

# CCSSE SNAPSHOTS

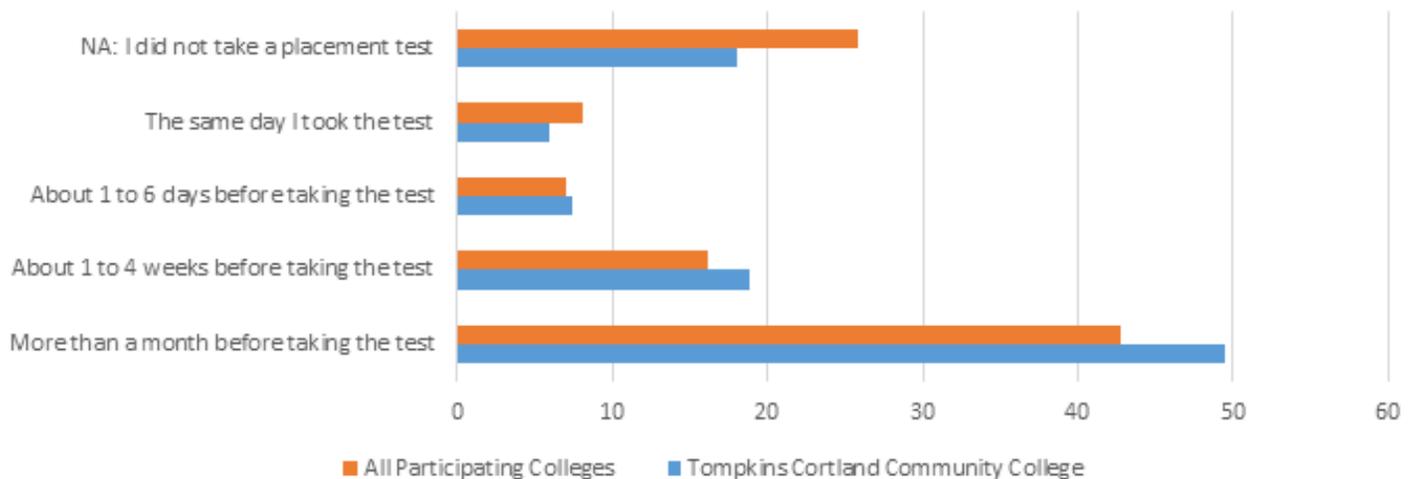
report on the community college survey of student engagement

In 2015, Tompkins Cortland surveyed a cross sample of students using the national Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). This is the fourth in a series of reports based on our findings from the survey. To find out more about the CCSSE, why Tompkins Cortland is involved in it, and how the results are being used by the College, see CCSSE Snapshots 1, which is available on the Tompkins Cortland website at: [www.tompkinscortland.edu/dept/ir/research.asp](http://www.tompkinscortland.edu/dept/ir/research.asp) under CCSSE Snap Shots.

## PLACEMENT PRACTICES

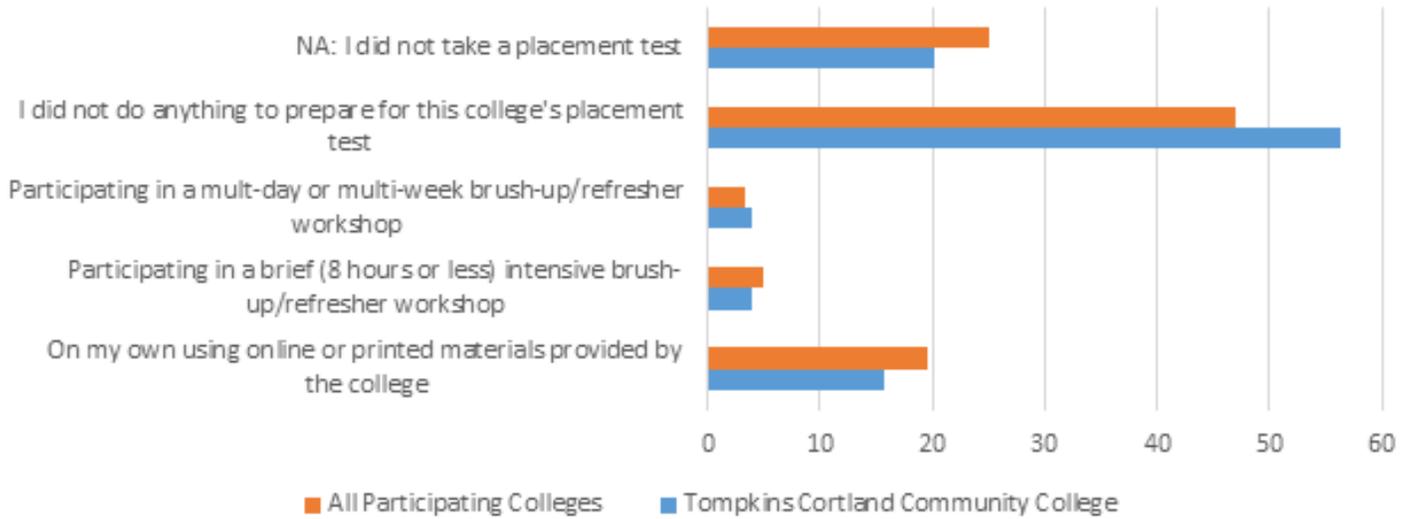
Each year the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) has included several items to allow participating colleges and national researchers to delve more deeply into areas of student experience and institutional performance that research has shown can have a major impact on student success. This year these questions focused on community college students' experiences related to assessment and placement practices. These initial findings give us critical information such as how students are preparing for placement tests and whether they feel they are assessed appropriately.

### I became aware I was required to take a placement test at this college...



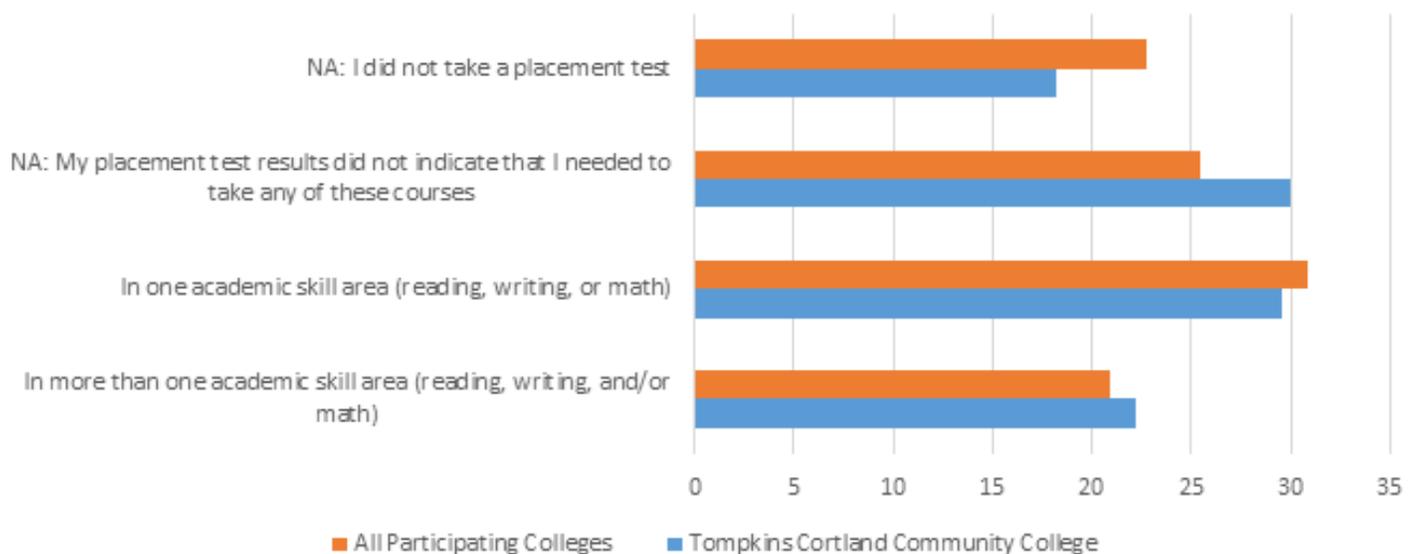
Tompkins Cortland students reported taking placement exams at a somewhat higher rate than the students at comparison colleges. They also indicated that they were aware they had to take placement tests earlier: almost 50% said they knew they had to take a placement test more than a month before actually taking the test, theoretically giving them ample time to prepare for the testing.

## Before enrolling at this college, I prepared for this college's placement test in the following way:



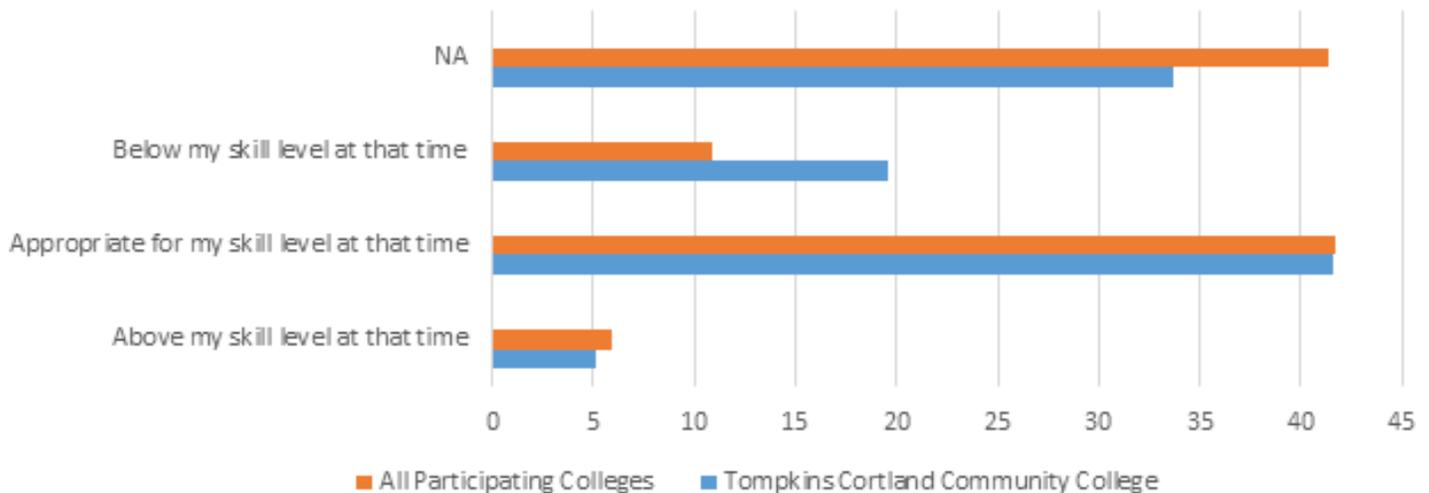
Tompkins Cortland students reported little preparation for placement exams: “I did not do anything to prepare for this college’s placement test” at a higher rate than the comparison mean (56% compared with 47%). In a similar vein, they reported preparing less frequently both “Participating in a brief (8 hours or less) intensive brush-up/refresher workshop,” and “On my own using online or printed materials provided by the college” than students in the comparison group.

## The results of the placement test I took at this college indicated that I needed to take a developmental/basic skills/college prep course...



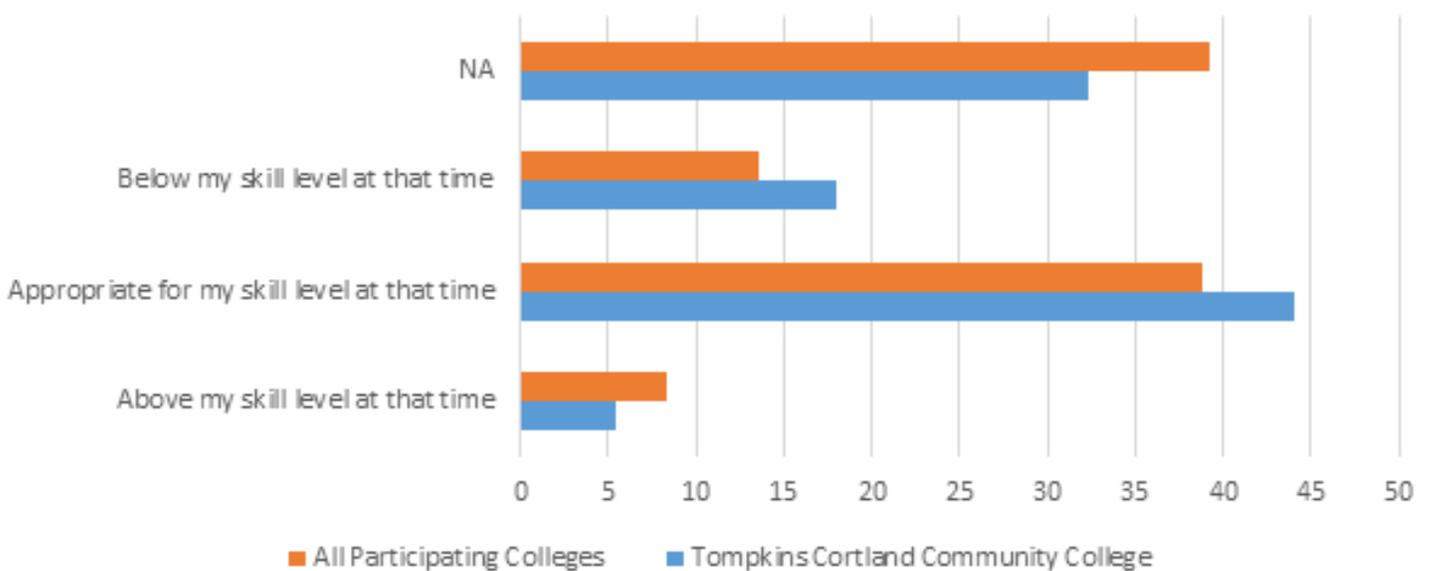
Turning to the results of the placement testing, Tompkins Cortland students reported not placing into developmental or basic skills courses at a higher level than the comparison group mean. At the same time they were a bit more likely to test into placement in more than one area (reading, writing, and/or math) than the comparison colleges, on average.

## I enrolled in the English course indicated by my placement test results, and I felt the course level was...



When asked how they felt about the appropriateness of their placement in an English course, most reported that it was: “Appropriate for my skill level at that time.” Of the respondents who did not feel their placement was appropriate, more Tompkins Cortland respondents felt their placement was “Below my skill level at that time” than felt it was “Above my skill level at that time.”

## I enrolled in the math course indicated by my placement test results, and I felt the course level was...



Math placement showed a similar pattern, with the majority of Tompkins Cortland respondents feeling they were placed appropriately in their first math course, at a higher level than respondents in the comparison group as a whole. Some felt the placement was below their skill level, but not many felt their placement was above their skill level.

# CONCLUSION

Overall, these results show evidence that the system used to place students in developmental classes works fairly well. Although students report having advance notification about upcoming placement testing, many of them report not preparing in any way. There is clearly some room for improvement, particularly by employing creative approaches to encourage incoming students to prepare for placement testing in advance.

