

## **Oakton Students' Information Literacy Skills: Results of the SAILS Test**

In Spring 2007, the Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills (SAILS) test was administered to 497 Oakton students. SAILS assesses students' knowledge about a variety of information literacy skills through multiple choice questions. SAILS test questions are derived from the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) information literacy standards and objectives (details are at [www.ProjectSAILS.org](http://www.ProjectSAILS.org)). The test relates to Oakton's general education objective: gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data/information using a variety of resources and methods, including technology. This project is part of Oakton's ongoing activities to assess general education learning outcomes and was conducted through the Student Academic Assessment Team, with the specific leadership of Sherrill Weaver, Professor of Library Services.

The primary population targeted in this pilot study was students who have earned 30 or more college-level credits at Oakton, the equivalent of one year of college work. This population was intended to include students who have had an appreciable amount of involvement at Oakton and have the potential to have achieved the college's general education objectives. Faculty teaching courses that draw a high number of students that meet this criterion were invited to administer the SAILS test. Because of the voluntary nature of the participant selection, the 497 students completing the test are not representative of Oakton's total student population or of students who have completed the equivalent of one year of college work at Oakton. For example, thirty-eight percent of test takers report they are in Health Careers programs, almost all in

Nursing, and seventy percent report receiving research instruction or assistance from an Oakton Librarian; the size of both of these sub-groups is disproportionately high compared to the general student population. In addition, of the 497 students taking the test, only about half, 229 (45%), report they had earned 30 or more credits at Oakton. Nevertheless, SAILS results provide some indications of students' knowledge about information literacy.

Key results for highly represented and target sub-groups:

- Oakton students who report they are in Health Career programs performed better than students at other community colleges on the SAILS skill set: retrieving sources.
- Oakton students who report completing the equivalent of one year of college performed about the same as students at other community colleges on the SAILS skill sets: selecting finding tools, using finding tool features, searching, retrieving sources, evaluating sources, and documenting sources.
- Oakton students who report completing the equivalent of one year of college performed worse than students at other community colleges on the SAILS skill sets: understanding economic, legal and social issues in the use of information.

The results of the SAILS study will be used to inform curriculum development across the College, particularly in Library Services.