

Student and Faculty Perceptions of What Makes a “Good” Classroom

This spring, the Classroom Task Force (a subcommittee of the 2012 Committee) conducted surveys of both students and faculty to gain insight into which physical classroom features were considered most conducive to student learning. This *In the Abstract* describes some of what was learned from those surveys. These surveys asked respondents to rate various components of comfort, space and visibility in Oakton’s classrooms, as well as to identify which physical aspects of a classroom, in general, they considered to be the most influential in facilitating learning. Additional questions asked respondents to identify their favorite and least favorite classrooms at Oakton. A paper survey was initially administered to a sample of classes in Des Plaines and Skokie, yielding 14 faculty and 383 student responses. Faculty were invited to complete a shorter, online version of the survey as well; this yielded an additional 91 responses.

Rating Oakton’s Classrooms

Respondents to the initial survey were asked to rate their level of agreement with a number of statements concerning the classroom that they were sitting in when completing the survey. This question was not included in the online survey administered to faculty. These responses are summarized in Table 1 below. Although it is difficult to draw any meaningful conclusions by comparing the responses to this question, given the disparity in faculty and student respondents, it is still interesting to note which statements yield the largest differences in agreement between faculty and students.

Table 1 – Statements about Oakton’s Classrooms

<i>Statement about Oakton Classroom</i>	% who said that they “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” *	
	<i>Faculty (n=14)</i>	<i>Students (n=383)</i>
There is enough room between students/me and my neighbor	43%	60%
There is enough room for books and other materials on my desk	43%	54%
Desks can be moved around easily to facilitate group discussions	36%	42%
There is enough room for people to easily enter and exit their seats	43%	48%
The projection screen is easily visible	50%	85%
The classroom is technologically up-to-date	54%	74%
I can easily see other students when they speak during classroom discussions	93%	68%
The classroom is usually at a comfortable temperature	72%	58%
Too Hot?	25%	29%
Too Cold?	75%	71%
The academic materials and posters in the room are conducive to learning	20%	39%

(* those who answered “4” or “5” on a 5-point rating scale asking how much they agreed with the statement)

It appears that students were more likely to agree with statements concerning the usefulness of teaching aides in the classroom than faculty (“The projection screen is easily visible,” “The classroom is technologically up-to-date,” “The academic posters in the room are conducive to learning”). Faculty were more likely to agree they could easily see other students, not surprising since faculty are typically at the front of the room facing the class.

General Classroom Characteristics that Facilitate Student Learning

Respondents to all surveys were asked to rank six physical aspects of any classroom based on their importance in facilitating student learning. Faculty responses from the paper and online surveys were combined. When comparing the amount of importance that each group places on these same characteristics, it is interesting to note that the two most important characteristics of a classroom to faculty (the ability to interact with students and classroom technology) are among the three least important characteristics to students. Conversely, the two characteristics that are most important to students (amount of personal space and seating comfort) are the two least important to faculty.

Table 2 – Importance of General Classroom Characteristics in Facilitating Teaching/Student Learning

	<i>Faculty (n = 105)</i>	<i>Students (n = 383)</i>
Most Important	Ability to Interact with Students	Amount of Personal Space
	Classroom Technology	Comfort of Seating
	Quality of Classroom Climate/Atmosphere	Quality of Classroom Atmosphere
	Desk Arrangement	Ability to Interact
	Comfort of Seating for Students	Classroom Technology
Least Important	Amount of Students’ Personal Space	Desk Arrangement