



Wisdom to make a difference.

Office of Institutional Research and Assessment

2015 CIRP Freshman Survey: Self-assessed Strengths

In summer 2015, Keene State College asked incoming first-year students to complete the CIRP Freshman Survey during Orientation. Usable responses were received from 882 first-time, full-time first-year students (95% response rate). Results from this survey will be shared in a series of reports on clusters of related survey items. This report summarizes the CIRP responses that relate to self-assessed strengths. National comparison data are not yet available for 2015, so 2014 national comparison data are reported here.

KEY FINDINGS

- CIRP asks students to rate themselves on a set of skills and traits in comparison to other people their age, using a five-point response scale from *Lowest 10% of People My Age* to *Highest 10% of People My Age*. Like their national peers, KSC first-year students are most likely to rate themselves as above average in non-academic skills and traits, such as cooperativeness (69%), understanding of others (66%), and drive to achieve (62%).
- Also similar to their national peers, few KSC first-year students rate themselves as above average on academic skills and traits such as mathematical ability (23%), public speaking ability (26%), and computer skills (31%). Above-average spirituality ratings were also infrequent among KSC students (27%), a finding consistent with New Hampshire's status as the second most secular state in the U.S.
- KSC first-year students were slightly more likely than their national peers to rate themselves as above-average in artistic ability (5% higher), risk-taking (3% higher), and creativity (1% higher).
- KSC first-year students were substantially less likely than their national peers to rate themselves as above-average in academic ability (20% lower) mathematical ability (17% lower), and drive to achieve (12% lower). Each of these differences was consistent with findings obtained in 2013.
- CIRP also asks students to provide a self-assessment of their strengths and weaknesses in each of a set of skills and traits. The skill area rated as a strength by the greatest percentage of KSC first-year students was diversity-related interpersonal skills. These include the ability to work cooperatively with diverse people (83%), tolerance of others with different beliefs (74%), and seeing the world from someone else's perspective (74%). National peers provided similar strength ratings for these areas.
- Critical thinking was the skill area for which KSC students' self-assessment of their strengths exceeded those of their national peers by the greatest margin. Two-thirds (66%) KSC students rated this as a strength, compared with 58% of their national peers.
- The ability to manage time effectively was least likely to be rated as a strength by both KSC students (45%) and their national peers (47%).

DETAILED FINDINGS

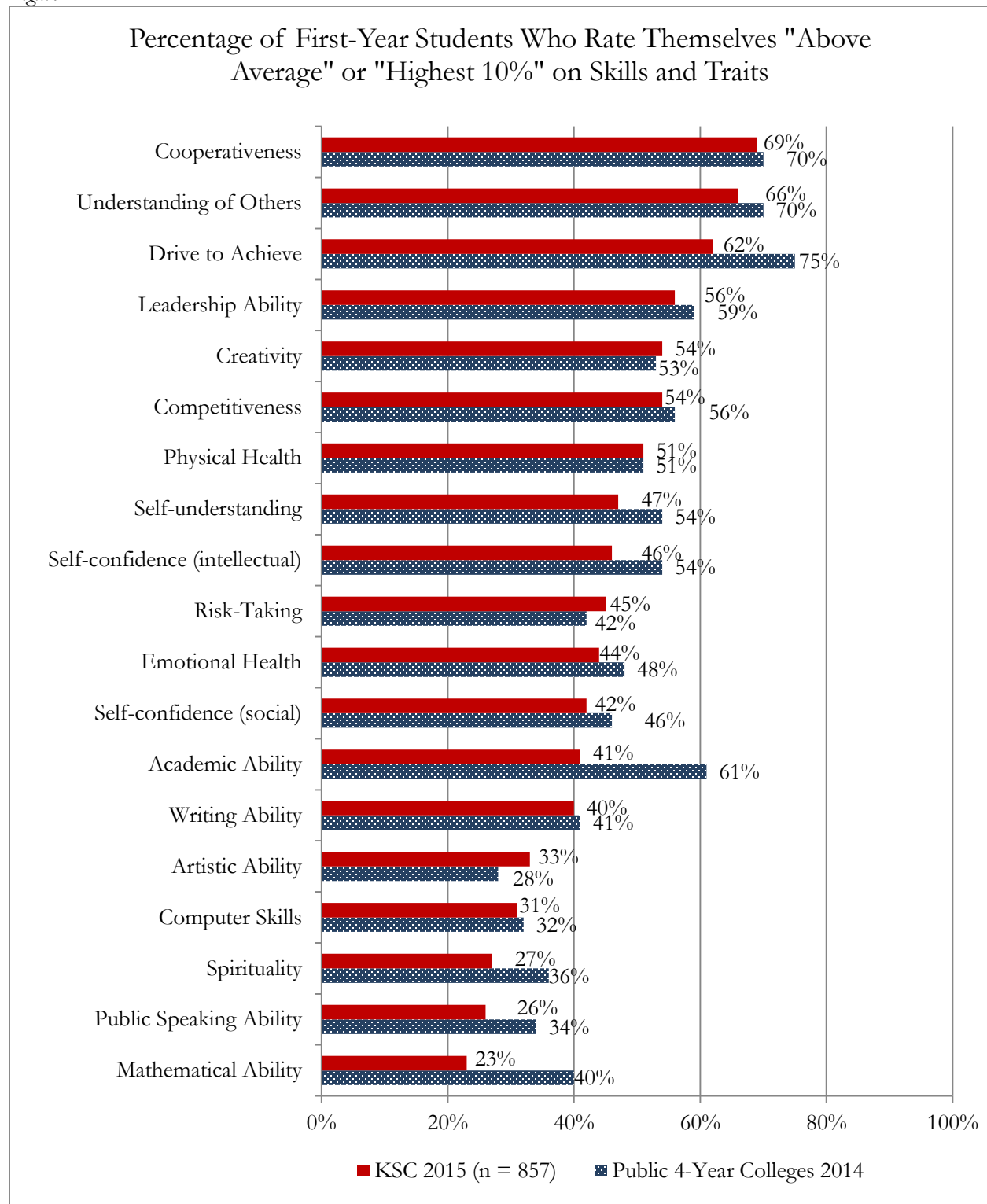
Skills and Traits Rated Above Average or Among Top 10% of Peers

Figure 1 shows the percentage of Keene State College students who rate themselves either “above average” or “highest 10%” compared to other people their age on each trait, using a five-point scale from *Lowest 10%* to *Highest 10%*. Also included in Figure 1 are national comparisons from 2014. KSC first-year students are most likely to rate themselves as above average in cooperativeness (69%), understanding of others (66%), and drive to achieve (62%). The same three traits were also most likely to receive above-average ratings among the national sample. Other traits receiving above-average or higher ratings by over half of KSC students include leadership ability, creativity, competitiveness, and physical health. For each of these, KSC first-year students and their national peers were nearly as likely to rate themselves as above average. Traits least likely to be assigned above average or higher ratings by KSC students include mathematical ability (23%), public speaking ability (26%), and spirituality (27%).

The areas for which KSC first-year students’ above-average percentages diverged most from those of their national peers were academic ability (20% lower) mathematical ability (17% lower), drive to achieve (12% lower), spirituality (9% lower), public speaking (8% lower), and intellectual self-confidence (8% lower). Each of these differences was consistent with findings obtained in 2013.

KSC students’ self-ratings tended to be somewhat lower than those of national peers on most traits. Exceptions to this pattern included artistic ability (5% higher), risk-taking (3% higher), and creativity (1% higher).

Figure 1



Self-Assessed Strengths

Beginning in 2013, CIRP asked first-year students to rate themselves on a second set of traits that made use of a different scale. For these, students were asked to assess their proficiency using a scale ranging from “A Major Weakness” to “A Major Strength.” Most of the abilities in this set were various types of interpersonal skills (e.g.: “See world from someone else’s perspective”), but the list also included critical thinking and time-management skills.

Figure 2 presents the percentages of first-year students selecting either of the two highest ratings: “Somewhat Strong” or “A Major Strength.” The areas KSC first-year students most frequently rated as strengths were the ability to work cooperatively with diverse people (83%), tolerance of others with different beliefs (74%), and seeing the world from someone else’s perspective (74%). These areas were also most frequently noted as strengths by the national sample. The ability to manage time effectively was least frequently rated as a strength by both KSC first-year students (45%) and their national peers (47%).

The difference between KSC and national strength ratings was greatest for critical thinking skills. Two-thirds (66%) of KSC first-year students rated it as a strength, but only 58% of their national peers did so.

Figure 2

