts to feel much smaller after just a couple weeks, and that I was actually very thankful it was that big because there is always something to do, more students and professors to connect with, and there is never a feeling of being stuck in the same place all the time. I think this variety makes for a fantastic learning environment. I also wish I knew how kind and welcoming people are here because I was surprised that everyone I meet was very nice, and it goes back to the idea of community in which the students are working together. Especially in CMNS majors which include difficult classes, I am thankful that instead of a competitive environment, it is a sense of helping one another and not comparing people. The number of fellow undergraduates that are more than happy to help underclassmen is immense and I believe this is important information to share as well. – Lindsey, Biological Sciences: General Biology, Spanish minor (Elkridge)

I wish that I knew more about the different kinds of opportunities that University of Maryland has. There are tons of different organizations, programs, activities, and research or internship opportunities that UMD offers. Pre-meds can take advantage of the University of Maryland School of Medicine where various volunteer and research opportunities are offered for UMD undergraduates. There are also tons of research experiences posted on UMD’s undergraduate database that CMNS students can choose to participate in. Departmental honors and funded research programs (like Summer Scholars) allow for UMD students to take their research even further. – Lora, Chemistry (Potomac, MD)

I wish someone had told me that by the end of week one of freshman year, I wouldn’t need my phone to navigate to my classes anymore. I was so nervous about getting lost and being late! It was actually lots of fun getting to explore the campus for the first time. Something else I wish someone had told me was how fun all the sporting events are, not just football and basketball. While those two are my favorites, I also really enjoy going to the soccer games. The energy is always amazing, and I really feel like a Terp at home. Freshmen should also know that at UMD, there really is a club for everything. Whatever their interests are, there is always a place for them here. I want to spread the word about my incredible major, because as I got to know my fellow geology majors more, I learned that a lot of students transferred into the major that was my first choice. Most students had started at UMD and did not even know we offered geology, or what it was. – Maddy, Geology, Planetary Science minor (Westminster, MD)
I am an African American woman studying STEM; this is critical because many black students, when choosing a college, want to see others like them. When they see other black students, it shows there are many activities they can join in and clubs that are about the black culture. I wish I knew about the resources provided at University of Maryland like the Career Center and campus research opportunities. If I had known about those, I would have sent my decision in sooner than waiting three weeks before the deadline. The Career Center is a great resource because students can be part of programs like Intern for a Day, search for on-campus jobs, build a resume, and get advice for steps they need to take after college. UMD gives students resources to help them after college, like pre-health advising, which was a high selling point for me to come to the university. – Madison, Biological Sciences: General Biology (Ijamsville, MD)

I wish I knew more about the variety of extra-curricular clubs and organizations established in the institution. I was aware that University of Maryland had many groups geared toward the pre-medical track, which was especially compelling since I aspire to attend medical school after my undergraduate years. I had no idea that there were so many more clubs available that were compelling. If I had known that UMD offered such a diverse range of clubs, the decision would have definitely been easier since I really value extra-curriculars in addition to the academic opportunities offered. Additionally, I wish I had known more about the Integrated Life Sciences (ILS) living and learning program, as I was not aware of the many mentoring and advising opportunities available, which have certainly helped drastically while navigating through the pandemic. – Meghna, Biological Sciences: Physiology and Neurobiology/Criminology and Criminal Justice (Germantown, MD)

As a high school student, the University of Maryland was always my first choice; I had heard about the CMNS program, and coming in as a biology major, I was excited to get started. There are a couple of things that I do wish I knew about the University when applying that could have helped me - especially the Counseling Center. It provides so many benefits and resources to help students, and while I had heard about it, I did not know too many of the specifics. Another thing was the plethora of options provided to help students academically; there is very strong support system here, as evidenced by different programs driven to assist students, such as Guided Study Sessions (GSS - also from the Counseling Center), the Course Center for Physics, and office hours for professors and TAs; coming into college, I remember being very nervous about academics, and about having to do things all by myself, and did not realize how much help there was for me. – Naman, Biological Sciences: General Biology (Brinklow, Maryland)

During the application process, I knew that I would apply to the University of Maryland. I grew up in Rockville, and UMD seemed like a solid option because I could commute there and most of my other options were out of state. The largest driving force behind which schools I applied to was how good their Computer Science programs were - when looking at rankings, UMD was always ranked in the top ten or higher. As a high school student, internships or prospective jobs seemed far away, but I wish I had made more of an effort in looking at how different universities connect you to career opportunities. UMD’s Computer Science career fairs, lobby days, and dedicated online platform (Careers4Terps), are excellent resources in doing just that. Even little things like the daily noon CMNS email digest make it easy to find opportunities and keep up with events happening on campus. – Rida, Computer Science (Rockville, MD)
When deciding what college I wanted to go to, I already knew I wanted to choose University of Maryland. Initially, I had chosen it because my uncle and aunt had graduated from UMD, specifically CMNS, and it was close to home. But if I knew the amount of resources that UMD provided, such as a well-equipped counseling center, writing center, Health Professions Advising Office (which is the most helpful in my case), and Office of Multi-ethnic Student Education (where I have attended many events), I would’ve picked UMD even if was 1,000 miles away. UMD is a public university so I always assumed it wouldn’t be as personal as a small, private college, however, if I knew what a close-knit community UMD really was, I would’ve picked it in a heartbeat. The amazing mentors and peers that UMD can provide make it like no other. – Shivika, Biological Sciences: General Biology/ Psychology, Humanities, Health, and Medicine minor (Columbia, MD)

As someone who would like to do research for a career, research opportunities are very important to me. At University of Maryland so far, I have been able to easily engage in research both on- and off-campus. I even secured my internship at nearby NASA Goddard Space Flight Center through meeting my mentor at an event hosted by the Astronomy Department. I would love to tell potential future Terps who are interested in conducting research about my professional experiences, which I feel like I would not have found at any other university I had been considering. – Siobhan, Astronomy/Geology: Geophysics, Atmospheric and Oceanc Science minor (Ashton, MD)

During my college application process, I was choosing among several schools and knew I needed as much information as possible to make my decision. I visited each school and made note of their campus aesthetic, layout, and atmosphere. I tried their dining halls to see if I could eat there every day, which is important as someone with celiac disease. I looked up extracurricular opportunities, and I contacted students from each school for their opinions on their school. This narrowed my list to four schools. I then read each school’s AP credit policies as well as requirements for general education, the pre-med track, and the computer science major. When I came to University of Maryland for summer orientation, I knew that I had made the right choice. – Skylar, Computer Science, Mathematics and Humanities, Health, and Medicine minors (Germantown, MD)

The workload at University of Maryland is much different than high school, with higher expectations. I always excelled in high school, and to maintain the same level, I had to adjust my study habits: for example, with STEM classes it is important to keep up with the lectures and start studying at least a week before a major exam, whereas in high school, it was sufficient to start studying one or two days before the exam. Schoolwork needs to be the number one priority to excel academically, and the coursework is challenging as college professors expect a lot from their students. You need to make the effort to build relationships with faculty members by attending office hours and participating in class. – Sriya, Mathematics: Applied Math, French Studies minor (Clarksville, MD)

My biggest hesitation of committing to Maryland was the size; I was afraid of becoming just a number. I wish I knew about programs that allow students to feel like they are more than just a number. Professors have discussion sections with Teaching Assistants (TAs) to make big classes smaller, a lot of professors and TAs are open to meeting one on one, and there are lots of free tutoring services. Knowing that professors really do make time would have made me a lot less scared of big schools. – Zoe, Biological Sciences: Cell Biology and Genetics, Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies certificate (Columbia, MD)