

## What Do New Students Experience at Oakton? Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE)

*Change Matters*, Oakton’s strategic plan, contains two strategic goals specifically focused on student success. They are:

- **Academic excellence.** We will uphold the preeminence of academic excellence as the engine that drives College decision-making. Key objectives include increasing student engagement and connections with faculty and improving the success and persistence of all students, especially under prepared students.
- **WISE student services.** We will involve all employee groups in developing, enhancing and delivering services that Welcome, Inform, Support, and Engage our students.

To learn more about the experiences and success of new students at Oakton, last fall Oakton participated in the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE). SENSE was developed by the same group that conducts the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, but the SENSE focuses on students who are new to (just entered) the College.<sup>1</sup> The SENSE invites entering students to tell us about institutional practices and student behaviors that research indicates are associated with student success during the early weeks of college.

In this *In the Abstract* we share what SENSE respondents told us about a number of their classroom experiences in the early weeks of their first term at Oakton. Of the 1,067 Oakton students who completed the SENSE, 638 were classified as “entering” students. Oakton students’ experiences are similar to those of students at other colleges participating in the SENSE. More important than how we compare with other colleges is whether Oakton is satisfied with the experiences we are providing for our entering students.

What do survey results indicate? Entering students tell us during the first few weeks they experience some classroom activities that foster engagement, but not many. A number of teaching tips to engage students from the first day can be found at the University of Hawaii Tips for Teachers web site <<http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/teachtip.htm#firstday>>.

How often did you.....	4 or >	2-3 times	Once	Never
Ask questions in class or contribute to class discussions during the first three weeks of your first semester	22%	45%	24%	10%
Use an electronic tool to communicate with another student about course work during the first three weeks of your first semester	18%	21%	24%	38%
Use an electronic tool to communicate with an instructor about course work during the first three weeks of your first semester	14%	23%	24%	39%
Discuss ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class during the first three weeks of your first semester	12%	24%	29%	36%
Work with other students on a project or assignment during class during the first three weeks of your first semester	11%	35%	28%	26%
Receive prompt written or oral feedback from instructors on your performance during the first three weeks of your first semester	10%	28%	31%	32%
Prepare at least two drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in during the first three weeks of your first semester	8%	30%	38%	25%
Ask for help from an instructor regarding questions or problems related to a class during the first three weeks of your first semester	8%	26%	34%	32%
Discuss an assignment or grade with an instructor during the first three weeks of your first semester	6%	21%	34%	39%
Work with classmates outside of class on class projects or assignments during the first three weeks of your first semester	5%	11%	18%	66%
Discuss ideas from readings or classes with instructors outside of class during the first three weeks of your first semester	5%	11%	20%	64%
Come to class without completing readings or assignments during the first three weeks of your first semester	3%	14%	36%	48%
Participate in a required study group outside of class during the first three weeks of your first semester	3%	7%	12%	79%
Not turn in an assignment during the first three weeks of your first semester	2%	8%	20%	70%
Turn in an assignment late during the first three weeks of your first semester	2%	6%	26%	66%
Skip class during the first three weeks of your first semester	1%	9%	23%	67%

<sup>1</sup> The SENSE asks students to indicate the number of terms they have enrolled at the College and identifies students as “entering” if they indicate they are in their first term. Students may have attended another college or university before enrolling at Oakton. Surveys were distributed in randomly selected developmental and first-level college English and math courses because these courses enroll a significant number of entering students.