

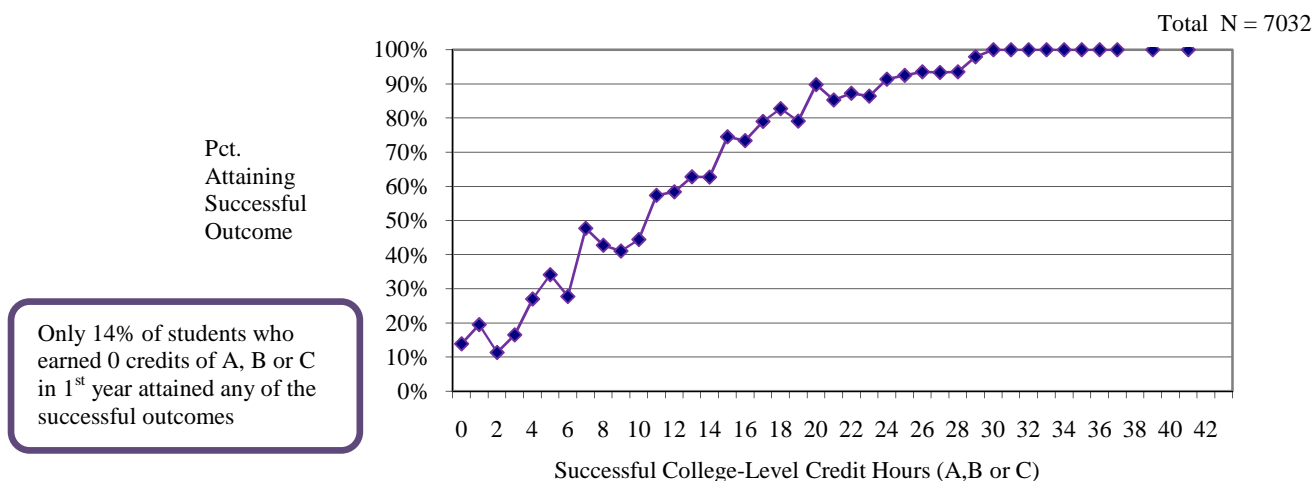
Credits Earned in First Year and Attaining a Successful College Outcome

Oakton’s Office of Research has been conducting extensive research on student success at the College. Using the model of Achieving the Dream, a national initiative to improve student achievement at community colleges, we look at the 11,995 students who first came to Oakton in the Fall terms 2002 through 2006 and did not report having an associate degree or higher when they first enrolled. There was little variation in race/ethnicity, gender, age or placement test results among the five cohorts (students entering in the same fall term are considered a cohort).

Our May *In the Abstract* focused on the association between students successfully earning a substantial number of credits in college-level courses during their first year at the community college and their subsequent success as measured by persistence to the next year. In this month’s *Abstract* we look at the association between successfully earning credits and attaining other success outcomes: earning a certificate, earning a degree, transfer to a 4-year institution, earning 30+ successful hours during time at Oakton, and earning 45+ successful hours during time at Oakton. To give every student the same number of terms of opportunity to attain one or more of the outcomes, we have looked at the 7,032 students in the cohorts of 2002 – 2004 and followed them for three years from the term of first enrollment. “Successful” credits are those in which a student earned a grade of A, B or C.

Figure 1 depicts the percentage who achieved one or more of these success indicators, controlling for the number of successful college credits earned in the first fall and spring at Oakton (a student who did not persist to the spring would have only the fall credits reflected). Of the 7,032 students, 1,830 (26%) did not earn any credits with grades of A, B or C in the first fall and spring at Oakton.

Figure 1: Overall College Success (within 3 years of 1st Term) by Successful Credit Hours in First Fall & Spring Terms



We next looked more closely at the association between earning credits and attainment of a successful outcome. Table 1 shows the odds of a student attaining a successful outcome for every credit of A, B or C earned in a college-level course during the first fall and/or spring term at Oakton.

Table 1: Increased Likelihood of Attaining Success Outcome for Each Credit Earned

Success Outcome	Odds of attaining outcome for each credit of A, B, C in first fall/spring at Oakton
Earn Oakton certificate	1.03
Earn Oakton degree	1.13
Transfer to 4-year institution in 3 years	1.11
Earn 30+ Oakton credits in 3 years	1.22
Earn 45+ Oakton credits in 3 years	1.20
Obtain 1 or more success outcomes	1.20

What do these findings suggest? In the May *In the Abstract* we noted data relating credits earned to persistence might suggest the importance of providing support to help students successfully earn college credits in their first semester or two at Oakton. Data in this October *In the Abstract* provide additional evidence that successfully earning college credits in the first term or two seems of paramount importance if students are to attain any one of a number of successful college outcomes. *Change Matters*, Oakton’s strategic plan for 2008-2012, commits the College to improving student success and engagement. Data in the May and October 2008 *In the Abstracts* point to an area on which the College might concentrate efforts: helping students to enroll and succeed in college-level courses during their first term(s) at Oakton.