

Baccalaureate Alumni Survey

2004 Report

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Acknowledgments

This is the seventeenth annual survey of alumni of Oakton's baccalaureate program. The College very much appreciates the participation of College alumni. The survey requires extensive behind-the-scenes support from staff members at the Office of Research. Particular thanks are due to the Office's support staff persons, Pat Miller and Brenda Manfredini, who handled the preparation and mailing of the comments given in response to the open-ended item about "outstanding" persons, courses, or events at the College to the faculty and staff members remembered and to their administrative supervisors.

Please telephone the Office of Research at 847-635-1894 or e-mail tbers@oakton.edu or jkostecki@oakton.edu with comments, questions, or suggestions for items that might be included in the next annual survey.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACCALAUREATE ALUMNI SURVEY, 2004

Annually the Office of Research surveys transfer program alumni with at least 30 Oakton credits or an associate's degree, and who were last enrolled one or three years ago. In 2004, 522 alumni responded to the survey, which was conducted by telephone during the summer of 2004. The survey required 10 to 15 minutes to complete, and the College very much appreciates these alumni giving their time to this project. The 30-credit criterion (about half an associate's degree program) ensures that the alumni surveyed were sufficiently experienced at Oakton to be fairly knowledgeable about the College. Survey findings include the following:

Profile of the Population Selected for the Baccalaureate Alumni Survey

- At the median, baccalaureate program alumni enroll at age 19 and leave at age 24. Slightly more than half are women. Sixty percent are white and the largest minority group is of Asian or Pacific Island ancestry.
- At the median, these alumni earned 53 credits at Oakton and a GPA of 2.84. Thirteen percent of these alumni completed associate's degrees at Oakton.
- Fifty-nine percent of survey respondents came to Oakton with no prior college enrollment. Thirty-four percent had some college elsewhere before coming to Oakton, and another seven percent had already earned a bachelor's degree before their last enrollment at Oakton. Students with the bachelor's degree may have taken most of their Oakton courses before earning that degree, but returned to Oakton for just a course or two afterwards.

Educational Experience at Other Colleges and Universities

- Of the 522 survey respondents, 378 (72%) report they attended another college or university after Oakton, and 181 (48%) of the transfers say they earned a bachelor's or associate degree after transfer.
- Most alumni transferred to schools in the Chicago area. Northeastern Illinois University and University of Illinois at Chicago drew 33 percent of the transfers.
- Of students who did not already have a bachelor's degree and who transferred, 73 percent who last attended Oakton in 2000-2001 had earned their bachelor's degree since leaving Oakton, compared to 34 percent of those who last attended in 2002-03.
- The most popular majors for Oakton alumni are in business, education, social and behavioral sciences, and humanities, fine arts.
- Respondents who transferred rated the utility of skills learned at Oakton for their courses after transfer. The percent who said each skill was useful were: speech 72%, writing 66%, problem-solving 65%, teamwork 69%, mathematics 62%, and computer skills 59%.

Experience at Oakton

- Respondents who transferred rated the extent to which, while at Oakton, they improved skills in several areas. The percent who said they improved in each skill was speech 67%, writing 65%, problem-solving 58%, teamwork 64%, mathematics 62%, and computer skills 51%.
- Fewer than half the alumni who transferred took courses in the same social science discipline both at Oakton and at the transfer institution. The percentage who did so was 45% in psychology, 44% in economics, 38% in history, 32% in political science, 29% in sociology, and 21% in anthropology. Most (74-86%) of the respondents did feel prepared for continuing their studies in these disciplines after transfer.
- Alumni perceive that, overall, Oakton is living up to its core values of fairness, integrity, responsibility, tolerance and compassion.

General Assessments

- Eighty-seven percent of respondents report that had they to do it over, they would again choose to attend Oakton.
- More than 100 Oakton faculty and staff members received positive comments in response to a question about there being an especially outstanding person, course or event at Oakton.

BACCALAUREATE ALUMNI SURVEY, 2004

This year's report of the 2004 survey of baccalaureate program alumni includes five sections. The first section provides overview information about the survey and methodology. Section II describes baccalaureate program alumni. Section III presents information about alumni's experiences at other colleges and universities, both before and after Oakton. Section IV is about experiences at Oakton, and a fifth and final section concludes the report. A number of appendices provide additional information about the methodology as well as detailed data.

I. Overview and Methodology

Each summer, Oakton Community College conducts a telephone survey of baccalaureate program alumni. To be considered a "baccalaureate program alumnus," a student must have earned at least 30 credits or an associate degree in a transfer program at Oakton, and last have enrolled in either 2000-01 or 2002-03. This year 2,518 alumni met these criteria, and 522 completed telephone interviews. The survey is not intended to reach all alumni; rather, they are randomly sampled.

Purposes of the survey are to

- investigate perceptions of these alumni about their experiences and satisfaction with various Oakton programs and services;
- gain information about their experience at the colleges and universities to which they transferred to complete baccalaureate degree programs or additional courses;
- gather information for program reviews of Oakton programs and services.

The questionnaire was developed in consultation with administrators and instructional programs and support service departments scheduled for program review in 2004-2005.¹ Appendix A provides more detailed information about the survey methodology and Appendix B provides data about survey respondents compared to the overall population of alumni eligible to be surveyed. Respondents were very representative of the overall population in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, age, and academic achievements at Oakton.

¹ Oakton also surveys career program alumni as mandated by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB). These surveys are done by program on five-year cycles tied to the Program Review schedule. While ICCB only requires surveys of graduates, Oakton augments the state procedure in two ways: in addition to graduates, we survey career alumni who took courses but did not complete programs. In addition to the questions in the state survey, we add a few questions developed collaboratively with program chairpersons and their deans, to whom the results are reported for discussion in their reports of program review.

When responses do not differ by year of last enrollment, the combined responses of alumni from the two years can reasonably be interpreted as evidence for alumni last enrolled throughout the three years, including the middle year not surveyed. Differences by year of last enrollment may be evidence of change that will warrant further inquiry. In this report, the survey text and over-all responses are presented in Appendix C. Throughout this survey, scales were consistently constructed so that the highest values represented the most positive responses.

II. Profile of Baccalaureate Program Alumni

Demographic information was extracted from the College's database. The survey is the source for information about the purposes and intentions of these alumni as students. Detailed data about the alumni population that met criteria for inclusion in the survey and the actual survey respondents is provided in Appendix B.

Age, Gender, and Racial-ethnic Identity

Data on age, gender and racial-ethnic identity come from the College's official student records, based on information provided by students on their Applications for Admission. Eight-two percent of alumni eligible for the survey (alumni population), and 79 percent of actual respondents, were first enrolled at the College before they were 24 years of age. Forty-nine percent of the population and 54 percent of the respondent group had completed their work at Oakton before age 24. The median entry age for both groups was 19. The median exit age for the population was 24, and for respondents it was 23. Women comprised slightly over half the alumni population and respondents (54% and 55% respectively). Sixty percent of the population and 66 percent of the respondents identified themselves as Caucasian. The largest minority group (18% of the population and 16% of the respondent group) comprised students of Asian or Pacific Island ancestry, and 14 percent of the population and 12 percent of the respondents either did not give a race-ethnic category or responded "other."

Purposes and Intentions

It helps to understand the purposes alumni had when they enrolled at the College. The survey includes two questions to provide some insight into objectives of these alumni when they were enrolled as students. Note that survey respondents were asked to think back to when they first came to Oakton and to identify their objectives at that time. Nearly three quarters (71%) of survey respondents said their main objective was to take coursework for transfer to another college, 17 percent were taking courses for occupational or career reasons, and 13 percent were taking courses for personal interest or self-development. The second question asked whether, when they first enrolled, they planned to earn an Oakton associate's degree or merely to take courses. Thirty-nine percent said they planned to earn a degree.

Credits, Grades, and Oakton Degrees Earned

Academic data show how the extent of the experience of these alumni at Oakton. Just over one-third (35%) earned 30-44 credits, another 27 percent earned 45-59 credits, and about two in five (38%) earned 60 or more credits. The mean number of credits for the respondents was 54. These

data indicate students had a substantial experience at Oakton, an expected finding since the survey includes only students with 30 or more credits.² Students did relatively well, as measured by their grade point averages. The mean GPA for the respondents was 2.86.

A common indicator of institutional performance is degrees awarded, yet Oakton, like community colleges nationwide, confers relatively few degrees on its students. Alumni data indicate that only 13 percent of students eligible to be surveyed received an Oakton associate's degree, and 15 percent of survey respondents did so. Because it would make little sense for a person who already had a bachelor's degree to earn an associate degree later, we backed out the 40 respondents who already had bachelor's degrees when they last attended Oakton. Of the 482 respondents remaining, 12 percent of those last enrolled in 2000-01 and 19 percent of those last enrolled in 2002-03 earned associate degrees at Oakton.

Of the 71 percent of alumni respondents who said their main objective while at Oakton was to take courses for transfer, nearly all (87%) did, in fact, transfer after leaving the College. Others might still transfer though they had not done so by summer 2004.

Of the 39 percent of respondents who said they intended to earn a degree at Oakton, just 31 percent did so. How might we explain the apparent discrepancy between plans and reality? First, to be eligible for financial aid, a student must be seeking a degree or certificate, so that financial aid rather than educational considerations might be prompting students to say they are degree-seeking. Second, it may be socially acceptable for students to say they are seeking a degree. Third, students may plan to earn an associate's degree but then discover they can transfer without the degree and decide to do so.

There are different ways in which credit can be accepted in transfer. For example, courses can be accepted toward total minimum count, but not to meet certain prerequisites or certain general education requirements. Certain Oakton courses have been "articulated" with certain public and private universities in Illinois, enabling students to know in advance the precise way in which credits will be accepted in transfer. Since there is often no advantage to presenting a degree over simply presenting the constituent courses, many students are more concerned with transferring at a convenient time than with how much credit they can present.

III. Educational Experiences at Other Colleges and Universities

Experiences before Oakton

The survey asked these alumni to indicate whether they attended another college or university or earned a bachelor's degree before their last enrollment at Oakton.³ Forty-one percent of survey respondents said they had attended another college or university before Oakton. Of all

² Grade point average and credits are based on college-level courses in which a grade was awarded (A, B, C, D, F). Remedial courses and courses from which a student withdrew or was dropped are not included. Consequently many students in the alumni group will actually have taken more courses at Oakton than are counted in the GPA or number of credits earned.

³ The survey script listed the four 2-year and eleven 4-year area institutions most often mentioned in previous surveys, and provided space to write in two additional institutions. A standard coding system (federal FICE codes) was used to avoid varied abbreviations of same institutions and to facilitate accurate tallies by institution.

respondents, 7 percent said they had already earned a bachelor's degree before they last attended Oakton. A student may have taken most Oakton credits prior to earning the bachelor's degree, then earned the bachelor's degree and then later returned to Oakton for a course or a few courses and technically met criteria for inclusion in the alumni population survey.

Experiences after Oakton

Respondents were asked whether they had attended another college or university after Oakton and, if so, whether they earned a degree. Table 1 presents results, which are duplicated headcounts. That is, a student who attended more than one institution is counted for each institution. (Appendix D contains the complete list of transfer schools identified by respondents). Of the 522 respondents, 378 (72%) reported they had attended another college or university after Oakton. Of these alumni, 181 said they graduated. When we back out students who already had a bachelor's degree when they last attended Oakton, the percentage of students who transferred goes up to 74 percent. Chicago area institutions drew most alumni, with Northeastern Illinois University and the University of Illinois at Chicago drawing 33 percent of the transfers. The attractiveness of local colleges and universities to Oakton alumni remains consistent over time.

Table 1
Colleges and Universities After Oakton

College / University	Total Who Attended	Number Who Graduated	Percent Who Graduated
Northeastern Illinois U	67	27	40%
University of IL at Chicago	56	25	45%
DePaul University	46	26	57%
National-Louis University	22	16	73%
Roosevelt University	21	9	43%
Columbia College	17	7	41%
Illinois State University	11	3	27%
University of IL at Urbana-Champaign	11	5	45%
Loyola University	10	8	80%
Elmhurst College	7	3	43%
North Park University	7	2	29%
Northern Illinois U	7	5	71%
DeVry Inst of Tech	5	4	80%
Northwestern U	5	1	20%
School of the Art Institute of Chicago	5	3	60%
Southern Illinois University at Carbondale	5	3	60%
William Rainey Harper College	15	3	20%
Triton College	10	0	0%
Wilbur Wright College, CCC	5	2	40%
College of DuPage	3	0	0%
College of Lake County	3	0	0%

Parkland College	1	1	100%
Other schools	74	28	38%

To gain more insight into the extent to which Oakton students earned bachelor's degrees we again backed out the survey respondents who said they had a bachelor's degree before they were last at Oakton and then, for the remaining alumni, looked at the year they were last at Oakton and subsequent attainment of a bachelor's degree. Table 2 presents findings. Results show students who left Oakton three years before the survey and transferred to four-year institutions were more than twice as likely to have completed their bachelor's degrees than students who last attended Oakton only one year before the survey. Clearly students who last attended Oakton in 2002-03 may not have had time to complete bachelor's degree yet, and even students who left in 2000-01 may still be working toward their degrees on a part-time basis.

Table 2**Percent of Transfers Who Earned Degrees after Oakton**

(Excluding Those Who Had Bachelor's Degree Before Last at Oakton)

Last at Oakton	Type Institution			
	Two-year Total Who Attended	Pct. Graduated	Four-year Total Who Attended	Pct. Graduated
2000-2001	10	30	130	73
2002-2003	28	14	192	34

In Table 3 we present data from the past eight alumni surveys indicating majors selected at institutions after Oakton. Business-related curricula continue to draw the largest percentage of transfers, and computer-related majors continued to decline from the 2001 peak. The percentage of respondents who said they were majoring in an area not listed or were undecided continued to increase, and now nearly matches the percentage of business majors.

Table 3**Major after Transfer**

Survey Year	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Area of Major	(N=484)	(N=401)	(N=331)	(N=134)	(N=227)	(N = 385)	(N=373)	(N=378)
Business-related	21 %	26 %	18 %	25 %	21 %	20%	18%	22%
Computer-related	*	*	*	10 %	16 %	11%	9%	7%
Education	13 %	8 %	8 %	10 %	15 %	16%	13%	13%
Social & Behavioral Sciences	17 %	18 %	19 %	18 %	12 %	19%	14%	11%
Humanities, Fine Arts	14 %	13 %	15 %	9 %	9 %	14%	9%	11%
Health-related	11 %	11 %	11 %	11 %	8 %	6%	7%	7%
Sciences or mathematics	9 %	9 %	12 %	7 %	6 %	5%	7%	4%

Engineering	7 %	7 %	7 %	3 %	5 %	5 %	5 %	4 %
Other, including undecided	8 %	7 %	10 %	5 %	8 %	6 %	18 %	21 %

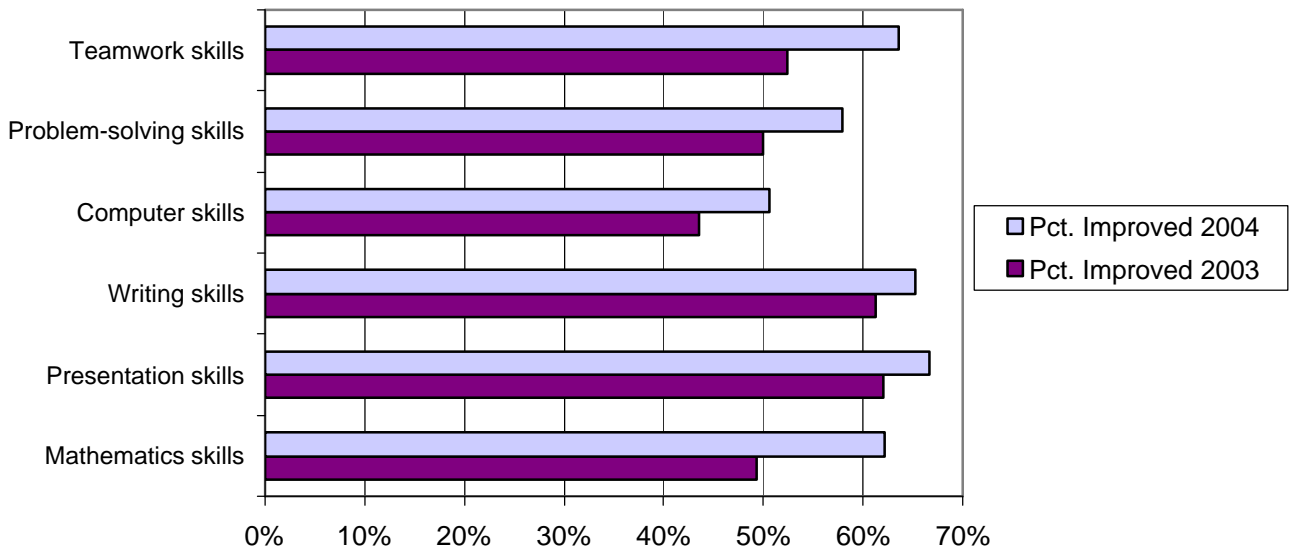
* Computer-related majors were not separately identified prior to the year 2000 survey.

Improvement in Skills and Utility of Oakton Experience to Courses after Transfer

This year’s survey again asked alumni to rate, on a 5-point scale, the extent to which they improved skills at Oakton (5 = significant improvement; 1 = did not improve) and how useful these skills were in courses taken after transfer (5 = extremely useful; 1 = not very useful). Respondents could also indicate they did not apply a skill after transfer. Note the survey did not ask respondents specifically whether a skill was required of them in courses taken after transfer.

Figure 1 provides a graphical description of the percent of respondents who said they improved their skill at Oakton (ranked the skill 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale), excluding responses from students who said the skill was not applicable. Note that the percent of respondents who reported an improvement increased over those who did so in last year’s survey.

Figure 1
Percent Saying They Improved Skills at Oakton



Beginning in 2001, alumni survey respondents were asked to rate the utility of skills in courses after transfer, enabling us to compare the percentages from the four surveys who said skills learned at Oakton were useful after transfer. Table 4 presents data, excluding responses from students who said the skill was not applicable after transfer. It is interesting to note the increase over the four years in the percent of respondents who said teamwork and computer skills were useful.

Table 4
Usefulness of Skills Learned at Oakton in Courses Taken After Transfer
By Year of Survey

Skill	Survey Year	Pct. Indicating Skill was Useful After Transfer			
		2001	2002	2003	2004
Speaking (presentation) skills		74%	70%	67%	72%
Writing skills		69%	69%	66%	66%
Teamwork skills		50%	61%	58%	69%
Problem-solving skills		62%	65%	56%	65%
Mathematics skills		68%	61%	54%	62%
Computer skills		53%	50%	50%	59%

To learn more about the usefulness of what was learned at Oakton we also looked at the percentage of respondents who indicated they did not apply these skills after transfer, with results presented in Table 5. The table reveals that the percent of respondents who said these skills were not applied after transfer varied, with the 2004 respondents more likely than respondents from a year ago to indicate skills were not applied. It is also clear that key skills of speaking/giving presentations, working in teams, problem solving and writing are expected after transfer, whereas computer and mathematics skills are not as widely expected. This may in part be due to students' majors after transfer. Many transfers in humanities and fine arts did not find math skills applicable, and many transfers in humanities and fine arts, education, and social and behavioral sciences did not find computer skills to be applicable.

Table 5
Skills Not Applied After Transfer by Year of Survey

Skill	Survey Year	Pct. Respondents Who Transferred & Indicated Skill Not Applied After Transfer		
		2002	2003	2004
Computer skills		41%	25%	36%
Mathematics skills		26%	21%	35%
Speaking (presentation) skills		20%	11%	17%
Teamwork skills		15%	12%	15%
Problem-solving skills		14%	8%	14%
Writing skills		11%	8%	12%

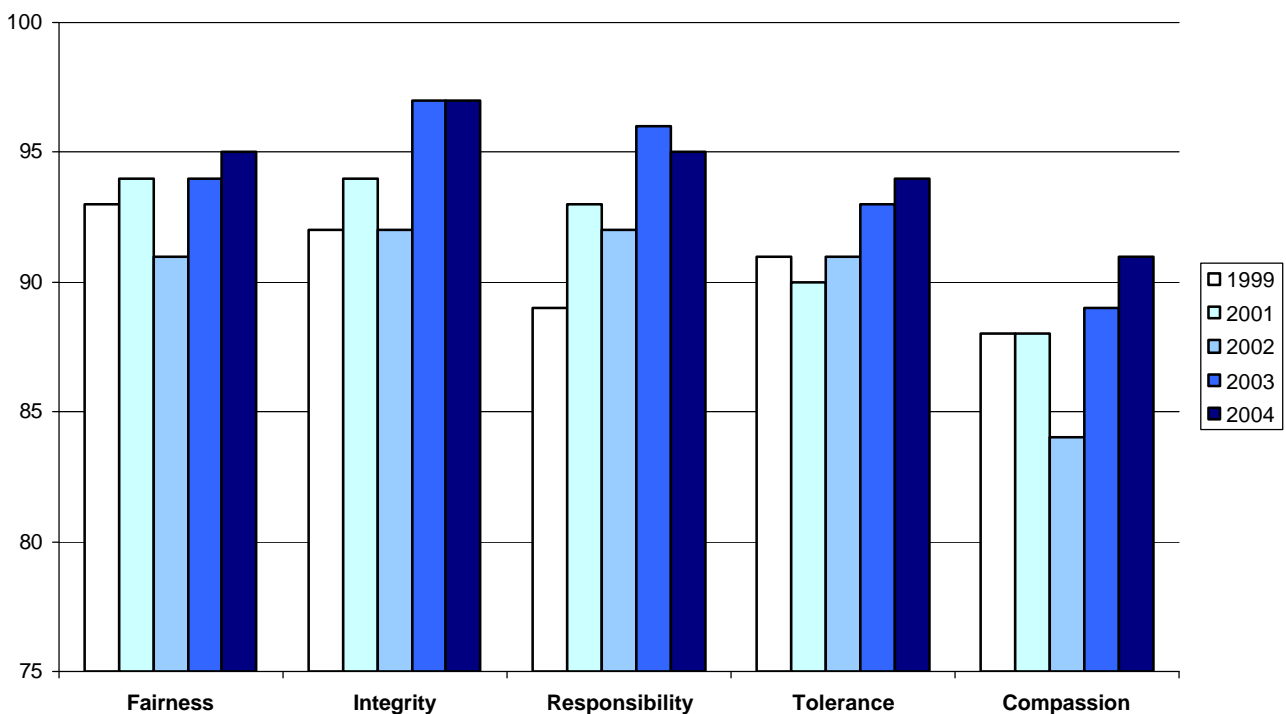
IV. Experience at Oakton

Survey items discussed in this section of the report were asked of all alumni, regardless of whether they transferred after they departed from Oakton. This year’s survey asked these alumni about core values they experienced at the College, and about their general satisfaction with Oakton as measured by responses to the question “If you had it to do over, how likely would you be to attend Oakton again?”

Core values

Oakton has placed substantial emphasis on its core values, which are central to ethical conduct. College values fairness, integrity, tolerance, responsibility, and compassion. Beginning in 1999, respondents to the baccalaureate alumni survey were asked to rate College staff members (faculty, administrators, and others) on the extent to which they lived up to these values. Figure 3 below provides a comparison of the findings from these five surveys.

Figure 3
Living up to Oakton’s Core Values by Survey Year
Percent Responding 3 or 4 on 4-point scale, where 1 = very poorly and 4 = very well



Comparison of these findings from these five surveys shows relative stability across the values. It is interesting to note that in 2004, the percentage of respondents who gave scores of 3 or 4 to the core values of fairness, tolerance and compassion was the highest of the five years. It should also be noted that a relatively small shift in the number of respondents providing a rating can

affect the percentages. Unless changes are fairly dramatic, variations in the percentage of respondents giving scores of 3 and 4 should be interpreted as random fluctuations across time.

Social Science Courses at Oakton and after Transfer

This year the social sciences were a special focus of the Alumni Survey. Respondents were asked whether they had taken Oakton courses in each social science discipline, whether they had taken courses in the same discipline after transfer, and whether they were well prepared for these courses after transfer. Table 6 provides responses.

Data indicate that fewer than half the alumni who transferred took courses in the same social science discipline both at Oakton and after transfer, with the percentage who did so ranging from a high of 45 percent in psychology to a low of 21 percent in anthropology. Respondents did feel prepared for continuing their studies in these disciplines after transfer.

Table 6
Preparedness of Students in Continued Studies in the Social Sciences

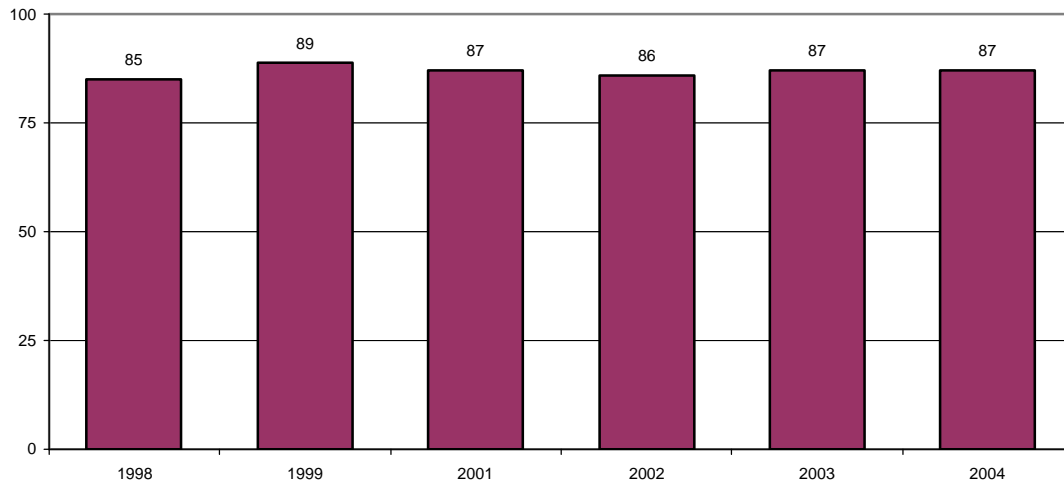
Subject Area	Respondents Taking Courses in Subject Area	Respondents Taking Additional Courses at Transfer Institution		Missing Response on Courses at Transfer Institution	Respondents Reporting that they were Well Prepared in Courses at Transfer Institution	
Anthropology	98	21	21%	2	14	74%
Psychology	271	122	45%	1	96	79%
Sociology	211	61	29%	2	49	83%
History	210	80	38%	2	59	76%
Political Science	110	35	32%	0	27	77%
Economics	115	50	44%	0	43	86%

Overall satisfaction with Oakton

To elicit alumni perceptions of their experience at the College as a whole, we asked “If you had it to do over, how likely would you be to attend Oakton again?” A seven-point scale was used, (1 = “Very unlikely”, 7 = “Very likely”). Eighty-seven percent responded at the 5, 6 or 7 level. The same question was asked in the 1998, 1999, 2001, 2002 and 2003 alumni surveys. Figure 4 presents results from these years and 2004. Data show that, over time, the percent of alumni who, if they had it to do over again, would still have attended Oakton remains high, between 85 and 89 percent.⁴

⁴ Again, findings refer to alumni who meet criteria for inclusion in the annual Baccalaureate-Transfer Alumni survey.

Figure 4
Percent Who Would Attend Oakton Again by Survey Year



Outstanding Persons, Courses, or Events

As it has for some years, the survey included an open-ended qualitative item providing alumni an opportunity to identify and describe any “especially outstanding person, course, or event” at Oakton. The telephone interviewers were asked to probe to elicit as complete a response as possible. Alumni mentioned more than 100 different individuals in their comments. Almost all comments were highly laudatory and provide additional evidence of the general satisfaction of our alumni with their experience at Oakton.

Sample comments reflect the general tone of comments received.

- All the teachers were great. Oakton is a fantastic school.
- Biology & Microbiology teacher (blonde hair, thin, funny). He made learning fun and was informative.
- I enrolled in their architectural program and it was good! It prepared students for the university level. Not a lot of schools offer what they offer. I moved to Florida and I can't believe that many of them don't offer that program. The instructor was excellent.
- World Religion teacher really got the students involved. He broadened my mind about different religions and showed me what the reality is about their beliefs.
- My accounting class teacher had a great method of teaching that made the class practical.
- All the teachers were great, especially my political science teacher. He had us read Newsweek and to this day I still read the magazine. Every teacher made the courses easy to understand.
- I took honors psychology theories of personality and the instructor was wonderful. I don't remember his name. He was charismatic, knowledgeable and I had a great learning experience.
- [NAME] deserves recognition because of his excellence in teaching and he was very helpful and understanding.
- [NAME] had passion for what she taught. She helped me with my presentation skills.

- [NAME] in computer science helped me choose a major by the presentation. If not, I wouldn't be where I am today.
- [NAME] was excellent too. Actually, most of my teachers were great. I would definitely advise teenagers to go there!

The Office of Research consolidated comments about any single individual, and sent memos and letters conveying these comments to the recipient or, if the individual was deceased, to his or her immediate family. Copies were provided for administrative supervisors. Anecdotal feedback from recipients indicates that this mailing is much appreciated by members of the College faculty, staff, and administration.

V. Conclusion

The annual Baccalaureate Alumni survey continues to provide Oakton with information about and perceptions of alumni of baccalaureate transfer programs. What respondents tell us is valuable in planning for new initiatives and improving existing programs. Much of this information can be obtained from no source other than direct feedback from alumni. Alumni survey topics and specific questions are constructed in consultation with administrators, departments, and offices doing program reviews. In this way, the research needs of many constituencies can be met with a single survey.

Alumni perceptions of Oakton continue to be highly positive, both in terms of overall evaluations of the College and comments about individuals who made a significant impact on students. The College can take pride in the quality of programs and services provided, the high regard alumni have for faculty and staff, and the institution's commitment to continuing its research to identify not just strengths, but also areas in need of attention.

Additional copies of this report are available at the College Office of Research. The Report is also posted on the Office of Research web site at <http://www.oakton.edu/resource/oir/>.

Appendix A Collection and Analysis of Data

As has been the case for some years, baccalaureate program alumni were selected for the survey if they had last attended the College either one or three years previously, and either had been awarded an associates' degree or had earned at least 30 college level credit hours at Oakton.⁵ Initially, in June 2003, student ID numbers, home phone numbers, names and other relevant biographic-demographic variables were downloaded from files extracted from the College's student database. These additional variables included gender, birth year, race-ethnicity, first and last terms of enrollment, curriculum, earned credit, cumulative GPA, and Oakton degree information.⁶

Two telephone lists were prepared, with separate lists for each year of last enrollment. Telephone interviewing was out-sourced to a firm specialized in such surveys. Survey forms and telephone lists were prepared in matching colors, a set for each of the two years of last enrollment at Oakton. In July, the phone lists, survey scripts, and a list of commonly used college and university FICE were sent to the interviewing firm. The firm used trained telephone interviewers who did the calling on site, with a supervisor present. Oakton asked for no more than 600 interviews, 300 for each of the two lists.

Of the 2,518 baccalaureate program alumni who met the survey criteria, 1,213 were last enrolled in 2000-2001 and 1,305 in 2002-2003. Of these, 328 alumni had earned Associate's degrees from Oakton.

Telephone logs show that some alumni were called as often as twelve times. Where possible, messages were left, and where changed telephone numbers were available, they were followed up. Nonetheless, our vendor experienced 795 disconnected or otherwise invalid telephone numbers.⁷ The vendor indicated this percentage of disconnected or invalid numbers is typical for a population like Oakton's baccalaureate alumni.

Subtracting these 795 alumni reduced the effective survey population to 1,723 alumni. Altogether, the vendor completed 522 interviews.

Interview responses were entered on forms with pre-coded response positions. Upon completion of the telephoning, the vendor entered student identification numbers from identity codes on each survey, and college code numbers for those colleges less often attended. The vendor then outsourced the forms for keying to electronic files. The data were read into databases using SAS software by Office of Research staff. The student identification number was used to merge the survey data and the biographic-demographic data. Data were analyzed using standard statistical

⁵ Since curriculum codes are carried forward in the student base from previous terms unless updated, codes were initially selected from the term table for the last term of enrollment. Then, since new codes are entered when degrees or certificates are awarded, any award table codes superseded term table codes. If more than one degree was awarded, the code for the most recent degree program was selected.

⁶ An advantage to using the telephone method for this survey is that data from the student database can be associated reliably with each respondent.

⁷ Data available in the student database do not reflect phone numbers changed since last enrollment.

procedures of SAS software. Microsoft Word and Excel were used in preparing the report, tables, figures, and appendices. Appendix C contains the survey instrument and the over-all numeric results for each item.

Responses

The 522 alumni with whom telephone interviews were completed constituted 30 percent of the 1,723 alumni in the effective survey population, slightly more than has been obtained before 2002 (31% in 2003, 30% in 2002, 21% in 2001, 27% in 2000, and 30% in 1999). The telephone survey method has shown itself to have several advantages over the mail survey method. It is not biased against those who set aside mail surveys to be done “later,” and reduces the time frame for responding to “now.” However, out-of-date telephone numbers and public skepticism engendered by telemarketers claiming to be “conducting a survey” appear to adversely affect responses.

Responses were slightly stronger for alum who earned an Oakton degree (24%) than for those who had not (20%), and was slightly weaker for those away from the college for three years (17%) than that for those last enrolled one year previously (25%).

Response Bias

Can information about these respondents be interpreted as representative of the population surveyed when interviews were completed with 31 percent of the population? The argument that it can depends on comparison on a variety of key demographic variables for the 522 respondents and for the whole population (N = 2,518).

Appendix B shows the data for these two groups. On all of the standard demographic variables — gender, racial-ethnic identity, age at entry, age at exit,⁸ credit earned, grade point average, and whether awarded an Oakton degree — differences between the two groups are small, suggesting the respondent group is highly representative of all alumni who met criteria for inclusion in the study.

⁸ Ages when first and last enrolled were calculated as the year of the first or last enrollment minus the birth year. This takes account of differences for alumni last enrolled three years or one year before the survey.

Appendix B

Student Characteristics—Alumni Population and Survey Respondents

Alumni Characteristic	Alumni Population (N=2518)		Survey Respondents (N=522)		Difference Btwn Respondents and Population
	n	%	n	%	
Gender					
Female	1,354	54 %	286	55 %	+ 1 %
Male	1,164	46 %	236	45 %	- 1 %
Entry Age					
Less than 24	2,074	82 %	414	79 %	- 3 %
24-25	83	3 %	14	3 %	- 1 %
26-39	236	9 %	45	9 %	- 1 %
40-59	112	4 %	44	8 %	+ 4 %
60 or older	13	<1 %	5	1 %	+ 0 %
Mean Age	21.8		23.0		1.2
Median Age	19.0		19.0		0.0
Exit Age					
Less than 24	1,241	49 %	281	54 %	+ 5 %
24-25	341	14 %	37	7 %	- 6 %
25-39	619	25 %	93	18 %	- 7 %
40-59	276	11 %	92	18 %	+ 7 %
60 or older	41	2 %	19	4 %	+ 2 %
Mean Age	27.5		29.5		2.0
Median Age	24.0		23.0		-1.0
Ethnicity					
African American	73	3 %	7	1 %	- 2 %
Asian or Pacific Island	459	18 %	83	16 %	- 2 %
Caucasian	1,503	60 %	344	66 %	+ 6 %
Hispanic	115	5 %	23	4 %	- 0 %
Native American	8	<1 %	0	0 %	+ 0 %
Other/No Response	360	14 %	65	12 %	- 2 %
Credit Hours Earned					
30-44 hours	881	35 %	184	35 %	+ 0 %
45-59 hours	627	25 %	140	27 %	+ 2 %
60 or more hours	1,010	40 %	198	38 %	- 2 %
Mean Hours	54.5		54.0		-0.5
Median Hours	53.0		52.0		-1.0
Grade Point Average					
Mean	2.77		2.86		0.09
Median	2.84		2.91		0.07
Oakton Degree Received					
AA	317	13 %	75	14 %	+ 2 %
AFA	1	<1 %	1	<1 %	+ 0 %
AS	10	<1 %	2	<1 %	+ 0 %

Appendix C
Survey Instrument with Results
Summer 2004 Telephone Survey
Transfer Program Follow-Up

From call list:

Call list counter: _____

Respondent ID: _____

Hello, This is _____ calling former students from Oakton Community College.

May I speak to _____ please? **(Make usual note on log.)**

_____ **If you find that a former student is deceased, please enter a code 2 at the left.**

Hi _____. I am calling on behalf of Oakton Community College. The College is surveying students formerly enrolled in courses that transfer to 4-year colleges or universities. Information and insights you have are important to the College as it reviews its programs and services. We have some questions about your experience at the college that we'd like to ask you. *There are no right or wrong answers.* We are interested in your honest opinion. Your privacy will be fully protected. Responses will be statistically summarized along with those of other former students, and nothing will be reported that could identify you individually. Is that OK?

(CIRCLE ONLY ONE RESPONSE) unless otherwise directed

EVERYONE (Questions 1 – 6)

1. Which one of the following was your main objective in attending Oakton? **(Circle one.)**

(N=522)

71% Take coursework for transfer to another college.

9% Explore courses to decide on a career.

5% Improve skills needed in my present job.

3% Obtain skills needed for entry into a new or different job.

13% Take courses for personal interest or self-development.

2. When you first enrolled at Oakton, did you plan to earn an Oakton degree, or only to take courses?

(N=521) 39% **Degree** 61% **Courses only**

3. How successful were you in achieving your objective? Please use a 5-point scale where 1 means “Not at all Successful” and 5 means “Very Successful.”

	Not at all						Very
	Successful	1	2	3	4	5	Successful
(N=522)		3%	3%	11%	22%	62%	

4. Had you attended another college or university BEFORE coming to Oakton?

(N=522) 41% **Yes** 59% **No**

(If “No”, skip to Question 6.)

5. Had you already earned a bachelor’s degree before you last attended Oakton?

(N=212) 17% **Yes** 83% **No**

6. Did you attend any colleges or universities AFTER leaving Oakton?

(N=522) 72% **Yes** 28% **No**

(If “Yes”, continue with Questions 6a, 6b. If “No”, skip to Question 15.)

6a. Which colleges or universities have you attended after leaving Oakton?

6b. Did you GRADUATE (earn a degree) from these colleges/universities?

Findings for questions 6a-6b are reported in Appendix D and Table 1.

FOUR-YEAR TRANSFERS ONLY (Questions 7 – 14)

7. Since you transferred, what has been your most recent major?

(N=353)

(Do not read list; circle the best fit for the response.)

- 24% **Business-related** (accounting, finance, marketing, management, etc.)
- 7% **Computer-related** (computer information systems, computer programming, computer science, computerized graphic design, information technology, tele-communications. Note: For computer engineering, use # 4 engineering.)
- 14% **Education** (early childhood, elementary, secondary, special, etc.)
- 5% **Engineering** (chemical, civil, computer, electrical, mechanical, etc.)
- 7% **Health-related** (nursing, allied health, medical technology and records, etc.)
- 12% **Humanities, fine arts** (art, communications, film, language, literature, music, philosophy, theater; also general liberal arts, cultural studies, English, etc.)
- 12% **Social and behavioral sciences, studies** (anthropology, economics, geography, history, political science, psychology, sociology, social problem studies, etc.)
- 1% **Physical sciences** (astronomy, chemistry, ecology, physics, etc.)
- 3% **Biological sciences** (biology, zoology, etc.)
- 1% **Mathematics**
- 15% Other, including undecided: **(Please specify)** _____)

8. At Oakton, did you take any courses in the following subject areas?

(N=378)

Subject Area	Yes	
	%	N
Anthropology.....	26%	98
Psychology.....	72%	271
Sociology.....	56%	211
History.....	56%	210
Political Science.....	29%	110
Economics.....	30%	115

(If all are “No”, skip to Question 13.)

(For Questions 9-12, ask only those subject areas in which they took Oakton courses.)

9. I’m going to read you a list of Oakton historical and policy studies course sequences. If you have taken both courses in the sequence at Oakton, how well did the first course prepare you for the second? Use a 5-point scale where 1 means “Very poorly and 5 means “Very well.”

Subject Area		N	Very Poorly					Very Well	Did not take both courses	
			1	2	3	4	5	N	%	
History	U.S History I and II (HIS 111, 112)	52	2%	8%	13%	33%	44%	158	75%	
	Western Civilization I and II (HIS 131, 132)	42	2%	7%	14%	29%	48%	168	80%	
Economics	Principles of Economics I and II (ECO 201, ECO 202)	53	2%	0%	21%	36%	42%	62	54%	
		21								

10. Since you transferred from Oakton, how many additional courses at your transfer institution have you taken in these subject areas?

Subject Area	N	0	1	2	3	4 or more
Anthropology	98	79%	14%	4%	1%	2%
Psychology	271	55%	16%	11%	6%	12%
Sociology	211	71%	16%	4%	3%	6%
History	210	62%	16%	9%	5%	8%
Political Science	110	68%	15%	5%	2%	9%
Economics	115	57%	23%	10%	4%	6%

(If all are “0”, skip to Question 13.)

11. How well do you feel that these Oakton courses prepared you for courses in the same subject that you have taken at the four-year college (or university) to which you transferred? Use a 5-point scale where 1 means “Very poorly” and 5 means “Very well.”

Subject Area	N	Very Poorly					Very Well		Took no more courses	
		1	2	3	4	5	N	%		
Anthropology	19	5%	5%	16%	11%	63%	77	80%		
Psychology	121	1%	1%	19%	30%	50%	149	55%		
Sociology	59	0%	0%	17%	31%	53%	150	72%		
History	78	1%	5%	18%	29%	46%	130	63%		
Political Science	35	3%	9%	11%	29%	49%	75	68%		
Economics	50	2%	4%	8%	34%	52%	65	57%		

12. (Refer to Question 10: Ask only those subject areas in which they took additional courses at their transfer institution.)

I’m going to read you a list of Oakton history or policy studies courses. If you have taken any of the courses, how well were you prepared for continued study in that subject area at the transfer institution? Use a 5-point scale where 1 means “Very Poorly” and 5 means “Very Well”.

Subject Area		N	Very Poorly					Very Well		Did not take	
			1	2	3	4	5	N	%		
History	U.S. History I (HIS111)	50	2%	2%	20%	32%	44%	27	35%		
	U.S History II (HIS112)	30	3%	0%	10%	37%	50%	46	61%		
	Western Civilization I (HIS131)	34	3%	3%	21%	18%	56%	46	58%		
	Western Civilization II (HIS132)	18	6%	0%	17%	22%	56%	61	77%		
	Non-Western History (HIS140)	13	8%	8%	15%	8%	62%	63	83%		
Political Science	American Government (PSC101)	20	0%	0%	15%	25%	60%	15	49%		
	State and Local Government (PSC102)	9	11%	0%	22%	22%	44%	26	74%		
	International Relations (PSC202)	7	14%	0%	29%	14%	43%	28	80%		

Economic s	Elements of Economics (ECO110)	20	0%	0%	20%	30%	50%	29	59%
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13. To what degree did you learn or improve at Oakton in each of the following skills: Please use a 5-point scale where 1 means “Did not improve” and 5 means “Significant improvement”.

(N=359)	N	Did not improve					Significant improvement 5	Did not apply	
		1	2	3	4	N		%	
Mathematics skills	275	4%	6%	27%	35%	28%	84	23%	
Presentation skills	314	3%	7%	23%	34%	32%	45	13%	
Writing skills	328	2%	10%	23%	39%	27%	31	9%	
Computer skills	237	8%	11%	30%	24%	26%	122	34%	
Problem-solving skills	318	2%	8%	33%	36%	22%	41	11%	
Teamwork skills	313	3%	9%	24%	35%	29%	46	13%	

14. Thinking back over what you learned at Oakton, what has been especially useful to you in courses you have taken at your transfer institution? Please rate the following on a 5-point scale where 1 means “Not very Useful”, and 5 means “Extremely Useful.” Or if this does not apply for you, please tell me that. (If respondents say this does not apply or doesn't much apply, mark “0.”)

(N=355-356)	N	Not very Useful					Extremely Useful 5	Did not apply	
		1	2	3	4	N		%	
Mathematics skills	233	8%	6%	24%	30%	32%	123	35%	
Presentation Skills	297	3%	7%	19%	38%	34%	59	17%	
Writing skills	313	2%	5%	26%	39%	27%	42	12%	
Computer skills	227	5%	8%	28%	28%	31%	128	36%	
Problem-solving skills	306	3%	5%	27%	34%	31%	50	14%	
Teamwork skills	304	3%	6%	22%	37%	32%	52	15%	

EVERYONE (Questions 15 – End)

15. Are you planning to enroll in college in the coming year?
(N=518) 55% Yes 45% No

16. I'm going to read you a list of academic advising and counseling services you might have used while at Oakton. If you used any of these services at Oakton, how well did Oakton do in providing you with the help or service you wanted? Use a 5-point scale where 1 means "Very Poorly" and 5 means "Very Well".

(N=522)

Service	N	Very Poorly					Very Well	N	Did not use %
		1	2	3	4	5			
Planning for transfer	283	6%	8%	21%	28%	36%	239	46%	
Selecting courses to take at Oakton	364	5%	6%	17%	32%	40%	158	30%	
Getting information on course transferability	332	4%	9%	21%	27%	38%	190	36%	
Coping with academic stress	146	10%	10%	27%	25%	29%	376	72%	
Dealing with family stress	91	14%	15%	24%	21%	25%	431	83%	
Obtaining a referral for mental health issues	37	22%	11%	19%	19%	30%	485	93%	

17. How well did Oakton College staff members (faculty, administrators, and others) live up to the following values? (This time, please use a 4-point scale where 1 means "Very Poorly" and 4 means "Very Well".)

(N=518-522)

	Very Poorly		Very Well	
	1	2	3	4
Compassion	1%	8%	32%	59%
Fairness	1%	4%	24%	71%
Integrity	1%	2%	22%	75%
Responsibility	0%	5%	25%	70%
Tolerance	1%	5%	24%	70%

18. Was there an especially outstanding person, course, or event at Oakton? Please describe: **(Probe)**

19. If you had it to do over, how likely would you be to attend Oakton again? Please use a 7-point scale where 1 means "Very Unlikely" and 7 means "Very Likely."

(N=520)

Unlikely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very Likely
	5%	1%	3%	4%	16%	14%	57%	

20. Would you like to receive a summary of the findings from this survey?

(N=521) 39% **Yes** 61% **No**

(Please Say) Thank you for participating in this survey. Oakton very much appreciates your help.

Appendix D
Institutions Attended After Oakton
(In Alphabetical Order)

Institution	Total Who Attended	Institution	Total Who Attended
Arizona State University	1	Parkland College	1
Aurora University	1	Prairie View A and M University, TX	1
Barat College	1	Robert Morris College	1
Benedictine University (IBC)	1	Roosevelt University	21
Bradley University	1	Rush University	3
Case Western Reserve University, OH	1	Saint Xavier University	1
College of DuPage	3	School of the Art Institute of Chicago	5
College of Lake County	3	Southern Illinois University at Carbondale	5
Columbia College	17	St. Frances, NY	1
Columbia University	1	Trinity International University	3
Cooking and Hospitality Institute of Chicago	1	Triton College	10
DePaul University	46	University of Arizona	3
DeVry Inst of Tech	5	University of Denver, CO	2
Dominican University (Rosary C)	2	University of Dubuque	1
Eastern Illinois University	2	University of IL at Chicago	56
Elmhurst College	7	University of IL at Urbana-Champaign	11
Harrington College of Design	3	University of Iowa	3
Herzing College, LA	1	University of North Florida, FL	1
IL Institute of Technology	2	University of Phonix, AZ	1
Illinois State University	11	University of St. Francis	2
ITT Technical Institute	1	University of WI - Green Bay	1
Kendall College	2	University of WI - Madison	2
Lawrence University	1	University of WI - Milwaukee	1
Lewis University	1	University of WI - Platteville	1
Loras College, IA	1	University of WI - Whitewater	1
Loyola University	10	Walden University, MN	1
Midwestern University (Chgo C of Osteo Med)	3	West Suburban School	1
National-Louis University	22	Western Illinois University	3
North Central College	1	Western Michigan University	1
North Park University	7	Westwood College of Technology	2
Northeastern Illinois U	67	Wilbur Wright College, CCC	5
Northern Illinois U	7	William Rainey Harper College	15
Northwestern Business College	1	U.S., non-Illinois, not identified	4
Northwestern U	5	Outside of the United States	2
Ohio State Univ.	1	Not given	1