

What are the best things about attending University of New England Dental School?

UNE has a Pass/Fail curriculum with passing set at 70%. This helps take away competition amongst the class and allows us to foster a strong network of helping each other succeed. Each class at UNE shares a collaborative Google Drive where people import notes, study guides, recordings of lectures, etc. for everyone's benefit. While the Pass/Fail curriculum eliminates the stress of striving for perfect grades and getting straight A's, the school has implemented Letters of Commendation in each course as a way to distinguish the top 10-15% performers in each course. The criteria to achieve a Letter of Commendation in each course is different based on past years' performance but is always clearly outlined in the Syllabus at the beginning of the semester. It normally includes criteria like "Exam/Quiz average above a 90% and pass skills assessment on first attempt." The Letters of Commendation are put in each student's file and will aid faculty in writing recommendations for jobs/residencies as we near graduation; however, they are in no way reflected on your transcript. The response to these letters has been positive as it recognizes those achieving high standards but doesn't negatively affect those who don't receive them.

Another great thing about UNE is that we start developing hand skills on Day 1 of Class by drilling in Sim Clinic. For the first year, we spend Wednesdays from 8am-5pm in Sim Clinic practicing drilling and restoring teeth on typodonts (sets of fake plastic teeth used by nearly every dental school in the country). Friday afternoons are spent working with partners from the class, practicing role plays like taking medical histories, oral cancer exams (first semester), cleaning each other's teeth and taking alginate impressions (second semester). In the third semester, we begin assisting D3/D4s in the clinic and have the opportunity to give injections and do work on real patients for any procedures that you've already passed in Sim Clinic.

In D4 year, students go out on externships for 12 weeks to sites around northern New England where they work under the mentorship of dentists in the area gaining speed and independence in their skill set. In part due to these externships, students generally feel very confident with their clinical skills upon graduation.

Each class at UNE is 64 students which is a great advantage because all our faculty get the chance to know us on a personal level. The faculty are down-to-earth and create an environment conducive to students' learning and growth. We have a strong sense of community at UNE and everyone gets to know their classmates and faculty very well. The small class size also allows basically everyone who wants a leadership position the ability to have one because there are so many clubs and positions available throughout the college.

What are the worst things about attending University of New England Dental School?

Since the school is fairly new, the curriculum changes year-to-year as the administration works out kinks in the program. At times the information/structure of some classes can feel disorganized; however, administration takes student feedback HIGHLY into consideration and changes things based on the information/opinions that we provide which is great for future classes.

Additionally, the rate of faculty turnover is quite high. We see many faculty members come and go, which is difficult when one of your favorites leaves. It does, however, give you the chance to learn more perspectives/techniques from many different experienced dentists. If you think of it with a positive mindset then you are likely to get more out of it.

Anatomy is taken at the Biddeford campus which is about 35 minutes away from the Portland campus where the rest of our classes are. On Tuesdays during the second semester, we spend the whole day in Biddeford with lecture in the morning and cadaver lab in the afternoon. There is a shuttle that goes from the Portland campus to the Biddeford campus, but most students drive themselves/carpool with classmates. The Biddeford campus is really nice and has a great cafeteria with tons of options for food, but the drive can be annoying for some people.

What do students need to know/what do you wish you knew before attending University of New England Dental School?

Portland is a great area with so much to do including restaurants, breweries, hiking, beaches, kayaking, running trails, and more! The cost of rent is high but living in a bordering town such as Westbrook, South Portland, Gorham, Scarborough, etc. can help decrease costs. Also, it snows in Maine in the winter and school is seldom canceled so be sure that your car is equipped to drive in the snow.