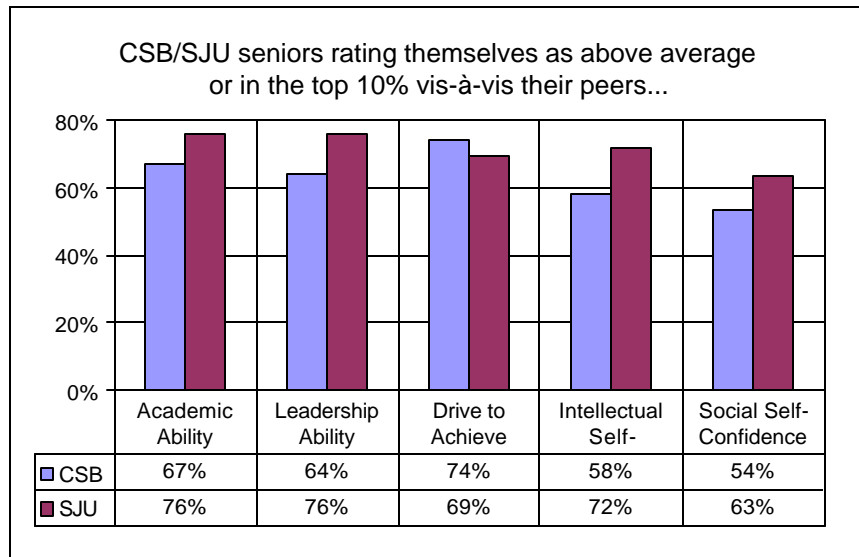


All of the ability-rating differences that existed between men and women as new students remained in the senior year.

### CSB/SJU Senior Self-Evaluation

As new entering students in fall 1999, CSB and SJU students were asked to evaluate themselves in relation to their peers on a number of measures, including academic ability, leadership ability, drive to achieve, intellectual self-confidence, and social self-confidence. With the exception of social self-confidence, the typical new CSB/SJU student rated herself or himself as above average compared to their peers. The 2002-2003 CSB/SJU Senior Survey asked students to again evaluate themselves in relation to their peers. This issue of *Trends* summarizes key findings for 2003 graduating seniors.



#### Academic Ability

- Seven in ten 2002-2003 seniors rated themselves as above average or in the top 10% in academic ability versus their peers. Both CSB and SJU students were typically more modest in evaluating their academic ability as seniors than they were as new entering students (when 83% rated their academic ability as above average).
- Gender gaps that existed among new students persisted and remained significant among CSB and SJU seniors. Three quarters of all SJU seniors rated their academic ability as above average, compared to two-thirds of all CSB students – and men were fully twice as likely as women to rate their academic ability as in the highest 10% (25% vs. 12%).
- When controlling for grade point average – examining only those with a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or higher – gender differences widened further. Almost two-thirds (62%) of all high achieving SJU seniors described their academic ability as in the highest 10% in relation to their peers, compared to just 25% of all high achieving CSB seniors. Irrespective of gender, the highest achieving students expressed the highest confidence in their academic ability (though the threshold for describing oneself as excellent was considerably higher for women than for men). The mean grade point average for those who rated their academic ability highest was 3.70, compared to an average of 3.34 for all other rating levels.

#### Leadership Ability

- Approximately 70% of all CSB/SJU seniors rated their leadership ability as above average or in the top 10%. A similar percentage indicated that their experiences at Saint Benedict and Saint John's had contributed "quite a bit" or "very much" to the development of their leadership skills.

- Overall assessment of leadership moved upward for all students between their first year and their senior year, but particularly among men. More than one-third of all SJU seniors rated their leadership ability as in the highest 10% compared to their peers (a ten percentage point increase from their rating as first-year students). SJU seniors were more than twice as likely as their CSB peers to rate their leadership as in the highest 10%. Gender-based differences in leadership ability narrowed somewhat among high achieving students (cumulative GPA greater than or equal to 3.5), though statistically significant differences between CSB and SJU students remained.

### **Drive to Achieve**

- More than 70% of all CSB/SJU seniors rated their drive to achieve as above average, nearly identical to their rating as first year students. Unlike most of the other assessment indicators, men and women rated their drive to achieve similarly.
- Not surprisingly, the highest achieving students were the most likely to rate their drive to achieve most highly. Almost half (45%) of all CSB/SJU seniors with a cumulative grade average of at least 3.5 rated their drive to achieve as in the highest 10%, compared to just 25% of those with grade point averages below 3.5.

### **Intellectual Self-Confidence**

- Two-thirds of all CSB/SJU seniors rated their intellectual self-confidence as above average or in the top 10%, an assessment similar to the one they provided as new entering students.
- Gender differences that existed among new CSB and SJU students in fall 1999 persisted to their senior year. Almost three-quarters of all SJU seniors (72%) rated their intellectual self-confidence as above average, compared to 58% of all CSB seniors – and SJU students were fully twice as likely as CSB students to describe their intellectual self-confidence as in the top 10% (30% vs. 15%).
- On average, high achieving students expressed the highest levels of intellectual self-confidence. However, similar to their assessment of academic ability, gender differences were widest among the highest achieving students. Almost half (48%) of all SJU students with a cumulative grade average of 3.5 or greater rated their intellectual self-confidence as in the highest 10%, compared to just 16% of all CSB students with similar grade point averages.

### **Social Self-Confidence**

- As new entering students, CSB and SJU students typically are more modest about their social skills than they are about their academic ability. However, by their senior year, their evaluation of their social confidence improves significantly. Nearly six in ten (58%) of all CSB/SJU seniors this year rated their social self-confidence as above average – a gain of ten percentage points from their first year.
- Though social self-confidence ratings increased substantially among both CSB and SJU students from the first to the fourth year, men remained significantly more likely than women to rate their social self-confidence highly. SJU seniors were nearly twice as likely as CSB seniors to describe their social self-confidence as in the highest 10% compared to their peers (29% vs. 15%).
- On average, high achieving students express somewhat lower levels of social self-confidence than other students. Seniors whose grade point average was 3.5 or higher were only half as likely as all other students to rate their social self-confidence as in the highest 10% (14% vs. 26%), but about 60% more likely than all other students to rate it as below average (15% vs. 9%).

### **Conclusions and Issues**

The *Senior Survey* data do not allow us to determine the causes of gender differences in self-assessment ratings. Nor do they make it particularly clear either that SJU students systematically overrate their abilities or that CSB students systematically underrate theirs. Nonetheless, the data do raise a number of important questions for us :

- Are the gender differences real and meaningful? Are they important in relation to our students' ability to compete for jobs or graduate school placement?
- Given our mission and commitment to gender education, should we expect that differences that exist at the time of first enrollment will narrow or disappear over four years? In general, do we expect our students to be more confident about their abilities when they graduate, irrespective of gender?

If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact Jon McGee at [jmcgee@csbsju.edu](mailto:jmcgee@csbsju.edu). To read past issues of the *Trends* monthly research newsletter, please visit our website at <http://www.csbsju.edu/institutionalresearch/Trends/trends.htm>.