

About Oakton and the Office of Research, Curriculum and Planning

The mission of Oakton's Office of Research, Curriculum and Planning is to serve as a catalyst and engine for gathering, analyzing and using data and information to improve learning, teaching and institutional effectiveness.

Oakton's recent Higher Learning Commission self study and visit from the team of HLC consultant-evaluators reaffirmed the importance of collecting, analyzing and using data and information to inform decisions. In this *In the Abstract* we present examples of the types of research conducted by the Office of Research, often in collaboration with others at the College. We do this to both provide you with insights into Oakton and to prompt you to think about research that may be germane for your department. Please call our office (847-635-1894) if you wish further information on these studies or have a research idea you'd like to explore with us.

To this end, we have recently

- Examined department-wide enrollment patterns by campus with the Department of Humanities and Philosophy, to determine the effect of adding sections at the Skokie campus. We found enrollments had risen substantially from summer 1994 through summer 2007, especially at the Skokie campus.
- Examined patterns of students success by enrollment type by looking at the grades earned by students from Fall 2005 through Fall 2006 in Honors courses, including Honors contract sections, and the grades earned by students in that same period who were taking the same courses but not for Honors. We found that a higher percent of students in Honors sections of a course were successful (earned a grade of A, B, or C) than in the non-Honors sections of the same course.
- Examined patterns of student success by classroom pedagogy by comparing the performance of students in MAT 120 Intermediate Algebra sections that used *MyMathLab* software with students in sections of the same course that did not use the *MyMathLab* software. We found that students in the *MyMathLab* sections did significantly better (40-50 percent difference in success rates).
- Calculated revenues and costs, and the net revenue after expenses, for instructional departments for Fiscal Year 2006. FY2007 data are now being compiled.
- Examined patterns of student success in math and English composition by compiling data depicting the number and percent of students in each initial placement group (e.g., below MAT 052, MAT 052, MAT 120, above MAT 120, EGL 074, EGL 075, etc.), using cohorts of students who were new to Oakton in either Fall 1999 or Fall 2001. We tracked students in each math and composition placement group through enrollment and success in the first college level general education course in the discipline. Not surprisingly, we found students who placed initially into lower levels of remedial work were less likely to enroll in and pass college level courses than were students whose initial placements were in college level courses.
- Examined success in "Gatekeeper" courses by writing placement. Gatekeeper courses are high enrollment courses, and typically meet general education or degree requirements and may be prerequisites for subsequent courses in the discipline. We included students new to Oakton in the Fall terms of 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006 who reported having less than an associate degree. We found that, overall, students who placed into college-level English and those who were exempt from the writing placement test were most successful, followed by students who either placed into ESL courses or had not taken any placement tests, followed by students who placed into remedial English (non-ESL).
- Examined the effectiveness of established placement criteria by comparing students' performance in English 101, based on whether they were placed by Oakton's holistic writing assessment test (WSAT) or the ACT score. We found there were no differences in performance between those placed via the WSAT and those placed via ACT, which verified Oakton is using an appropriate ACT score for placement.