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Office of Institutional Research

2012 Admitted Student Survey

In order to understand the factors that affect students' decisions to enroll or not enroll at Keene State College, the Office of Admissions surveyed admitted students in the summer of 2012 using a locally developed online survey. Survey invitations were successfully emailed to 4502 admitted students (1253 enrolled and 3249 not enrolled). The response rate was 41% for enrolling students ($N = 516$) and 4% for students who chose not to enroll at Keene State ($N = 115$). The response rate for non-enrolled students is typical of surveys such as this. Nevertheless, the rate was too low to allow for statistical analysis of the quantitative responses from that group. Therefore, this report presents the results of the questionnaire for enrolling students. For non-enrolling students, only the open-response items are summarized here.

Readers should be aware that cognitive dissonance almost certainly colors the responses of both groups of students. When people make a major choice in their lives, they tend to seek consonance between that choice and the other information in their environment, in order to reduce cognitive dissonance. So students who have recently chosen Keene State College will be very aware of the factors that supported that choice, and they will downplay – to themselves as well as to others – any areas of concern. They will see the college through rose colored glasses, so to speak. Students who have recently chosen another institution will be unable to focus on the good experiences and impressions they may have had during the admission process, and will tend instead to see only the evidence that confirms their choice. So both sets of responses are biased in favor of the choice that the student ultimately made.

KEY FINDINGS

- **A successful campus visit is crucial.** Students who enroll at Keene State tend to fall in love with the look of the campus and the town, and they feel welcome from the first moment they are on campus. A large majority – 84% - of the enrolling students rated their campus tour as “Excellent.” Some students who chose not to enroll described off-putting experiences during their visit. (See the final bullet below, on missed opportunities.)
- **Size and location work both for and against KSC’s recruiting efforts.** Students who chose Keene State commented that it is the right distance from home, or the right size for them. Students who chose other institutions wanted to be nearer to home, or farther away, or in a more urban location, or at a larger school.
- **For most students, the simple availability of desired academic majors is key.** For a smaller number of students the reputation of the major is determinative, either positively or negatively.
- **Athletic opportunities affect a relatively small number of students, but for them, it is the deciding factor.**

- **Enrolling students tend to view KSC as a good bargain. Non-enrolling students tend to describe it as expensive.** Enrolling students were less likely in general than non-enrolling students to comment about financial considerations.
- **Friends and family play an important role in college selection.** Parents are the most important advisors in this process by far. Friends and relatives who had good experiences at Keene State can seal the deal.
- **A few non-enrolling students commented negatively on KSC's reputation as a party school,** or mentioned that a preferred institution has a stronger academic reputation.
- **There were some key missed opportunities.** A few non-enrolling students had very specific negative experiences with Keene State. Most of these centered on not being able to get the information they needed or to have the experiences they wanted to have while on campus (e.g., touring the academic department – see the first bullet above about campus visits.) While enrolling students overwhelmingly reported feeling welcomed and well treated by Keene State, these non-enrolling students indicated that their negative experiences made them feel not wanted here.

ENROLLING STUDENTS

Respondents were invited to list up to six colleges or universities to which they had applied. Apart from Keene State, these enrolling students most often mentioned the following institutions:

<u>Institution to Which Student Had Applied</u>	<u>Number of Mentions*</u>
Plymouth State University	74
University of New Hampshire	74
Southern New Hampshire University	42
Westfield State University	38
University of Rhode Island	37
Eastern Connecticut State University	31
Franklin Pierce University	31
Colby-Sawyer College	28
University of Massachusetts-Amherst	28
Castleton State College	27
Bridgewater State University	25
Quinnipiac University	23
Roger Williams University	22
University of Connecticut	22
Endicott College	21
Framingham State University	21
University of Vermont	21
<u>Fitchburg State University</u>	<u>20</u>

*Respondents were invited to list up to six institutions.

Of the 2,149 college applications described by these respondents, including their applications to KSC, students reported that they had been accepted for admission 83% of the time. Three out of four respondents indicated that Keene State College was their first-choice institution. Students used open comments to explain why KSC was or was not their first choice.

Love at First Sight. Students who are enrolling at Keene State wrote that they knew instantly – when they first saw the campus – that this was the place for them. This category is named love at first “sight” because so many students wrote about the beautiful campus and the charming town of Keene. A few students wrote that their decision had been swayed from another first-choice institution to KSC because of the look of the campus. Others wrote about being welcomed during that first visit, and just knowing that Keene State College was the right fit for them. These are examples of comments in this category:

It wasn't my first choice until I saw the campus.

Because as soon as I went on the tour I knew this was the right school for me.

I loved everything about it. ... I just felt at home as soon as I stepped onto the campus.

I instantly knew it was the school for me

The school felt like it was a second home to me from the second I stepped foot on it. My mom felt it was safe and I felt comfortable and welcome there.

It had everything I was looking for in a school. When I walked on campus for the first time, I instantly fell in love with it.

I felt like I was at home the second I came here.

It is the perfect school for me. I fell in love the first time I came to visit.

beautiful and home-like campus

i loved the college and the town

I liked the campus a lot. I thought it was beautiful.

When I visited Keene State I absolutely loved the campus.

I really liked the layout of the campus.

I loved the campus, and the surrounding town. Everything was easy to get to. My parents also liked ... the atmosphere of the town and college.

The combination of the campus, surrounding town

I fell in love with the campus as soon as I saw it.

I also did not choose Keene State until I went and saw the campus and decided that Keene was the one.

fell in love with how beautiful the schools facilities were.

Location and Size. Keene State College benefits from its location. Many students chose Keene because of the distance from home (near enough, far enough away) or because of the beauty of southeastern New Hampshire or the opportunities for outdoor activities in the area. Other students wrote that Keene's size felt welcoming and personal to them. These two concepts – size and location – are combined here because so many students mentioned them together. These are sample comments in this category.

The reason Keene was my first choice is because of it's setting and location. Not too far from me and not too close. I love the small mountains surrounding it and the town of Keene is very nice.

small enough for my liking

It was a small school in the middle of a really pretty and comforting town.

I liked the small campus and small class sizes.

Perfect size, nice surroundings, far from home,

I also liked how it was far enough away from home to get away, but close enough to come home if I needed to.

I also wanted to be in New Hampshire for skiing and it sounded like a great school.

I like that Keene is close to home but not too close. I like being in a town where there is stuff to do and it is easily accessible to stores.

At first I wanted to be farther away from home, but then I decided I wanted to be far enough but close enough where I could come home.

It was close enough to home where i could visit but far enough away to give me privacy.

I think it is the perfect size.

Academic Offerings. A few respondents wrote about the strength of KSC's programs in their area of interest – most often in education – but far more students wrote about academic offerings as a baseline requirement. That is, they seemed to be looking for a college that merely offered their major, and beyond that they made their decision based on other factors such as the look and feel of the campus. These are sample comments in this category:

majors I wanted

perfect school for me and for my major, elementary education.

The college had/has a lot of support systems for students, from disability services to homework, help, which I liked a lot. ... The college also has/had all of the programs I was interested in, so that was a huge plus.

It was one of my first choices because it offered my major

Also I heard from friends and teachers that Keene has a great Music Education program, which is my intended major.

because i was so happy that i got into the nursing program

first off i wanted to go to a liberal arts school, keene was listed as one of the best in new england. i enjoyed going through their psychology programs

They offer my major

had my major

Keene State had the major(s) I was interested in

Also on my tour, I saw the preschool or daycare kids come outside and it looked like the Students studying Early Education were having so much fun. I hope one day I can be as happy as them!

Also the major that I wish to pursue is offered.

Athletic Opportunities. For the relatively small number of students who want to play college sports, athletic opportunity trumps all other considerations. The following comments were in this category.

I loved ... the lacrosse program.

I will be playing basketball

the sports offered because I wanted to continue cheerleading in college...

I have earned the privilege to play lacrosse here.

I wanted to play soccer and I liked Coach Butcher and the program.

Due to my viist and to play basketball

Friends and Family. Several students wrote that they felt drawn to Keene State because of friends and family who had attended, as these comments show:

My cousins currently go to Keene and I loved it there.

My brother went there

I know friends that attend keene that said good things about it.

It's kind of like a family tradition at this point. I'm the 4th generation of my family to go to Keene State, And I've always heard great things about it. Not only that, it's easy to get to, and close by. I honestly couldn't ask for anything better than that. I've also seen the campus before, and when I was little, I was basically in love with the place. It's kinda like a second home to me, in a way.

Both of my parents went there.

i know students at Keene that love it.

My friend is going to be a sophomore here and he really likes it here and only had good things to say about the professors and classes and campus life in general.

my mom went to this school

Financial Considerations. Some enrolling students view KSC as a bargain, compared to the other institutions they were considering. These are sample comments in this category:

cheaper tuition

reasonably priced,

My parents also liked the price

It was one of my first choices because ...the cost was low.

It was in my price range.

affordable

I've always wanted to go to Keene but I fell in love with Wheelock's Early Childhood program, however, it was to expensive.

[Keene State was not originally my first choice.] It changed after I calculated all of the college expenses, coming to find that Keene State was giving me the most money. That definitely led to my decision of attending this college!

Cornell College's "One Course at a Time" program sounded really great to me and I was excited to go there, however their tuition cost was too high.

a reasonable price

Enrolling students were asked to rate the quality of the information they received during the admission process. The following table shows the percentage of respondents who rated each item as “Excellent.” Responses of “Didn’t Use” or “Wasn’t Provided” are counted here as missing data, so the percentage is based only on those students who used and rated each item.

Item	% Rating Excellent	# of Students Rating Item
Campus visit	84%	436
Contact with college after you were admitted	68%	454
Electronic communication with the college	68%	458
College web site	57%	464
Contact with Keene State students	55%	406
Printed materials	52%	430
Contact with Keene State coaches	49%	211
Contact with Keene State faculty	48%	360
Information about financial aid	46%	457
Visits by admissions staff at your high school	35%	274

Enrolling students were asked to indicate which people in their lives were most influential in their college choice. Parents were rated as “Very Important” or “Most Important” in this decision by 81% of the respondents. No other group (teachers, guidance counselors, etc.) came close.

These students were given a final opportunity to comment on the admission and financial aid process. The most common responses were about how “easy,” “helpful,” and “accommodating” the staff were. A few students indicated some confusion about the steps after admission, and others referred to a general lack of understanding of financial aid, but in general the comments were positive.

NON ENROLLING STUDENTS

Only two open-ended questions can appropriately be analyzed from the non-enrolling student responses, because the response rate was so low.

The survey asked, “Was your decision not to attend Keene State College influenced in part by actions taken by the New Hampshire legislature? If yes, which issues are you most concerned about. The responses were overwhelmingly “No.”

The final item of the survey was this: “We would like your honest input on why you did not choose Keene State College.” The responses are summarized below. Readers should interpret the responses with caution, because a survey with a low response rate attracts only respondents with very strong feelings – either positive or negative – about the subject of the survey. So students who had a very negative experience or reaction are more likely to respond than their peers who may have had more positive experiences but simply chose another institution. Readers should not consider these responses to be representative of the larger group of admitted students who chose not to enroll at Keene State College.

Size or Location. Keene State’s size and location are ideal for some students (see the enrolling student summary above) and are just not right for others. The largest number of reasons (33) given by these respondents for choosing another college over KSC fell into this category, as the following samples show:

It wasn't close enough to home.

I like the location of UNH. It is close to Boston.

I decided that I wanted a school that was larger.

I just came to the realization that it was too small.

The location was too far from my home. I prefer something a little closer.

Too small for me.

I really wanted to get away from the Keene area instead of staying around, as I really need to get out of the area and prove to myself I can start a life of my own, without all my friends and family close by.

Too isolated. I wanted a bigger school.

The Keene area was more rural than I was looking for.

Academic Offerings. The second largest group of comments (26) related to academic offerings. Some students wanted majors not offered by Keene State, and others reflected on the strength of their intended major at KSC vs. the school they chose. (See the comments in the introduction about cognitive dissonance.) These are examples of comments in this category:

Keene was in my top choices. Keene was very limited in the offering of its Business Programs. I really wanted to get a degree in Finance, Marketing, or Accounting.

The only reason I chose UNH was because I am undecided in my career path and UNH offered many more major choices.

I am a music major. During my second visit, I was not very impressed with the music program at Keene – specifically the fact that professional musicians were hired out during performances. It wasn't exactly the level that I was looking for in a music program.

Did not have the major I really wanted. Occupational therapy.

Keene is a very nice school but UVM seemed to offer more in terms of my intended major or the ability to switch majors and go a different route.

No accounting major.

The main reason that I did not choose Keene was the fact the program for architecture is not well known. Also, there were no co-ops required. I also would have to look elsewhere to finish my masters. The campus and town were beautiful, however, for professional reasons, I needed to pursue my education elsewhere. If I was going for a different major, I would have definitely considered Keene.

More interested in the public health field and got into my first and second choices.

I wanted a more comprehensive dance program.

Your architecture program wasn't accredited.

I chose UNH because the nursing program has a good reputation and I did not choose Keene State because the major is not yet established.

There was no Business Major.

School did not offer major in adapted PE.

Financial Considerations. While enrolling students commented on Keene State's affordability in comparison to their other choices, the non-enrolling students wrote about KSC being too expensive. There were 24 comments in this category. The following are examples:

As in any other case, costs is very important. I did not feel that I was getting enough help with money to go to Keene State. I didn't want to come out with the amount of debt that I would have.

To me, the cost of the tuition was too expensive.

I didn't receive enough financial aid to be able to attend. Otherwise I would've gone.

Eastern CT and Keene State were a tie as far as choice. The primary reason I did not attend Keene was financial. Eastern was less expensive with an equal financial aid package.

The amount of financial aid awarded. Clarkson University provided a much nicer package than Keene State. I can attend Clarkson with the same out of pocket costs that it would have been for Keene.

Not enough financial aid received.

Out of state tuition and lack of financial aid.

I received really good scholarships from PSU.

UNH provided me a better offer financially with relation to the quality of education provided at the school.

Dean offered me a very generous scholarship. Keene did not offer any help with finances.

The out-of-state tuition cost was a factor.

The tuition cost for residents is so high that there was no big savings to go to Keene.... It is unfortunate that a state university gives residents of NH so little incentive to attend their school.

Very expensive.

Just Didn't Love It. While enrolling students tended to fall in love with Keene State immediately, those who chose not to enroll commented that KSC just was not a good fit for them, or was not their first choice from the beginning. There were 22 comments in this category. These are examples:

Keene State was my back-up college. I wasn't planning to apply, but my guidance counselor insisted.

I did not choose Keene State because it just didn't seem like the school for me.

I did not choose Keene because I liked the college town of Burlington VT better.

Felt other colleges were better fit

Keene State College was my back up school and I got into my first choice school

I didn't feel the same connection that I felt with St. Joseph's the minute I walked onto the campus. Sorry.

Was indifferent after campus visit.

I couldn't see myself there.

KSC has a Negative Reputation. Enrolling students wrote about the good things that they had heard about Keene State from friends and family or from guidance counselors. In contrast, 15 non-enrolling students wrote that they had heard bad things about KSC – that this is a party school, that it is not selective, that it is not oriented toward academic excellence. The following are examples of comments in this category:

Keene has party reputation and know kids who have not made it past first year because of that atmosphere

Party school identity was hard to get past.

It's not selective; the other students I knew that were going there were only there because that was the only place they were accepted.

[KSC was] not as academically challenging as the other schools I was admitted to.

Not the greatest for academics.

Missed Opportunities. Fourteen students wrote about bad experiences or missed opportunities in their interactions with Keene State. As the comments above from enrolling students show, these experiences were not typical of most students, but they were bad enough to dissuade these particular students from enrolling at KSC. Since each experience is unique – and uniquely important to that respondent – all 14 of their stories are transcribed here:

I happened to get a freshman for my campus tour leader, and they couldn't answer any of my questions. I felt that they weren't very helpful.

I did not get a lot of information on what I was interested in. No one tried to make me come. I wasn't drawn to the school by anyone from the staff or current students.

The school did not provide information that interested me even though I asked for it.

The college didn't feel as welcoming to me as Westfield State University.

I chose not to attend Keene because I was unsatisfied with the communication after the submission of my application. All of the other schools that I applied to had sent me some sort of notification about whether or not they had received my application and this made your school seem unorganized. My FAFSA was chosen for an audit and this audit included too much information such as the worth of our house; which is not supposed to be included in the financial aid consideration when applying to a state school. This was a big turn-off because it meant that I was not interested enough to complete my FAFSA. Also, when visiting the other colleges that I considered attending; there was a lunch offered so that the future applicants would be able to experience the food that they would be eating at Keene. For these many reasons, I chose UNH as opposed to Keene State College.

I applied late to the school and was accepted. I called the school twice to obtain information for accepted student days. Both times I was told the program was full and I couldn't attend. I couldn't believe as an accepted student I wasn't allowed to see the school that accepted me. That right there told me the whole story about your school.

Keene never seemed interested in me. When I called to arrange a visit over the holiday, I was told the office was closed until late January. Even though I applied in December I lost interest. All other schools were open and offering tours.

I did not choose Keene state college because of the following: 1. I was told by an admission counselor that town tolerated the college. 2. When being accepted I heard 6 months after all my other colleges. 3. I never got any e-mails letters etc about events. 4. I also found the campus not smoke free. 5. The dorm rooms to reek of pot or alcohol. 5. The tour guide unfriendly and not able to answer questions. I thank you for your time but your college just wasn't for me.

I was never informed by Keene State by mail of my admission. I had to check on line. Once I found out on line I never heard from the admission staff again. As far as I am concerned if they do not have the time to contact me then it is not the kind of school I want to attend.

I had to make my decision on which college I was going to plan on attending to and I had yet to receive my letter of acceptance from Keene so I decided to go NESCom instead. If I would have gotten the acceptance letter a lot sooner, I would have decided to go to Keene as it is a lot closer to home and all the things I currently participate in such as Boy Scouts and Order of the Arrow. I also was unable to visit the Video Production field while I took a tour since it was done with tours. And when the tours started again for the spring season, I was unable to go and check it out. It's a bit silly to go into a program at a school that you know nothing about. And when I did the regular tour, I talked with an admission s counselor, and he said tht he couldn't tell me anything about the program. So yeah, that it just about why I did not choose Keene State as my choice of college.

I was accepted at Keene Stae via a nice letter and then a month and a half later, sent another letter to accept me again. I had a friend who was denied in a letter and then accepted a month later by letter. It didn't seem like the office was too organized.

I wanted a school that would allow me to play volleyball. I emailed the volleyball coach at the school and did the recruiting page and still was not contacted. So I just decided to gie up and look at the schools who were interested in me.

I like the campus of Keene State College, but for me personally I didn't connect with something personally and identify with it in a way. If I had seen the music department (I am a music major), then I might have felt differently. The person who gave me the tour didn't really know much about the music department in terms of giving a tour of the building, and for me that was the most important factor. It was the ultimate deciding factor for choosing a college. It's why I'm going to URI instead of Keene, Salve Regina, or Castleton. Also, I didn't see a "downtown area" where you can hang out off campus.

There wasn't much mention of activities at keene other than community service and pumpkin fest

Athletic Opportunities. Seven students chose to enroll at other institutions because they had better athletic opportunities there. These are some of their comments:

It was a better fit athletically for me to choose Eastern Connecticut State University. Academically, I loved Keene State. If I was not playing basketball, I would have chosen Keene.

I had more athletic opportunity at Bentley.

Had been recruited in soccer and track by many schools. Wanted to play soccer but soccer coach did not seem interested. Track coach was interested but soccer coach did not respond.