

Oakton Current Student Survey

Fall 2003 Report

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Special Acknowledgement

The Office of Research is grateful to the many faculty members who cooperate with us by distributing the Current Student Survey in their classes and giving students time to complete it. This cooperation is the primary reason we have a high rate of response and can accept survey findings as representative of the students enrolled at Oakton this past fall.

Please telephone, e-mail, or write any of us at the Office of Research with comments or questions about this report or suggestions for next year's survey of current students.

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Oakton Community College Current Student Survey, Fall 2003

Executive Summary

The Current Student Survey (CSS) for 2003 obtained evidence about students' academic goals at Oakton, their prior education, and likely major program of study after transfer (if applicable). This year's survey included questions about the extent to which students perceive they have achieved the college's general education objectives, interest in learning about study skills and strategies, use of Oakton's website, use of the deferred payment plan for tuition and fees, use of mass media, time spent on campus engaged in a variety of activities, and Oakton's core values.

The survey was given during the third and fourth weeks of the fall semester to a sample of classes that included nearly 16 percent of currently enrolled students. Eighty-three percent of these students (N = 1,312) responded to the survey. Survey responses were statistically weighted in order to obtain results that are representative of the student population at Oakton. Results are presented from this weighted sample of respondents.

Demographic and Enrollment Information of Survey Respondents

- Fifty-five percent of the respondents were female, and 57 percent were below the age of 25. The mean age was 27.6 and the median age was 23.
- Fifty-five percent of the respondents identified themselves as White, non-Hispanic, 24 percent as Asian or Pacific Islander, 8 percent as Hispanic or Latino, 4 percent as Black, non-Hispanic, and the remaining 9 percent as Other, Multiple or Prefer Not to Answer.
- More than half the respondents said English is both their native language and the language mainly spoken at home.
- Fifty three percent of the respondents were first-generation college students, defined as students where neither parent went to college at all and/or were not educated in the United States. About 40 percent of these first generation students were so categorized because both parent were educated outside the U.S. Half the students age 24 or below were first generation and 58 percent of students age 25 and above were first generation.
- Respondents were divided nearly into thirds with respect to their enrollment status: 33 percent were full-time (12 credits or more), 33 percent were half-time (6-11 credits), and

the remaining 34 percent were less than half time (1-5 credits).

- Half of the younger students (under age 25) were full-time. Nearly 60 percent of the older students (25 and older) took fewer than 6 credits.
- The majority (51%) of the younger students enrolled in transfer curricula. The majority (61%) of older students enrolled in the career curricula.
- One-third (35%) of younger students were new to Oakton in Fall 2003, while 21 percent of older students were new.

Educational Patterns and Planning of Survey Respondents

- Nearly one half (46%) of all students and two-thirds (65%) of younger students planned to transfer to 4-year institutions.
- Nine percent were exploring courses to decide on careers, 12 percent were seeking to improve present job skills, 23 percent were preparing for new or different careers, and 10 percent were taking courses for personal interest or self-development.
- Nearly one quarter (22%) of these current students held bachelor's or more advanced degrees.
- Fields of study most often listed as the likely major after transfer were business-related (25%), health-related (20%), education-related (12%), and computer-related (8%). Interestingly, the percent who said they planned to major in a computer-related field after transfer continued to decline, from 16 percent in the 2000 and 2001 surveys to 11 percent in 2002 to 8 percent in 2003.

Perceptions of Achievements in Science

- Thirty six percent of survey respondents had taken at least one science course at Oakton. Respondents were asked to rate how well they achieved each of seven objectives identified by the science department. On a 5-point scale, with 5 = very well, the mean ratings for achievements ranged from 3.5 to 3.8.

Learning and College Success

- Respondents were given a list of topics associated with learning and college success, and asked to identify their interest in discussing each topic with Oakton staff members. On a 5-point scale, with 5 = very interested, the mean scores ranged from 2.8 to 3.7. Students expressed the most interest in discussing career options, studying for exams and transfer schools.

Core Values

- From 88 to 94 percent of continuing students (those who had attended Oakton before the fall semester) responded that Oakton faculty and staff do live up to the College's five core

values: integrity, responsibility, fairness, tolerance, and compassion. There were no differences in ratings from minority and non-minority students.

Website and Media Usage

- Sixty one percent of respondents have used Oakton's website to obtain information about the College, 49 percent to register for summer 2003 and/or fall 2003 classes, and 32 percent to perform library or other research of course assignments, and 26 percent to complete an admission application. Note that web-based registration became available only in summer 2003, and online payment of bills was not yet available in Fall 2003.
- The most frequently read newspaper by respondents is the *Chicago Tribune* (58%), followed by the *Sun Times* (33%). Only 13 percent said they read the *Pioneer Press* and 11 percent the *Daily Herald*.
- Most frequently listened to radio stations were B-96 (40%) and Q-101 (27%). Respondents were given a list of radio stations and while they could list other stations not on the list, the survey itself did not include stations such as public radio.
- Fifty seven percent of respondents said they had seen or heard an Oakton ad in one or more of these media: radio, bus, television, movie theater or billboard.

Participation in Learning and Related Activities

- About half or more of the respondents said they had been required to do a group or team assignment, discussed topics such as ethics or integrity in a class, or talked outside of class with a faculty member. Between 30 and 40 percent said they had studied or discussed subjects such as diversity or multiculturalism in a class, been required to give a presentation or speech in a class other than speech or theater, and/or used tutoring or other services in the Learning Center.
- In interpreting these findings, it is important to note that 83 percent of respondents work outside their homes, 15 percent 1-19 hours per week, 27 percent 20-34 hours per week, and 40 percent 35 or more hours per week. Respondents said they spend, on average, 5 hours per week on campus at Oakton outside of class time.
- Nearly one quarter of Oakton students (24%) have used tutoring or other services from the Learning Center (known at the time of the survey as Instructional Support Services, or ISS).
- On a 7-point scale measuring the extent to which students felt connected with other students in their Oakton courses, with 1 = very disconnected and 7 = very connected, 11 percent of respondents felt connected (responses of 6 or 7) and 22 percent did not feel connected (responses of 1 or 2). The mean score was 3.8, about halfway between the extremes.

Oakton Community College

Current Student Survey, Fall 2003

Report

Objective

Each fall, Oakton conducts a Current Student Survey (CSS) using a sample of currently enrolled students. The purposes for the CSS are to:

- develop profiles of current credit students in both the career and transfer programs,
- gain insights into the past experience that these students bring to their Oakton work,
- identify students' perceptions, present expectations, and satisfactions with Oakton.

In addition, each year the CSS includes questions related to particular topics of interest for the year and questions relevant to programs and departments conducting program reviews. This year's survey included questions about the extent to which students perceive they have achieved the college's general education objectives, interest in learning about study skills and strategies, use of Oakton's website, use of the deferred payment plan for tuition and fees, use of mass media, time spent on campus engaged in a variety of activities, and Oakton's core values.

Overview of Methodology

For the annual CSS, a random sample was drawn of credit classes taught in the fall semester, including classroom sections as well as those taught using College media services. From this list, a random sample of classes was selected. This sample included 16 percent of the enrolled students. Most Oakton faculty members were cooperative, willing to devote a half period of class time to this project, knowing that it is an omnibus survey and that they will not be asked to do others in this same class. Responses were received from 1,312 students, or 83 percent of the students enrolled in the classes included in the sample.

Since the sample was randomly drawn from a list of classes and not students, the responses are statistically weighted in order to obtain a sample that is representative of the student population at Oakton. In this procedure, weighted survey responses compensate for the greater probability that students enrolled in a number of courses would be included in the sample. Further details of the procedures used are discussed in Appendix 1. Appendix 2 provides data for the Fall 2003 student population, sample and weighted sample.

Unless noted otherwise, all results are presented for the weighted sample, the one most representative of the entire Oakton student population in Fall 2003.

Students were asked but not required to provide their student ID numbers, and could take the survey with complete anonymity. Six of the questions in the survey asked for demographic variables that also are available from the College's student database.¹ For students who provided their ID number but left one of those demographic variables blank, missing survey data were augmented with corresponding data from the college database. This year, 53 percent of the respondents provided their student ID number, decline from the 61 percent who provided it in Fall 2002 but the same percentage who provided it in Fall 2001.

Demographics of Survey Respondents

Important demographic variables describing currently enrolled students include age, gender, and racial-ethnic identity. Appendix 2 provides comparative demographic data for the entire student body, the sample, and the survey respondents.

Gender and Age

Students responding to the survey can be broken down by gender and by age group, 24 and younger, 25 or older. As seen in Table 1 below, 55% of the (weighted) respondents are female. Note that a larger proportion of older students are female compared to younger students.

Table 1
Survey Respondents by Gender and Age Group
(Weighted Respondents)

Gender	Age Group		All Ages
	24 or Younger	25 or Older	
Female	51.2%	60.1%	55.1%
Male	48.8%	39.9%	44.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

¹ These variables are Q. 3 (curriculum), Q. 4 (courses and credit hours of current enrollment), Q. 5 (highest level of prior education), Q. 26 (racial-ethnic identity), Q. 28 (gender), and Q. 29 (birth year).

Race/Ethnicity, Native Language and Family Education

Of survey respondents, 55 percent identified themselves as White, non-Hispanic, 24 percent as Asian or Pacific Islander, 8 percent as Hispanic or Latino, 4 percent as Black, non-Hispanic, and the remaining 9 percent as Other, Multiple or Prefer Not to Answer. Just over half (55%) said English is both their native language and the language mainly spoken at home.

To determine family education, we asked respondents the highest level of education attained in the U.S. by mothers and fathers. Table 2 presents results. In addition, we looked at the percentage of first generation college students, whom we defined as respondents where both parents did not go to college at all and/or who were not educated in the United States, excluding from our calculations the respondents who did not provide the highest level of education for both parents. We found some 53 percent of students to be first generation, using this definition. However, approximately 40 percent of first generation were categorized this way because both parents were educated outside the United States. Half the students age 24 or below were first generation and 58 percent of students age 25 and above were first generation.

Table 2
Education Levels of Mother and Father by Student Age

Student Age Parent Education level	Mother			Father		
	24 or younger	25 or older	Total	24 or younger	25 or older	Total
H.S. diploma	19%	25%	22%	16%	22%	19%
Some college	20%	13%	17%	17%	12%	15%
Bachelor's degree	13%	15%	14%	15%	12%	14%
Graduate degree	9%	7%	9%	11%	11%	11%
Not educated in U.S.	39%	40%	39%	40%	43%	41%

Enrollment Information

Like most community colleges, Oakton serves a student population that is highly diverse not only in its demographic characteristics, but also in choices for academic curricula and course load. Appendix 2 provides comparative data for the entire student body, the sample, and the survey respondents on enrollment status (full-time, part-time), curricular program, and tenure (whether new or continuing at Oakton). As appropriate, missing survey data has been augmented with corresponding data from the student database, if a student provided an ID number.

Class Load

Most Oakton students enroll part-time. However, thirty-two percent of the weighted respondents indicated they were enrolled for 12 or more credit hours, the minimum for full time status. One third (33 %) were taking 6 to 11 credits, and 35 percent were enrolled for less than half time—fewer than six credits. These data show an increase in the percent of students enrolled for 12 or more credits and a decrease in the percent enrolled less than half-time compared to Fall 2002 survey results (28% were full-time and 40% were less than half-time in 2002).

As expected, significantly more younger students are full time (47%) than are older students (6%), and significantly more older students are less than half time (65%) than are younger students (18%). (See Table 3 below.)

Table 3
Survey Respondents by Class Load and Age Group
 (Weighted Respondents)

Class Load	Age Group		All Ages
	24 or Younger	25 or Older	
Full-time	50.7%	10.8%	33.1%
Half-time	34.3%	31.0%	32.8%
Less than half-time	15.0%	58.2%	34.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Curricula Selected

Most years CSS data and student body data based on the student database differ somewhat with respect to students' choices between baccalaureate/transfer curricula and career/vocational curricula. A central factor in this is that the two sources of data describe students at different points in time. The population database is taken from applications for admission whereas the survey reflects students' views at the time the survey was completed. In some cases, this may be several years since the time of admission.

The population data reported in Appendix 2 show 50 percent of Oakton students choosing transfer programs, 32 percent selecting career curricula, and the remaining 18 percent being undecided. The college added the 'undecided' category to the Admission Application only a few years ago. In part, the growing percent of undecided students is due to the fact that many continuing students applied before this option was available and never updated their records. As these students leave the college and are replaced by newer students who chose the undecided category, the percent of undecided students among the population increases. In the

survey, 41 percent of respondents chose transfer curricula, 48 percent selected career programs, and the remaining 11 percent were undecided.

A significantly higher proportion (61%) of older students choose career programs than younger students (36%) while a greater proportion of younger students (51%) choose transfer programs than do older students (31%). Younger students are more likely to be undecided than older students. It is interesting to note that in the 2002 survey, 57 percent of younger students said they were in transfer programs. (See Table 4 below.)

Table 4
Survey Respondents by Curriculum and Age Group
(Weighted Respondents)

Age Group	Curriculum		
	Career	Transfer	Undecided
24 or Younger	36.3%	50.7%	13.1%
25 or Older	61.2%	30.7%	8.1%
All Ages	46.9	42.1%	10.9%

A significantly larger proportion (43%) of students enrolled in transfer programs are full-time compared to those in career programs (23%). A larger proportion (45%) of students enrolled in career programs are less than half time than those enrolled in transfer programs (23%). In 2002 only 16 percent of Career program respondents were enrolled full-time and 50 percent were enrolled less than half-time, suggesting that the worsening economy may have driven more individuals to seek full-time study. (See Table 5 below.)

Table 5
Survey Respondents by Class Load and Curriculum
(Weighted Respondents)

Class Load	Curriculum		
	Career	Transfer	Undecided
Full-time	23.3%	43.4%	38.2%
Half-time	32.1%	33.8%	30.8%
Less than half-time	44.6%	22.8%	31.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

New or Previously Enrolled at Oakton

New and previously enrolled students may bring different perspectives to CSS questions. New students know what brought them to the College, but with only three or four weeks in

attendance prior to the survey, they would have so far had a less extensive experience of the college than would students continuing at the College after previous enrollment.

To distinguish new and returning students, the survey asked if the current term (Fall 2003) was their first semester at Oakton. Since this information is on the College database (and by definition new students first attended in Fall 2003), every respondent could be classified as new or returning. In the population as a whole, 28 percent of the students enrolled in Fall 2003 were new; among survey respondents (weighted sample), 29 percent were new to Oakton.

Among younger students (age 24 or younger), 35 percent were new to Oakton and 65 percent were returning. Among older students (age 25 and older), 21 percent were new and 79 percent returning. (See Table 6 below.) Compared to Fall 2002, a higher percent of 2003 survey respondents were returning students (66% in 2002 were returning, compared to 71% in 2003).

Table 6
New and Returning Students by Age Group
(Weighted Respondents)

Tenure	Age Group		All Ages
	24 or Younger	25 or Older	
New	35.4%	20.5%	28.9%
Returning	64.6%	79.5%	71.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Educational Patterns and Planning

Students come to Oakton with a variety of educational backgrounds and diverse goals and intentions. Those who plan to transfer to bachelor's degree programs at four-year colleges and universities have a great variety of majors in mind. The CSS gathered data helpful in detecting patterns in the preferences and decisions of Oakton students.

Goals and Intentions at Oakton

Students' goals can be grouped in four clusters: related mainly to transfer, to careers for which two years of college is adequate background, to remediation of basic academic deficiencies, or to personal interest or self-development. As seen in the Table 7 (below), relatively few students say their primary objective at Oakton relates to personal interest and self-development or remediation. Two-thirds (65%) of Oakton's younger students are enrolled to prepare for transfer to four-year colleges or universities, about a fourth (29 %) have career goals, and the

remaining six percent are enrolled to remedy skills deficiencies or for personal interest or self-development.

The objectives of older students are significantly different than those of younger students. Nearly two-thirds of older students (63%) were pursuing career objectives. Insights into the effects of the economy can be gleaned from comparing responses of older students to the same question in the Fall 2002 survey. In that year, 30 percent of respondents were taking courses to improve their present occupational skills and 31 percent were preparing for a new or different career. In 2003, the percent taking courses to improve their present skills declined to 21 percent, and 36 percent said they were preparing for different careers. This suggests that an increasing number of students may be attending Oakton to facilitate a change in careers rather than to move ahead in their current jobs.

Table 7
Main Objective at Oakton by Age Group
(Weighted Respondents)

Main Objective at Oakton	Age Group		All Ages
	24 or Younger	25 or Older	
Prepare to transfer to a four-year college or university.	64.7%	22.1%	46.1%
Explore courses to decide on a career.	11.9%	5.2%	9.0%
Improve present occupational skills.	4.5%	21.4%	11.9%
Prepare for a new or different career.	13.0%	36.2%	23.1%
Remedy or review academic skills deficiencies.	1.2%	0.5%	1.0%
Take courses for personal interest or self-development.	4.7%	14.6%	8.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

As seen in the Table 8, degrees or certificates are more important to students with career goals than to those planning to transfer. While about half the students who say they plan to transfer also say they plan to earn an Oakton degree, in reality the vast majority of transfer students move to another college or university after Oakton without earning the Oakton degree. This is typical of community colleges, and is particularly likely to reflect student attendance patterns at community colleges located in metropolitan areas, where students have many choices of colleges to attend.

Table 8
Main Objective at Oakton by Plan

(Weighted Respondents)

Main Objective at Oakton	Plan to Complete		
	Degree	Certificate	Neither
Prepare to transfer to a four-year college or university.	52.3%	11.4%	50.9%
Explore courses to decide on a career.	12.0%	11.5%	5.9%
Improve present occupational skills.	8.1%	24.3%	11.2%
Prepare for a new or different career.	23.5%	43.2%	14.4%
Remedy or review academic skills deficiencies.	1.5%	0.0%	.6%
Take courses for personal interest or self-development.	2.6%	9.6%	17.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Educational Aspirations and Expectations

The discussion above focuses on students' objectives at Oakton. A different way to understand Oakton students' educational aims is to study their aspirations; i.e., the highest degree they would *like to complete*, and their expectations; i.e., as things stand now, how far in school they *think they will get*. Table 9 presents data for both aspirations and expectations, excluding students who have already earned a bachelor's degree or higher.

What is very clear from this table is that the vast majority (67%) of Oakton students both aspire and expect to earn at least a bachelor's degree. For the most part, student's aspirations and expectations are aligned; that is, students expect to earn the highest-level degree they would like to complete. One exception, noted in the shaded cell, is that 13 percent of respondents say they expect to complete a bachelor's degree but would like to earn a master's degree or higher. Since the data in this table are from respondents who have not yet achieved the bachelor's degree, it is highly likely that at least some individuals in this category will find ways to earn the master's degree they desire even if, at this point, they do not expect to. Likewise, some students who both expect and wish to earn bachelor's degrees or who both expect and wish to earn master's degrees will change their goals or fail to achieve them.

Table 9
Educational Aspirations and Expectations
 (Weighted Respondents, Excluding Respondents with Bachelor's Degree or Higher)

Expectation Question: "As things stand now, how far in school do you <u>think you will get</u> "	Aspiration Question: Thinking ahead to the future, what is the <u>highest</u> degree you would <u>like to complete</u> ?				
	Some college or a certificate (less than associate degree)	Associate degree	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree or higher	Total

Some college or a certificate (less than associate degree)	6.6 %	2.1 %	1.4 %	.8 %	10.9 %
Associate degree	.6%	10.2%	5.5%	3.8%	20.1%
Bachelor's degree	.2%	1.2%	23.8%	13.3%	38.5%
Master's degree or higher	.3%	.4%	.4%	29.5%	30.6%
Total	7.7%	13.9%	31.2%	47.3%	100.1 %

(Totals come to 100.1% due to rounding)

Prior Education and Prior Bachelor's Degrees

What preparation do Oakton students have before coming to the college? Table 10 shows that 22 percent of Fall 2003 Oakton students held bachelor's degrees or more advanced graduate or professional degrees. Note that among students 25 years of age or older, the number who already hold bachelor's degrees or higher is significantly higher (43%) than among younger students (6%).

Table 10
Education Level by Age Group
(Weighted Respondents)

Education Level The question asks for the highest level of education completed prior to the Fall 2003 semester.	Age Group		All Ages
	24 or Younger	25 or Older	
High school or equivalent	50.3%	17.0%	35.8%
Some college (at another college or university)	40.6%	32.9%	37.3%
Associate's (2-year) degree	3.3%	7.0%	4.9%
Bachelor's degree	5.6%	30.4%	16.4%
Master's degree or higher	.2%	12.7%	5.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Likely Majors of Transfer Students

Table 11 presents intended majors for respondents who plan to transfer from the Current Student Surveys of 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003. Business-related fields continue to be the most popular majors, selected by 25 percent of students. Health-related fields have grown in popularity, now attracting 20 percent of students. Conversely, the popularity of computer-related fields continues to decline, with only eight percent of students selecting this area for their majors. The attraction of other majors has remained remarkably stable over the four years, with only a percentage point or two variance from one year to the next.

Oakton has recently launched several new education courses, and it is anticipated that within the next two years the college will offer an Associate in Applied Science for Paraprofessional Educators, targeted to teacher aides, and several Associate of Arts in Teaching degrees, targeted to transfer students who plan to major in Education. The combination of statewide concern about teacher shortages, new Oakton course and program offerings, and two and four-year college partnerships to facilitate transfer for education majors may prompt an increase in the number of Oakton students who plan to major in Education.

Table 11
Planned Majors by Year of Current Student Survey
 (Weighted Respondents)

Planned Major	2000	2001	2002	2003
Business-related	24%	26%	25%	25%
Computer-related	16%	16%	11%	8%
Education	12%	10%	12%	12%
Engineering	6%	9%	8%	7%
Health-related	13%	11%	15%	20%
Humanities, fine arts	8%	7%	6%	5%
Social and behavioral sciences	8%	8%	9%	7%
Science or mathematics	3%	3%	4%	4%
Undecided or other	10%	9%	10%	11%

Student Perceptions of Achievements in Science at Oakton

One of the major topics explored in the Fall 2003 CSS was students' perception of their achievements in science at Oakton. Science is one of Oakton's five general education areas, and all students who earn an associate degree in a transfer curriculum must complete at least two science courses from a list of courses approved by the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI). At least one of these courses must include a lab.

Thirty six percent of survey respondents had taken at least one science course at Oakton (science disciplines include biology, chemistry, earth science, natural science and physics). They were given a list of objectives commonly embedded in or related to the study of science, and asked to indicate how well they feel they had achieved each objective. The objectives themselves go beyond a particular science discipline such as biology or chemistry; instead, they focus on critical thinking, understanding the scientific process, and core science concepts. The rating was on a 5-point scale, with 1 = Very poorly and 5 = Very well. Table 12 provides the percentage of respondents (from the weighted sample) who had taken science at Oakton and who rated each objective with a 4 or 5, along with the mean value for each objective.

Table 12
Perceived Achievement of Objectives Related to Science
 (Weighted Respondents)

Objective	Percent saying Well (Rating ≥ 4)	Average (Mean) Rating
Collect, analyze, and classify information	65%	3.8
Explain and apply the scientific method	62%	3.8
Develop hypotheses, construct models, and evaluate theories	63%	3.8
Recognize the limits in scientific understanding	58%	3.7
Use appropriate mathematical reasoning to analyze scientific problems	55%	3.6
Explain and use core science concepts such as matter and energy, causality, scale and proportion, dynamic equilibrium, change, and evolution	53%	3.5
Place scientific knowledge in its historical context, and recognize ethical, social, and political dimensions of science	53%	3.6

Results suggest that more than half of the students perceive they have achieved these objectives well or very well, with approximately two-thirds saying they have achieved the first three objectives well or very well.² Because nationally there is such concern about critical thinking and scientific knowledge, we decided to explore whether there were differences in the perceived achievement of these objectives by age or curriculum. To do this, we calculated t-tests to determine whether mean ratings on the 5-point scale were significantly different between younger and older students, or between students in transfer or career programs. Following standard research methodology, we considered a probability value (type I error) of 0.05 or less to indicate significance. Note that a statistically significant difference does not necessarily mean there is a substantive difference, especially when sample sizes are quite large.

Statistically significant differences were detected in the perceived achievement of these objectives by age for three items: explain and apply the scientific method, develop hypotheses, construct models, and evaluate theories, and use appropriate mathematical reasoning to analyze scientific problems. Younger students were slightly more positive than older students about their achievements. Students in transfer and career programs differed only in their perceived achievement of the objective collect, analyze, and classify information, with transfer students slightly more positive about their perceived achievement.

² We are interpreting a rating of '4' to be equivalent to 'well,' since a rating of '5' is explicitly labeled as 'very well.'

Learning and College Success

Another major area of inquiry on the Fall 2003 Current Student Survey was students' interest in discussing a variety of topics related to learning and college success. Discussions would take place with Oakton staff members. While the set of questions was developed primarily by the Learning Center staff, many Oakton staff and faculty members could be engaged in these discussions and respondents were not asked to indicate with whom they might wish to have a conversation. The rating was on a 5-point scale, with 1 = Not at all interested and 5 = Very interested. Table 13 provides the percentage of respondents (from the weighted sample) who rated each topic with a 4 or 5, along with the mean value for each topic.

Table 13
Interest in Discussing Topics Related to Learning and Student Success
 (Weighted Respondents)

Topic	Percent saying Very Interested or Interested (Rating \geq 4)	Average (Mean) Rating

Making a study schedule	32%	2.8
Time management	40%	3.0
Using your instructor's office hours	34%	2.9
Personal learning styles	45%	3.2
Note taking during lectures	49%	3.2
Getting more from textbook reading	46%	3.2
College resources	45%	3.3
Using the library	40%	3.1
Accessing tutoring	41%	3.1
Writing papers	44%	3.2
Studying for exams	55%	3.4
Handling stress	44%	3.1
Balancing school and family responsibilities	44%	3.1
Transfer schools	55%	3.4
Career options	65%	3.7
Distance learning courses	32%	2.9

As we did for questions about objectives related to science, we examined student interest in discussing topics associated with learning and student success by age and curriculum. We found that statistically significant differences between younger and older students on all the items listed in Table 13 except using instructor's office hours, getting more from textbook reading, using the library, balancing school and family responsibilities, and distance learning courses. In all cases, younger students were more interested than older ones in discussing these topics related to learning and student success. Students in transfer and career programs differed only in their interest in discussing the topics of writing papers and transfer schools. For these items, students in transfer programs were significantly more interested than those in career programs in discussing these topics related to learning and student success.

In addition to examining responses to each topic, we asked students a general question about the likelihood of their meeting with someone at Oakton who could offer insights about the topics. On a 5-point scale, with 1 = Not at all likely and 5 = Very likely, 47 percent of

respondents responded with a 4 or 5 (interpreted as likely or very likely). The mean was 3.3. There were statistically significant differences between younger and older students and between students in transfer and career curricula on the general question, with younger and transfer students somewhat more apt to express interest in meeting with someone to discuss these topics.

Core Values

Some years ago, the College moved toward accepting some responsibility toward helping students to develop and grow in basic values appropriate not only in college communities, but in the larger world as well. Five core values were selected: compassion, fairness, integrity, responsibility, and tolerance.

How well do currently enrolled students think College personnel (faculty, administrators, and other staff members) live up to the five core values the College has adopted? This question was asked in Current Student Surveys in 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003. In these surveys, students were asked to respond using a four-point scale that ranged from “Very poorly” to “Very well.”

{ EMBED Excel.Chart.8 \s }

In all years, the CSS was given in the third and fourth weeks of the fall semester, and in all years, about a third of the responses represented students who were new to Oakton that fall. Since returning or continuing students would have had a broader experience of the College than would new students, just the responses of the continuing students were used for the comparison shown in Figure 1. This graph shows that a high percentage of returning students selected one of the two positive response options for each of the values, and that this positive pattern has persisted over time.

To learn more about perceptions of Oakton’s core values we also examined whether responses in 2003 varied by race/ethnicity. We found no differences in ratings among minority and non-minority students.

Website and Media Usage

Another area of inquiry in the Fall 2003 Current Student Survey was student use of the Oakton website and mass media. To set responses regarding the website into context, it should be noted that for the Fall 2003 semester students could complete and submit an Oakton application online, register for classes online, obtain information about programs and courses online, and access a host of department and faculty websites. They could not pay Oakton bills online (this capability was introduced for the Spring 2004 registrations).

How have students used Oakton's website? Sixty-one percent have used it to obtain general information about Oakton, 49 percent to register for summer 2003 and/or fall 2003 classes, 32 percent to perform library or other research for Oakton course assignments, and 26 percent to fill out an admission application. The survey did not include questions about satisfaction with the website.

To obtain insights into student use of mass media, we asked students what newspapers are read regularly in their homes by themselves or others, and what radio stations the students listen to regularly. We also asked where students have seen or heard advertisements for Oakton. Table 14 provides results.

Table 14
Media Usage and Oakton Advertising

Newspapers		Radio stations		Oakton advertisement	
Newspaper	Percent read regularly in home	Radio stations	Percent listen to regularly	Where saw or heard Oakton ad	Percent saw or heard
Chicago Tribune	58%	B-96	40%	Radio	26%
Chicago Sun-Times	33%	Q-101	27%	Bus	18%
Pioneer Press	13%	The Drive	12%	TV	18%
Daily Herald	11%	WBBM-AM	9%	Movie theater	11%
Red Eye	4%	Onda 92.7/5	5%	Billboard	9%
Red Streak	1%	WCKG	3%		
		Other	48%		
		103.5	11%		
		94.7	7%		
		107.5	6%		
		92.3	5%		
		101.9	4%		
		97.9	4%		
None	17%	Do not listen during commute	13%	Have not seen or heard Oakton ad	43%

Participation in Learning and Related Activities

Oakton encourages faculty to use a broad array of teaching approaches and assignments, provides many academic support services for students, and asserts that values such as ethics, integrity and honoring diversity are of great importance. To learn more about students' experiences both within and outside the classroom, the survey included a number of items and asked respondents to indicate whether, since they first came to Oakton, they had done any of

them. Figure 2 presents the percentage of respondents (from the weighted sample) who said yes.

Figure 2
Participation in Learning and Related Activities
(Percent saying yes)

{ EMBED Excel.Chart.8 \s }

A number of the items in Figure 2 relate to Oakton's general education objectives or core values (group or team assignments, studying or discussing subjects such as ethics or integrity, studies or discussed diversity or multiculturalism, giving a required presentation or speech). It is difficult to determine whether the percent of students who indicated they have engaged in each activity at Oakton is a "good" or "desired" percent; faculty and staff might wish to discuss the meaning of these data in the context of assessing Oakton's general education objectives and core values.

In interpreting the findings, it may be helpful to note that 82 percent of Oakton's students work outside their homes, 15 percent 1-19 hours per week, 27 percent 20-34 hours per week, and 40 percent 35 or more hours per week. Put another way, 40 percent of Oakton students are employed full time in addition to attending school. Survey respondents indicated they spend, on average, 5 hours per week on campus at Oakton outside of class time.

Conclusion

The annual Current Student Survey provides Oakton with information about its students that is valuable for planning new initiatives and improving existing programs. Much of this information can be obtained from no other source. Some of the information gathered serves also to validate the survey by comparing characteristics of survey respondents with independently known characteristics of the entire student body. By creating an omnibus survey, the research needs of many constituencies can be met with a single survey. This is important to prevent an over-surveying of students that might otherwise result.

Suggestions for next year's CSS are welcome and may be submitted to the Office of Research. Copies of this report are available at the College Office of Research and on the Oakton web site at www.oakton.edu/resource/oir/.

List of Appendices

- Appendix 1. Research Methodology
- Appendix 2. Comparison of Enrolled Population, Sample Surveyed, and Respondents
- Appendix 3. Report of Survey Responses

APPENDIX 1

Research Methodology

With the generous cooperation of faculty members, the Current Student Survey (CSS) was conducted in a random sample of classes in the fall semester of 2003. To ensure that the sample would reflect opening fall enrollment, before many students would have withdrawn from their courses, the survey was scheduled in the third and fourth weeks of the term.

The sample included students from randomly drawn active sections of classes. Tandem and honors sections and media-based and cross-listed courses were identified, and only the first listing of a course or section number was used in drawing the sample. The 2003 sample consisted of students enrolled in 98 different classes, including 92 classroom sections, five media-based courses, and one off-campus course.

As soon as the sample was drawn, instructors of the classroom sections were notified of their inclusion in the sample and given more information about the process. In the case of the media-based courses, the instructors were notified for information only that the College would be contacting enrolled students by mail. So that they would have current information, the division deans were provided with copies of materials going to the faculty. Mailings were prepared for the students enrolled in the media-based courses. These included directions, the survey, and a postage-paid return envelope.

The survey was presented as eight pages of questions with a back page of code numbers from which students were asked to indicate their primary area of study. The survey text is embedded in the Report of Survey Responses in Appendix 3.

The College is fortunate in that most members of the faculty teaching the classroom sections in the sample were willing to administer the survey during class time, even though they are not required to participate. Collection boxes were conveniently located at both the Des Plaines and Ray Hartstein campuses for students who did not complete the survey in class, whether because of class absence or because an instructor distributed the surveys, but did not have them completed during class. The full cooperation of most of the faculty enabled a much higher rate of response than would be possible otherwise.

Obtained from extract files in the College's Research database, class data were taken as of the tenth day of classes from operations transactions. The enrollment data used to describe the population to be surveyed were downloaded as of the tenth day, the end of the second week of the term.

The sampled sections included 1,580 different students, 16 percent of the 9,893 students enrolled for the fall semester.

Fall 2003 surveys were completed by 1,312 students, 83 percent of the 1,580 different students enrolled in the sections surveyed. Directions asked students to complete the survey only once even if they were enrolled in more than one of the classes included in the sample.

Although the survey is conducted in randomly selected classes, a correction is needed to take account of the fact that students enrolled in more classes have a greater probability of being included in the sample than do those enrolled for fewer. To compensate for these unequal probabilities, responses to each item in the survey are weighted by an inverse function of the number of courses individual respondents are taking.¹ Throughout this report, the percentages are given of the weighted sum of the observations, are given as a measure of the response to each specific question.

One survey item asked respondents for their student identification number. This enabled us to download items of demographic or academic data and to use it to augment data obtained in the survey should such items have been left blank. This year, 53 percent of the respondents provided this number. (In Fall 2002 the student ID was typically the student's social security number. In Spring 2003 the College began using a different student ID; Oakton student databases carry both the social security number and the College-assigned ID).

How can we be confident that the weighted responses from respondents in the randomly selected class sections are truly representative of the student body as a whole? Appendix 2 shows demographic data for the entire student body, for the respondents without weighting, and for the respondents weighted as explained above. Comparisons of the data in these three columns show that the weighted data for the respondents better approximate those of the entire population of enrolled students than do the non-weighted data. *Unless otherwise indicated, results reported in this CSS are based upon observations that have been weighted in this way.*

¹ To compensate for this inequality, we weight individual responses for all statistical calculations. Responses from students enrolled for four courses are given a weight equal to 1.0. Responses for students enrolled in only 3 courses are weighted by 4/3, 1.333, those taking five courses by 4/5, .80, etc. For students who provided their identification number, but did not respond to the survey item asking how many courses they were taking in the fall, the College's Research database was accessed to obtain this data. If this information was unavailable from either source, a default weight (1.0) was used, the lowest of the three measures of central tendency (mean, median, and mode) for the number of courses in which enrolled.

APPENDIX 2

Comparison of Enrolled Population, Sample Surveyed, and Respondents

Student Characteristic	Population (Total Enrollment) (N = 9,893)	Students in Sampled Sections (N = 1,580)	Actual Respondents (Unweighted) (N = 1,312)	Weighted Respondents	Difference Btwn Weighted Respondents and Population
Age					
Less than 23	48 %	63 %	59 %	47 %	- 1 %
23-24	9 %	8 %	10 %	10 %	+ 1 %
25-39	25 %	20 %	21 %	28 %	+ 3 %
40-54	13 %	7 %	8 %	13 %	+ 0 %
55 or older	5 %	1 %	2 %	3 %	- 2 %
Median Age	23	21	21	23	0
Mean Age	28.3	24.2	24.9	27.6	- 0.7
Gender					
Male	46 %	49 %	46 %	45 %	- 1 %
Female	54 %	51 %	54 %	55 %	+ 1 %
Racial Ethnic					
African American	5 %	4 %	4 %	4 %	- 1 %
Asian or Pacific Island	17 %	21 %	26 %	24 %	+ 7 %
Caucasian	51 %	48 %	53 %	55 %	+ 4 %
Hispanic	7 %	7 %	7 %	8 %	+ 1 %
Native American	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	+ 0 %
Multiple			3 %	3 %	+ 3 %
Other/No response	21 %	20 %	6 %	5 %	- 16 %
Enrollment Status					
Full-time	32 %	52 %	52 %	32 %	+ 0 %
Half-time	34 %	34 %	32 %	33 %	- 1 %
Less than half-time	34 %	14 %	16 %	35 %	+ 1 %
Curriculum ***					
Transfer	50 %	54 %	47 %	41 %	- 9 %
Career	32 %	28 %	41 %	48 %	+ 16 %
Undecided	18 %	18 %	12 %	11 %	- 7 %
Tenure					
New to Oakton	28 %	32 %	32 %	29 %	+ 1 %
Returning	72 %	68 %	68 %	71 %	- 1 %

* From an extract of OakStar data as of the 10th day of fall semester 2003.

** The sample from randomly selected sections (1,580 unduplicated students, unweighted) is 16.0 % of the total student population. The 1,312 respondents (unweighted) are 83.0% of that unweighted sample.

*** Curriculum data for the total population and the sampled sections are mainly from admissions applications (extracted from OakStar). Survey data are from a later point in time and are expected to differ somewhat.

APPENDIX 3
Report of Survey Responses



Current Student Survey Fall 2003

*Each year Oakton surveys students in a randomly selected sample of fall semester classes. Your perceptions as reported on this survey help us evaluate and improve our programs and services. Your insights and information is very important to us. There are no right or wrong answers. Your responses are confidential; all results are reported in totals and not identified with any specific person. **If you have already done this survey in another class, please do not complete it again.***

1. What is your main objective in attending Oakton? *(Please mark only one response.)*

(Resp= 99.5%)

- 10 % Explore courses to decide on a career.
- 12 % Improve present occupational skills.
- 23 % Prepare for a new or different career.
- 46 % Prepare to transfer to a four-year college or university.
- 1 % Remedy or review basic academic skills deficiencies.
- 9 % Take courses for personal interest or self-development.

2. Do you plan to complete an Oakton degree or certificate program or only to take a few courses? *(Please mark only one.)*

(Resp= 99.5%)

- 47 % Earn an Associate degree
- 15 % Earn a certificate
- 38 % Take a few courses only, but not earn a complete Oakton degree or certificate

3. What is your current program at Oakton?

_____ *(Enter the 3 letter code from the list on the last page.)*

(Resp= 92%)

- 48 % Career Programs
- 41 % Baccalaureate Transfer Programs
- 11% Undecided

4. This semester (Fall 2003), how many courses are you taking at Oakton?How many credit hours are you taking this semester? (*Please fill in both blanks.*)

	Mean	Median	% Resp
Courses	2.5	2.0	99.5%
Credit hours	8.2	7.0	97%
Full time (12 or more credits)		32%	
Half time (6-11 credits)		33%	
Less than half time (1-5 credits)		35%	

5. Before this semester, what was the highest level of education you had completed?**(Resp= 98%)**

- 35%** High school or equivalent (no college) (**Skip to Question 6.**)
- 37%** Some college (at another college or university)
- 5%** Associate's (2-year) degree
- 17%** Bachelor's degree
- 6%** Master's degree or higher

5A. Before you first enrolled at Oakton, had you ever been enrolled in a college or university that offered bachelor's degree (four-year) programs?**(Resp= 99%)****65% Yes****35% No****6.** During your time at Oakton (not just this semester) at which campus did you take most of your classes?**(Resp= 95%)****81%** Des Plaines Campus**19%** Ray Hartstein Campus in Skokie**7.** Is this your first semester at Oakton?**(Resp= 99%)****29% Yes****71% No****8.** Do you plan to return to Oakton next semester (Spring 2004)?**(Resp= 99%)****74% Yes****9% No****17% Not**

sure

9. Thinking ahead to the future, what is the highest degree you would like to complete?

(Resp= 97%)

- 3% Some college
- 6% A certificate (less than an associate degree)
- 13% Associate degree
- 27% Bachelor's degree
- 51% Master's degree or higher

10. Do you expect to transfer to a 4-year college or university?

(Resp= 99%) 68% Yes 32% No

- 10A. If you do plan to transfer to a four-year program, in which of the following areas are you most likely to choose your major? (*Mark only one.*)

(Resp= 99%)

- 25% Business-related (accounting, finance, marketing, management, etc.)
- 8% Computer-related (computer information systems, computer programming, computer science, computerized graphic design, information technology, telecommunications). ***For computer engineering, use engineering, # 4***
- 12% Education (early childhood, elementary, secondary, special, etc.)
- 7% Engineering (chemical, civil, computer, electrical, electronic, mechanical)
- 20% Health-related (nursing, medical technology, medical records, physical therapy, radiology, etc.)
- 5% Humanities, fine arts (art, communications, film, language, literature, music, philosophy, theater; also general liberal arts, cultural studies, etc.)
- 7% Social and behavioral sciences or studies (anthropology, economics, geography, history, political science, psychology, sociology, social problem area studies, etc.)
- 4% Sciences or mathematics (astronomy, biology, chemistry, environmental sciences, geology, physics, statistics, etc.)
- 6% Other: (*Please specify.*) _____
- 5% Undecided

11. As things stand now, how far in school do you think you will get?

(Mark only one.)

(Resp= 96%)

- 4 % Some college
- 8 % A certificate (less than an associate degree)
- 17 % Associate degree
- 33 % Bachelor's degree
- 37 % Master's degree or higher

12. Are you currently enrolled in another college or university, besides Oakton, for this semester?

(Resp= 99.5%)

5% Yes

95% No

12A. If yes, which of the following describes your courses at the other college or university?

(Resp= 100%)

- 84% Taught in a classroom or lab site.
- 16% On-line or distance education.

13. Have you taken any science courses at Oakton (courses in biology, chemistry, earth science, natural science or physics)?

(Resp= 98%)

36 % Yes

64 % No

13 A. How well do you feel that you have achieved the following objectives?

(Resp= 96-97%)	Very Poorly					Very	Mean
	1	2	3	4	5	Well	
Collect, analyze, and classify information.....	1%	3%	31%	43%	22%		3.8
Explain and apply the scientific method.....	2%	7%	29%	39%	23%		3.8
Develop hypotheses, construct models, and evaluate theories.....	2%	6%	30%	39%	23%		3.8
Recognize the limits in scientific understanding.....	2%	6%	35%	34%	24%		3.7
Use appropriate mathematical reasoning to analyze scientific problems.....	4%	10%	30%	32%	23%		3.6
Explain and use core science concepts such as matter and energy, causality, scale and proportion, dynamic equilibrium, change, and evolution.....	5%	10%	32%	33%	20%		3.5
Place scientific knowledge in its historical context, and recognize ethical, social, and political dimensions of science.....	3%	10%	34%	33%	20%		3.6

14. How interested would you be in discussing the following topics, related to learning and college success, with a staff member here at Oakton? (Please circle one answer for each.)

(Resp= 93%)	Not at all Interested		Very Interested			Mean
	1	2	3	4	5	
Making a study schedule.....	29%	14%	25%	17%	15%	2.8
Time management.....	25%	11%	25%	22%	18%	3.0
Using your instructor's office hours.....	19%	15%	31%	20%	14%	2.9
Personal learning styles.....	20%	9%	26%	24%	21%	3.2
Notetaking during lectures.....	19%	9%	23%	26%	23%	3.2
Getting more from textbook reading.....	18%	9%	26%	25%	21%	3.2
College resources.....	14%	11%	30%	26%	19%	3.3
Using the library.....	17%	13%	30%	23%	17%	3.1
Accessing tutoring.....	20%	13%	26%	23%	18%	3.1
Writing papers.....	19%	11%	25%	23%	21%	3.2
Studying for exams.....	17%	8%	21%	25%	30%	3.4
Handling stress.....	22%	12%	21%	20%	24%	3.1
Balancing school and family responsibilities.....	25%	10%	21%	20%	24%	3.1
Transfer schools.....	19%	9%	16%	20%	35%	3.4
Career options.....	13%	6%	17%	24%	41%	3.7
Distance learning courses.....	30%	13%	26%	16%	16%	2.8

15. How likely would you be to meet with someone at Oakton who can offer insights about the above topics?

(Resp= 98%)

Not at all Likely	1	2	3	4	5	Very Like	Mean
	14%	11%	29%	24%	23%		3.3

16. For which of the following have you used Oakton's website? (*Please check all that apply.*)

61% Obtain general information about Oakton.

26% Fill out an admissions application.

49% Register for summer 2003 and/or Fall 2003 classes.

32% Perform library or other research for Oakton course assignments.

17. Have you used the deferred payment plan to pay your tuition and fees?

(Resp= 97%) 21% Yes 79% No

- 17A. If so, how satisfied are you with this plan?

(Resp= 99%)

Very Dissatisfied	1	2	3	4	5	Very Satisfied	Mean
	8%	15%	24%	21%	32%		3.5

- 17B. If a monthly installment program for tuition payment were available to you, how likely would you be to use it?

(Resp= 96%)

Not at all Likely	1	2	3	4	5	Very Likely	Mean
	3%	4%	13%	15%	65%		4.4

18. What newspapers are read in your home regularly (by you or others)? (*Check all that apply.*)

58% *Chicago Tribune*

33% *Chicago Sun-Times*

11% *Daily Herald*

13% *Pioneer Press*

1% *Red Streak*

4% *Red Eye*

15% Other (Please specify _____)

17% None

19. What radio stations do you listen to regularly?

27% Q-101

40% B-96

5% Onda 92.7/5

12% The Drive

9% WBBM-AM

3% WCKG

48% Other (Please specify _____)

13% I do not listen to the radio during my commute.

20. Where have you seen/heard advertisements for Oakton?

11% Movie Theater

18% Bus

18% TV

26% Radio

9% Billboard

43% I have not seen or heard any advertisements for Oakton.

21. How many hours per week do you typically work (on or off campus)? (*Please mark one.*)

(Resp= 98%)

18% I am not currently employed outside the home.

15% 1-19 hours per week

27% 20-34 hours per week

40% 35 or more hours per week

22. This semester, how many hours per week do you typically spend on campus at Oakton; outside of class? (*Write in.*) **Median=5.0** hours per week

(Resp=77%)

23. In the time since you first came to Oakton, have you done any of the following?

(Resp= 97%)

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Attended an Oakton new student orientation session.....	24%	76%
Participated in Honors Program activities at Oakton.....	5%	95%
Talked outside of class with a faculty or staff member.....	50%	50%
Used tutoring or other services in the Learning Center (formally called Instructional Support Services).....	30%	70%
Been required to give a presentation or speech in a class <u>other than speech or theater</u>	37%	63%
Been required to do a group or team assignment.....	58%	43%
Studied or discussed subjects such as diversity or multiculturalism in a class.....	41%	59%
Studied or discussed subjects such as ethics or integrity in a class....	50%	50%

24. In your experience at Oakton, how well have Oakton College staff members (faculty, administrators, and other staff members) lived up the following values?
(Please circle one answer for each.)

	Very				Mean
	Poorl y			Well	
	1	2	3	4	
Compassion.....	2%	10%	49%	38%	3.2
Fairness.....	1%	7%	45%	46%	3.4
Integrity.....	1%	5%	44%	50%	3.4
Responsibility.....	1%	4%	43%	51%	3.4
Tolerance.....	2%	6%	44%	48%	3.4

25. What is the *highest* level of education attained in the U.S. by your:

(Resp= 95%)

(Resp= 91%)

Mother:

Father:

(Please mark one.)

(Please mark one.)

22% H.S. diploma

19% H.S. diploma

17% Some college

15% Some college

14% Bachelor's degree

14% Bachelor's degree

9% Graduate degree

11% Graduate degree

39% Not educated in U.S.

41% Not educated in U.S.

26. In which racial/ethnic group(s) is your ancestry? (*Mark as many as apply.*)

1% American Indian or Alaskan Native

24% Asian or Pacific Islander

4% Black, non-Hispanic

8% Hispanic or Latino

55% White, non-Hispanic

5% Other/Prefer not to answer

3% Multiple

27. Is English both your native language and the language mainly spoken in your home?

(Resp= 98%)

55% Yes

45% No

28. Are you: 45% Male 55% Female

29. In what year were you born? (*Write in.*) 19 _____

(Resp= 99.5%)

Mean= 27.6

Median= 23 years old

30. What is your Oakton student identification number or social security number?

(For research purposes only.) (*Write in.*)

53% Provided their student identification number.

47% Did not provide their student identification number.

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