In the Abstract

Oakton Community College

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Academic Excellence & Preparation for Transfer: What Alumni Tell Us

One of Oakton's *Change Matters* strategic goals is "Academic Excellence: We will uphold the preeminence of academic excellence as the engine that drives College decision-making." Many Oakton students are in baccalaureate-transfer programs; they, and the College, expect their experiences at Oakton will prepare them for work at their transfer institutions. This summer, our annual survey of alumni who earned at least 30 credits or an associate degree in a baccalaureate-transfer program and who were away from the College for one or three years, included some questions to help us examine preparation. Specifically, we included questions about the extent to which Oakton prepared students in an array of skill areas, whether they used these skills after transfer, and the types of final exam experiences they had after transfer. Our 600 respondents last attended Oakton in 2006-07 or 2004-05.

Of the 600 survey respondents, 421 (70%) reported that they attended at least one college or university after attending Oakton. What did they tell us? Of those who transferred,

- 77 percent reported that they experienced little to no difficulty in adjusting to the differences between Oakton and their transfer institution during the first semester or year at that institution.

- 63 percent reported that their transfer institution has a class schedule during the final exam week that differs from the class schedule for the rest of the semester. (Percentages below do not add to 100% because one respondent may have had more than one type of exam experience.)
    - 68 percent took a 1-2 hour exam during "finals week"
    - 31 percent took a 2-3 hour exam during "finals week"
    - 5 percent took an exam that lasted more than 3 hours during "finals week"
    - 44 percent took an exam during a regular class meeting time
    - 49 percent took a take-home exam
    - 3 percent took another type of exam

- 71 percent reported that their coursework at Oakton prepared them "well" for final exams at their transfer institution.

- A large majority of respondents told us they were well prepared for the level of work expected of them at their transfer institutions. The table below is revealing not just in terms of the percent who say they were well prepared, but also the number and percent who said the skill "Did Not Apply" after transfer.

Skill Area	*Of those who used skill, percent reporting they were Well-Prepared*	*Number & Percent of all respondents who transferred and said skill "Did Not Apply"*
Critical-thinking	73%	45 (11%)
Giving presentations	72%	83 (20%)
Writing papers	72%	53 (13%)
Note-taking	70%	57 (14%)
Using math	69%	94 (22%)
Problem-solving	69%	61 (15%)
Reading textbooks and other assignments	69%	64 (15%)
Time management	68%	67 (16%)
Taking in-class essay exams	66%	87 (21%)
Teamwork assignments	64%	80 (19%)
Using computers	62%	116 (28%)
Take-home essay exams	60%	174 (41%)