

Entering Students' Commitment to Their Educations More from the Survey of Entering Student Engagement

Our April 2009 *In the Abstract* presented data about entering students' experiences in the early weeks of their first term at Oakton. Data came from the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE), a national survey developed by the same group that conducts the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). Oakton administered the SENSE early in the Fall 2008 semester; 638 of the 1,067 Oakton respondents were classified as "entering" students (new to Oakton in the fall term).

In this *In the Abstract* we share what entering students told us about their commitment to their educations and the barriers they perceive might interfere with achieving their educational goals. We first present data on commitment, and then we present some provocative data about students' self-reported level of academic preparation and out-of-class obligations. Respondents used a 5-point scale to answer commitment items, with 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Somewhat Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Somewhat Disagree, and 5 = Strongly Disagree.

Entering students tell us :	1	2	3	4	5	Pct. Strongly & Somewhat Agree
I have the motivation to do what it takes to succeed in college.	368	167	58	16	3	87%
I have support from my immediate family for attaining my educational goals.	400	126	55	16	13	86%
I am prepared academically to succeed in college.	286	234	66	21	3	85%
I have the support of my friends to succeed in college.	363	145	75	12	11	84%
I will be able to obtain the academic assistance in and out of the classroom that is necessary to succeed in college.	272	216	99	18	4	80%
The faculty at this college wants me to succeed.	278	155	150	19	6	71%
I will have the money necessary to pay for school supplies (books, computers, etc.) that are essential for completing my educational goals.	202	202	119	47	27	68%
I will have the money necessary to pay for the tuition required in order to meet my educational goals.	212	163	131	60	43	62%
I will have the money necessary to pay for my living expenses while I obtain my educational goals.	179	184	150	65	27	60%
Caring for dependents will [not] interfere with my ability to succeed in college.(*)	191	78	179	99	55	45%
Commitments other than work and family will [not] interfere with my ability to succeed in college.(*)	142	114	150	136	63	42%
Time spent working will [not] interfere with my ability to succeed in college.(*)	102	95	170	150	86	33%

(*) Original SENSE question excluded [not]. Answers were recoded so percent agree depicts high commitment and perceptions other obligations will not interfere.

At the same time, entering students are:

Not as college-ready as they think; 11% tell us their placements indicate they need developmental reading, 25% tell us they need developmental writing and 42% tell us they need developmental math.

Working. More than 2/3 of entering student are working, with 17% working more than 30 hours per week and another 14% working 21-30 hours per week.

SENSE data suggest Oakton's entering students believe they are committed to achieving their educational goals and generally have support from their family and friends. They are a bit less confident about support from Oakton, and are even less certain they will be able to pay for college. More than half perceive responsibilities for family and at work may interfere with their ability to succeed in college. And, many are unrealistic about their level of academic preparedness for college: 85% say they are ready, yet 25% need developmental writing and 42% need developmental math.