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Office of Institutional Research and Assessment

National Survey of Student Engagement: Gains from Curricular and Co-Curricular High-Impact Practices

In spring 2014 Keene State College participated in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), surveying first-year and senior students. This report details the findings of a local analysis of NSSE data, comparing self-reported gains from the college education for seniors who participated in various curricular and co-curricular high-impact practices vs. their classmates who did not have those experiences.

KEY FINDINGS

- KSC seniors participate in the following high impact practices at a significantly greater rate than seniors at other Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC) institutions:
 - Internship, co-op, field experience, student teaching, or clinical placement
 - Formal leadership role in a student organization or group
 - Work with a faculty member on a research project
 - Complete a culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, portfolio, etc.)

The only high-impact practice for which KSC seniors participate at about the same rate as COPLAC seniors is study abroad.

- KSC seniors spend significantly more hours per week in co-curricular activities and working for pay on-campus than their peers at other COPLAC institutions. They work significantly fewer hours off-campus than COPLAC seniors.
- KSC seniors are significantly more likely than COPLAC seniors to say that their college education has contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in
 - Writing clearly and effectively
 - Speaking clearly and effectively
 - Acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills
 - Working effectively with others
 - Developing or clarifying a personal code of values and ethics
 - Being an informed and active citizen
- Compared to seniors nationally, KSC seniors have significantly greater confidence in their ability to help people resolve their disagreements with each other and their ability to contribute to the well-being of their community.

- KSC seniors who participate in internships and other similar activities are significantly more likely than other seniors to say that KSC contributed to their ability to speak clearly and effectively. They are also more likely to say that they would choose KSC again.
- Seniors who have had a formal leadership role in a student organization are significantly more likely than other seniors to say that KSC contributed to their developing a personal code of values and ethics, their ability to analyze numerical and statistical information, and their ability to lead a diverse group where all are welcome.
- Seniors who worked with a faculty member on a research project are significantly more likely than other seniors to say that KSC contributed to their ability to analyze numerical and statistical information and their becoming an informed and active citizen. They are also more likely than other seniors to rate their overall KSC education as good or excellent.
- Seniors who took many service-learning courses are significantly more likely than seniors with fewer such courses to say that KSC contributed to their ability to speak clearly and effectively, their acquisition of work-related knowledge and skills, their understanding of people from different backgrounds than their own, and their ability to solve complex real-world problems.
- Seniors who on average performed some co-curricular community service each week are significantly more likely than other seniors to say that KSC contributed to their acquisition of work-related knowledge and skills.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Participation in High-Impact Practices

The following table displays the percentage of KSC seniors who participated in NSSE-identified high-impact practices. Comparisons are shown for institutions COPLAC, of which KSC is a member, and for all NSSE-participating institutions in KSC's Carnegie classification (master's level, smaller programs). Data for learning communities are omitted from this table because KSC currently has residential options that are called learning communities, whereas the NSSE item about learning communities refers to "students who take two or more classes together."

Table 1. Percentage of KSC Seniors who Participated in High-Impact Practices

High-Impact Practice	% KSC Seniors	% COPLAC Seniors	% Carnegie Class Seniors
Internship, co-op, field experience, student teaching, or clinical placement	68%	54%***	57% **
Formal leadership role in a student organization or group	60%	43%***	40%***
Study abroad	19%	16%	16%
Work with a faculty member on a research project	44%	32%***	28%***
Complete a culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, portfolio, etc.)	89%	56%***	57%***

** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

About three-quarters of KSC seniors (76%) have taken at least "some" service-learning courses. This is significantly higher than the participation rate for seniors at other COPLAC institutions (66%, $p < .01$) and statistically similar to the percentage at institutions in our Carnegie classification (69%).

Work, Co-Curricular Activities, and Community Service

Students' choices about how they spend their out-of-class time can enhance their overall educational experience. Table 2 shows the median number of hours that KSC seniors spend in work, co-curricular activities, and community service.

Table 2. Mean Hours per Week Spent by KSC Seniors in Work, Co-Curricular Activities, and Community Service

Activity	KSC Seniors	COPLAC Seniors	Carnegie Class Seniors
Participating in co-curricular activities	7.1	5.1***	4.8***
Working for pay on campus	7.5	4.2***	3.9***
Working for pay off campus	8.2	10.0*	11.6***
Total hours working for pay	15.4	14.0	15.4
Doing community service or volunteer work	2.8	3.2	3.2

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Perceived Gains from the College Experience

NSSE asks respondents to report how much their college experience has contributed to their “knowledge, skills, and personal development” in several areas. Table 3 displays the percentage of KSC seniors who responded “Quite a Bit” or “Very Much” to each item.

**Table 3. KSC Seniors’ Perceived Gains from Their College Experience
(Quite a Bit or Very Much)**

Area of Gain	% KSC Seniors	% COPLAC Seniors	% Carnegie Class Seniors
Writing clearly and effectively	85%	74%**	74%**
Speaking clearly and effectively	85%	70%***	72%***
Thinking critically and analytically	90%	85%	85%*
Analyzing numerical and statistical information	56%	58%	59%
Acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills	72%	68%*	69%
Working effectively with others	81%	73%***	74%*
Developing or clarifying a personal code of values and ethics	69%	60%***	65%
Understanding people of other backgrounds (economic, racial/ethnic, political, religious, nationality, etc.)	61%	59%	62%
Solving complex real-world problems	68%	60%**	62%
Being an informed and active citizen	69%	58%*	59%*

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Civic Engagement Competencies

KSC participated in a NSSE add-on module on civic engagement. The comparator group for this module included all institutions nationally that had used this module in 2013 or 2014. Table 4 displays the percentage of KSC seniors who rated their ability at 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale (*Poor* to *Excellent*) on each of the following competencies related to civic engagement.

**Table 4. KSC Seniors' Self-Rated Competencies for Civic Engagement
(Ratings of 6 or 7 where 1 = Poor and 7 = Excellent)**

Area of Competence	% KSC Seniors	% National Comparator Seniors
Help people resolve disagreements with each other	58%	50%*
Resolve conflicts that involve bias, discrimination, or prejudice	46%	40%
Lead a group where people from different backgrounds feel welcomed and included	58%	56%
Contribute to the well-being of your community	66%	57%*

*p < .05

Satisfaction with the College Experience

NSSE also asks respondents to answer two questions that provide an estimate of their satisfaction with the overall college experience. On these items KSC seniors' responses were statistically similar to those of seniors in the comparison groups: 92% of KSC seniors rated their entire educational experience as "good" or "excellent," compared to 88% at COPLAC institutions and 87% at institutions in our Carnegie classification; and 84% of KSC seniors reported that they would choose KSC again if they could start over, vs. 81% at COPLAC institutions and 80% at institutions in our Carnegie classification.

Comparison of Outcomes for Participants and Non-Participants in High-Impact Practices

The data above compare the responses of all KSC seniors to those of seniors at comparator institutions. The next step of the analysis was to compare perceived gains and satisfaction for KSC participants in high-impact practices with those of KSC non-participants. Working on-campus (15 or fewer hours per week), participating in co-curricular activities (more than 10 hours per week), and participating in co-curricular community service (more than zero hours per week) were included in the analysis because national literature has shown them to be associated with various positive outcomes for students. The outcomes used in the analysis included perceived gain items, civic engagement competencies, and satisfaction with the college experience. Table 5 displays the comparisons that were statistically significant. As the table shows, all significant differences were in the direction of greater gains for participants in these experiences. There were no statistically significant differences in either direction related to study abroad, capstone courses, working on-campus, or participation in co-curricular activities.

Table 5. Statistically Significant Chi-Square Comparisons of Outcomes for Seniors Who Participated in High-Impact Practices

Outcome	High-Impact Practice	% Agree + Strongly Agree	χ^2	df	p
<u>Had internship, co-op, field experience, student teaching, or clinical placement</u>					
Speaking clearly and effectively	Internship No internship	89% 76%	4.57	1	.033
Would choose KSC again	Internship No internship	88% 74%	5.20	1	.023
<u>Had a formal leadership role in a student organization or group</u>					
Analyzing numerical and statistical information	Student org. leader Not student org. leader	61% 44%	4.52	1	.034
Developing a personal code of values and ethics	Student org. leader Not student org. leader	76% 59%	5.16	1	.023
Leading a diverse group where all are welcome	Student org. leader Not student org. leader	70% 39%	19.78	6	.003
<u>Worked with a faculty member on a research project</u>					
Analyzing numerical and statistical information	Did research w/ faculty Did not do research	63% 47%	3.94	1	.047
Becoming an informed and active citizen	Did research w/ faculty Did not do research	77% 60%	5.92	1	.016
Overall evaluation of KSC education (<i>good/excellent</i>)	Did research w/ faculty Did not do research	97% 88%	5.15	1	.023

Table continues

Table 5 (continued)

Outcome	High-Impact Practice	% Agree + Strongly Agree	χ^2	df	p
<u>Had many service-learning courses</u>					
Speaking clearly and effectively	Had many S-L courses	100%	6.18	1	.013
	Had few or no S-L courses	82%			
Acquiring work-related knowledge and skills	Had many S-L courses	86%	4.01	1	.045
	Had few or no S-L courses	67%			
Understanding people of different backgrounds	Had many S-L courses	79%	4.79	1	.029
	Had few or no S-L courses	58%			
Solving complex real-world problems	Had many S-L courses	83%	4.08	1	.043
	Had few or no S-L courses	63%			
<u>Performed at least some co-curricular community service each week, on average</u>					
Acquiring work-related knowledge and skills	Did comm. svc. each week	80%	6.46	1	.011
	Zero comm. svc. each week	62%			