

Baccalaureate Alumni Survey

2002 Report

James Kostecki
Trudy Bers



Oakton Community College
1600 East Golf Road, Des Plaines, IL 60016
www.oakton.edu/resource/oir/index.htm
847-635-1894

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Acknowledgments

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Please telephone the Office of Research at 847-635-1894 or e-mail tbers@oakton.edu or jkostecki@oakton.edu with comments, questions, or suggestions for items that might be included in the next annual survey.

James Kostecki
Trudy Bers

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Annually the Office of Research surveys transfer program alumni with at least 30 Oakton credits or an associate's degree, and who were last enrolled one or three years ago. In 2002, 515 alumni responded to the survey, which was conducted by telephone during the summer of 2002. The survey required 10 to 15 minutes to complete, and the College very much appreciates these alumni giving their time to this project. The 30-credit criterion (about half an associate's degree program) ensures that the alumni surveyed were sufficiently experienced at Oakton to be fairly knowledgeable about the College. Survey findings include the following:

Profile of the Population Selected for the Baccalaureate Alumni Survey

- At the median, baccalaureate program alumni enroll at age 19 and leave at age 24. Slightly more than half are women. Two thirds are white and the largest minority group is of Asian or Pacific Island ancestry.
- At the median, these alumni earned 52 credits at Oakton, with GPAs of 2.8. Thirteen percent of these alumni completed associate's degrees at Oakton.
- Fifty-eight percent of survey respondents came to Oakton with no prior college enrollment. Thirty-four percent had some college elsewhere before coming to Oakton, and another 8 percent had already earned a bachelor's degree before their last enrollment at Oakton. Students with the bachelor's degree may have taken most of their Oakton courses before earning that degree, but returned to Oakton for just a course or two afterwards.

Educational Experience at Other Colleges and Universities

- Of the 515 survey respondents, 387 (75%) report they attended another college or university after Oakton, and 193 (37%) say they earned a bachelor's or associate degree after transfer.
- Most alumni transferred to schools in the Chicago area. Northeastern Illinois University and University of Illinois at Chicago drew 37 percent of the transfers.
- Of students who did not already have a bachelor's degree and who transferred, 65 percent who last attended Oakton in 1998-99 had earned their bachelor's degree since leaving Oakton, compared to 36 percent of those who last attended in 2000-01.
- The most popular majors for Oakton alumni are in business, social and behavioral sciences, education, humanities and computer-related fields.
- Students were most likely to need these skills in coursework after transfer: working with other people, writing, problem-solving, teamwork and speaking.
- Respondents who transferred rated the utility of skills they learned at Oakton for their courses after transfer. The percent who said each skill was useful were: speech 70%, writing 69%, working with other people 66%, problem-solving 65%, teamwork 61%, mathematics 61%, applying ethics to fields in which they may work 59%, information about content in the major 53%, information about content in other fields 51%, and computer skills 50%.

- About a third of these Oakton alumni reported Oakton required less reading than the institution to which they transferred; 24% reported encountering greater reading requirements at Oakton; the remaining 43% thought there was no difference.

Experience at Oakton

- Just over one-third of alumni (37%) thought it was fairly easy to earn A grades at Oakton, 41% thought it was fairly difficult, and 22% were noncommittal.
- Alumni perceive that, overall, Oakton is living up to its core values of fairness, integrity, responsibility, tolerance and compassion.

General Assessments

- Five out of six of transfer program alumni surveyed in 2002 felt they had been successful in achieving the goals for which they came to Oakton, and six out of seven report that had they to do it over, they would again choose to attend Oakton.
- Over 160 Oakton faculty and staff members received positive comments in response to a question about there being an especially outstanding person, course or event at Oakton. There were fewer than a dozen negative comments.

BACCALAUREATE ALUMNI SURVEY, 2002

This year's report of the 2002 survey of baccalaureate program alumni includes five sections. The first section provides overview information about the survey and methodology. Section II describes baccalaureate program alumni. Section III presents information about alumni's experiences at other colleges and universities, both before and after Oakton. Section IV is about experiences at Oakton, and a fifth and final section concludes the report. A number of appendices provide additional information about the methodology as well as detailed data.

I. Overview and Methodology

Each summer, Oakton Community College conducts a telephone survey of baccalaureate program alumni. This year 515 transfer program alumni who earned at least 30 credits at the college, and were last enrolled in either 1998-99 or 2000-01, whether or not they completed an Oakton associate's degree, completed telephone interviews.

Purposes of the survey are to

- investigate perceptions of these alumni about their experiences and satisfaction with various Oakton programs and services;
- gain information about their experience at the colleges and universities to which they transferred to complete baccalaureate degree programs or additional courses;
- gather information for program reviews of Oakton programs and services.

The questionnaire was developed in consultation with administrators and instructional programs and support service departments scheduled for program review in 2002-2003.¹ Appendix A provides more detailed information about the survey methodology and Appendix B provides data about survey respondents compared to the overall population of alumni eligible to be surveyed. Respondents were very representative of the overall population in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, age, and academic achievements at Oakton.

When responses do not differ by year of last enrollment, the combined responses of alumni from the two years can reasonably be interpreted as evidence for alumni last enrolled throughout the three years including the middle year not surveyed. Differences by year of last enrollment may be evidence of change that will warrant further inquiry. In this report, the survey text and over-all responses are presented in Appendix C. Throughout this survey, scales were consistently constructed so that the highest values represented the most positive responses.

¹ Oakton also surveys career program alumni as mandated by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB). These surveys are done by program on five-year cycles tied to the Program Review schedule. While ICCB only requires surveys of graduates, Oakton augments the state procedure in two ways: in addition to graduates, we survey career alumni who took courses but did not complete programs. In addition to the questions in the state survey, we add a few questions developed collaboratively with program chairpersons and their deans, to whom the results are reported for discussion in their reports of program review.

II. Profile of Baccalaureate Program Alumni

Demographic information was extracted from the College's database. The survey is the source for information about the purposes and intentions of these alumni as students. Detailed data about the alumni population that met criteria for inclusion in the survey and the actual survey respondents is provided in Appendix B.

Age, Gender, and Racial-ethnic Identity

About four-fifths of these alumni were first enrolled at the College before they were 24 years of age and about half had completed their work at Oakton before age 24. The median entry age was 19 and the median exit age was 24. Women comprised slightly over half the alumni population. About two-thirds of these alumni identified themselves as Caucasian. The largest minority group (17% of the total) was students of Asian or Pacific Island ancestry, and another 12% either did not give a race-ethnic category or responded "other."

Purposes and Intentions

It helps to understand the purposes alumni had when they enrolled at the College. As it has for several years, the survey opened with two questions to provide some insight into the orientation of these alumni when they were enrolled as students. Two-thirds (68%) of survey respondents said their main objective was to take coursework for transfer to another college, 20% were taking courses for occupational or career reasons, and 12% were taking courses for personal interest or self-development. The second question asked whether, when they first enrolled, they planned to earn an Oakton associate's degree or merely to take courses. Just over one-third (37%) said they planned to earn a degree.

Credits, Grades, and Oakton Degrees Earned

Academic data show how the extent of the experience of these alumni at Oakton. Just over one-third earned 30-44 credits, another quarter earned 45-59 credits, and about two in five earned 60 or more credits. The mean number of credits for the alumni population was 54. These data indicate students had a substantial experience at Oakton, an expected finding since the survey includes only students with 30 or more credits.² Students did relatively well, as measured by their grade point averages. The mean GPA was 2.8.

A common indicator of institutional performance is degrees awarded, yet Oakton, like community colleges nationwide, confers relatively few degrees on its students. Alumni data indicate that only 13% of students eligible to be surveyed received an Oakton associate's degree, and 18% of survey respondents did so. Because it would make little sense for a person who already had a bachelor's degree to earn an associate degree later, we backed out the 40 respondents who already had bachelor's degrees when they last attended Oakton. Of the 474

² Grade point average and credits are based on college-level courses in which a grade was awarded (A, B, C, D, F). Remedial courses and courses from which a student withdrew or was dropped are not included. Consequently many students in the alumni group will actually have taken more courses at Oakton than are counted in the GPA or number of credits earned.

respondents remaining, 18 percent of those last enrolled in 1998-99 and 20 percent of those last enrolled in 2000-01 earned associate degrees at Oakton.

Of alumni respondents, two thirds said their main objective while at Oakton was to take courses for transfer; nearly all (89%) of those who indicated this was their objective did, in fact, transfer after leaving Oakton. Others might still transfer though they had not done so by summer 2002.

Of the 37 percent of respondents who said they intended to earn a degree at Oakton, just 39 percent did so. How might we explain the apparent discrepancy between plans and reality? First, to be eligible for financial aid, a student must be seeking a degree or certificate, so that financial aid rather than educational considerations might be prompting students to say they are degree-seeking. Second, it may be socially acceptable for students to say they are seeking a degree. Third, students may plan to earn an associate's degree but then discover they can transfer without the degree and decide to do so.

There are different ways in which credit can be accepted in transfer. For example, courses can be accepted toward total minimum count, but not to meet certain prerequisites or certain general education requirements. Certain Oakton courses have been "articulated" with certain public and private universities in Illinois, enabling students to know in advance the precise way in which credits will be accepted in transfer. Since there is often no advantage to presenting a degree over simply presenting the constituent courses, many students are more concerned with transferring at a convenient time than with how much credit they can present.

III. Educational Experiences at Other Colleges and Universities

The survey asked these alumni to indicate whether they attended another college or university or earned a bachelor's degree before their last enrollment at Oakton.³ Forty-two percent of survey respondents said they had attended another college or university before Oakton, and 8 percent said they had already earned a bachelor's degree before they last attended Oakton. While this may seem to be a very high percent, a student may have taken most Oakton credits prior to earning the bachelor's degree, then earned the bachelor's degree and then later returned to Oakton for a course or a few courses and technically met criteria for inclusion in the alumni population survey.

Experiences Before Oakton: Traditional, Reverse Transfer, and Multi-cycle Groups

Several years ago, John and Quinley and Melissa Quinley (1998)⁴ developed a tri-fold categorization for students entering community colleges. (1) Traditional students come with no prior college experience and plan to transfer to bachelor's degree programs. (2) Reverse transfer students enroll first at four-year institutions, then attend community colleges, but

³ The survey script listed the four 2-year and eleven 4-year area institutions most often mentioned in previous surveys, and provided space to write in an additional one 2-year or two 4-year institutions. A standard coding system (federal FICE codes) was used to avoid varied abbreviations of same institutions and to facilitate accurate tallies by institution.

⁴ John Quinley and Melissa Quinley, "From Pipelines to Cycles: Changing the Way we Think About Learning and Learners," (1998) In *Learning Abstracts* volume 1 (League for Innovation in the Community College), issue 2 (November) <www.league.org/learnlab.html>.

ultimately seek bachelor's degrees. (3) Multi-cycle students hold earned bachelor's degrees while enrolled at community colleges.

In the last several alumni reports we computed the percentage of respondents in each of the three Quinley and Quinley categories, with those previously attending only other two-year colleges counted as traditional. This year we did not differentiate previous schools by two-year and four-year categories so have modified the definitions of traditional, reverse transfer and multi-cycle. Traditional students are those who came to Oakton without prior college or university experience. Reverse transfer are those who attended another school before Oakton but did not earn a bachelor's degree before last attending Oakton. Multi-cycle are those who did earn a bachelor's degree before last attending Oakton.

Two caveats are crucial here: first, data are for alumni who met criteria for inclusion in this survey, not for all Oakton students, and second, prior attendance and degrees are based on students' self reports. This year's calculation showed that 58 percent were traditional, 34% were reverse transfer and 8 percent were multi-cycle. Data from the last two alumni surveys indicated some 16-17% of respondents were multi-cycle.

Experiences after Oakton

Respondents were asked whether they had attended another college or university after Oakton and, if so, whether they earned a degree. Table 1 presents results (Appendix D contains the complete list of transfer schools identified by respondents). Of the 515 respondents, 387 (75%) reported they had attended another college or university after Oakton. Of these alumni, 193 said they graduated. Chicago area institutions drew most alumni, with Northeastern Illinois University and the University of Illinois at Chicago drawing 37 percent of the transfers. The attractiveness of local colleges and universities to Oakton alumni remains consistent over time.

Table 1
Colleges and Universities After Oakton

College/university	Total Who Attended	Of Those Who	
		Attended, Number	Pct. Graduated
Northeastern IL	82	38	46%
U of I - Chicago	63	32	51%
DePaul	48	23	48%
Roosevelt	20	10	50%
Columbia (IL)	18	9	50%
Loyola	17	12	71%
National Louis	16	12	75%
Northern IL	14	7	50%
Illinois State	14	6	43%
U of I - Urbana	11	5	45%
Southern IL - Carbondale	7	2	29%
DeVry	6	3	50%
Eastern IL	6	2	33%
Harper College	8	1	13%
Wright College	3	1	33%
College of Lake County	3	0	0%
Other schools	94	40	43%
Total Transferred	387	193	50%

To gain more insight into the extent to which Oakton students earned bachelor's degrees we again backed out the survey respondents who said they had a bachelor's degree before they were last at Oakton and then, for the remaining alumni, looked at the year they were last at Oakton and subsequent attainment of a bachelor's degree. Table 2 presents findings. Results show students who left Oakton three years before the survey and transferred to four-year institutions were almost twice as likely to have completed their bachelor's degrees than students who last attended Oakton only one year before the survey. Clearly students who last attended Oakton in 2000-01 may not have had time to complete bachelor's degree yet, and even students who left in 1998-99 may still be working toward their degrees on a part-time basis.

Table 2
Percent of Transfers Who Earned Degrees after Oakton
 (Excluding Those Who Had Bachelor's Degree Before Last at Oakton)

Last at Oakton	Type Institution			
	Two-year		Four-year	
	Total Who Attended	Pct. Graduated	Total Who Attended	Pct. Graduated
1998-99	6	0	153	65
2000-01	16	19	206	36

In Table 3 we present data from the past six alumni surveys indicating majors selected at institutions after Oakton. Business-related curricula continue to draw the largest percentage of transfers, though in the 2002 survey the traditional liberal arts areas of humanities/fine arts and social and behavioral sciences showed dramatic increases, and education continued to draw more students than in the earliest survey years.

Table 3
Major after Transfer

Survey Year	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Area of Major	(N=484)	(N=401)	(N=331)	(N=134)	(N=227)	(N = 385)
Business-related	21 %	26 %	18 %	25 %	21 %	20%
Computer-related	*	*	*	10 %	16 %	11%
Education	13 %	8 %	8 %	10 %	15 %	16%
Social and Behavioral Sciences	17 %	18 %	19 %	18 %	12 %	19%
Humanities, Fine Arts	14 %	13 %	15 %	9 %	9 %	14%
Health-related	11 %	11 %	11 %	11 %	8 %	6%
Sciences or mathematics	9 %	9 %	12 %	7 %	6 %	5%
Engineering	7 %	7 %	7 %	3 %	5 %	5%
Other, including undecided	8 %	7 %	10 %	5 %	8 %	6%

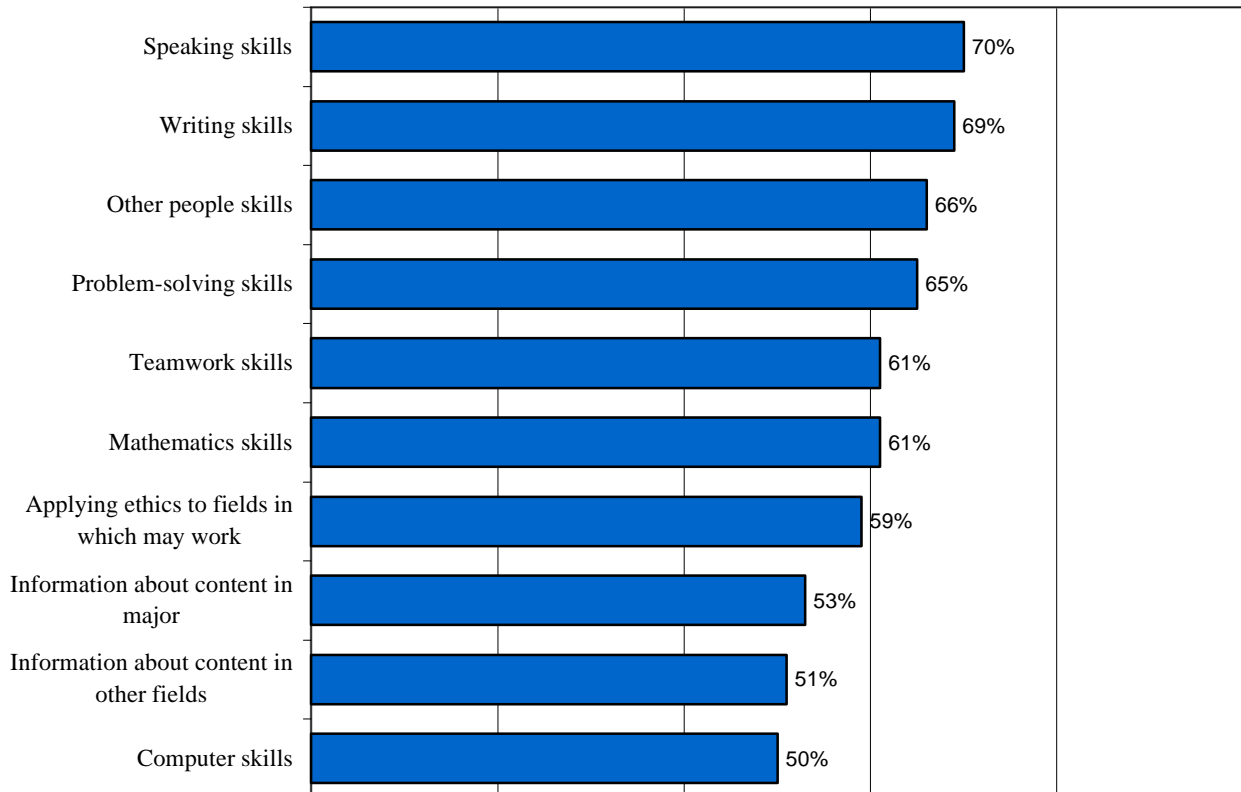
* Computer-related majors were not separately identified prior to the year 2000 survey.

Utility of Oakton Experience to Courses after Transfer

This year's survey asked alumni who had transferred to indicate, on a 5-point scale, the extent to which skills learned at Oakton were useful in courses taken after transfer (5 = extremely useful; 1 = not very useful). Respondents could also indicate they did not apply a skill after transfer. Note the survey did not ask respondents to evaluate to what extent they think they learned the skill at Oakton or whether it was required of them in courses taken after transfer.

Figure 1 provides a graphical description of findings. The percentage of respondents who said what they learned was useful (ranked the skill 4 or 5 on the 5-point scale) is presented, and the skills are arrayed in descending order based on the percentage of respondents who said what they learned was useful. Respondents who said the skill “did not apply” to them and those who did not transfer after Oakton are not included in the percentage calculations.

Figure 1
Percent Saying What They Learned Was Useful in Courses After Transfer



In 2001 respondents were asked the same item, enabling us to compare the percentages from the two surveys who said skills learned at Oakton were useful after transfer. Table 4 presents data, arrayed in descending order based on 2002 respondents. Some shifts between the two years are evident, but findings should be treated with caution because we cannot determine whether alumni took courses after transfer that required these skills. In four skill areas the percent saying the skill was useful in transfer courses dropped from 2001 to 2002, in four skill areas the percent increased, and in two areas there was no change. It is particularly interesting to note that 11 percent more respondents in 2002 than in 2001 said that what they learned in teamwork skills was useful after transfer. Working in groups is an Oakton general education objective that has received less attention than most other general education objectives over the past four years.

Table 4
Usefulness of Skills Learned at Oakton in Courses Taken After Transfer
By Year of Survey

Skill	Percent Indicating Skill was Useful		Pct. Change: 2001 to 2002
	2001	2002	
Speaking skills	74%	70%	-4%
Writing skills	69%	69%	0%
Other people skills	61%	66%	5%
Problem-solving skills	62%	65%	3%
Mathematics skills	68%	61%	-7%
Teamwork skills	50%	61%	11%
Applying ethics to fields in which may work	59%	59%	0%
Information about content in major	57%	53%	-4%
Information about content in other fields	50%	51%	1%
Computer skills	53%	50%	-3%

To learn more about the usefulness of what was learned at Oakton we also looked at the percentage of respondents who indicated they did not apply these skills after transfer, with results presented in Table 5. The table reveals at several surprising findings. Two in five respondents said they did not apply computer skills learned at Oakton after transfer, and one-third did not apply skills in applying ethics in fields in which they might work. There is nearly a linear relationship between the rank order of the utility of skills to transfer work and the applicability of those skills after transfer. That is, where respondents said their Oakton learning was especially useful were the same skill areas they were most likely to apply in their courses after transfer. Finally, the importance of “soft” and communication skills is evident in the data. Alumni said what they learned at Oakton in the areas of teamwork, problem-solving, working with other people, speaking and writing was useful after transfer and that these skills were needed in courses taken after transfer.

Table 5
Skills Not Applied After Transfer

Skill	Pct. Respondents Who Transferred & Indicated Skill Not Applied After Transfer	Rank order of Utility of Learned Skills at Transfer Institution
Computer skills	41%	9
Applying ethics to fields in which may work	33%	6
Mathematics skills	26%	5
Information about content in major	22%	7
Speaking skills	20%	1
Information about content in other fields	19%	8
Teamwork skills	15%	5
Problem-solving skills	14%	4
Writing skills	11%	2
Other people skills	10%	3

To gain more insights into the utility of skills after transfer, we examined alumni responses by their major at the transfer institution. We found some differences by major, though the small number of majors in some areas means findings must be treated with caution. Figures 2a-2j depict the percent of respondents by major who said what they learned was useful after transfer, not useful, or not applied.

The findings presented here warrant further investigation. Are students not learning useful skills at Oakton? Are these skills not expected at the transfer institution? How can we reconcile the finding that a substantial percentage of respondents say writing and speaking are not applicable to transfer courses with information from other sources that asserts the importance of these skills?

The survey asked alumni to compare the amount of reading that Oakton required with the amount required after transfer and to use a seven-point scale (1 = "Oakton required much less", 7 = "Oakton required much more"). A third (32 %) of these alumni said Oakton had required less reading (responses 1 - 3), a quarter (24%) thought Oakton had required more reading (responses 5 - 7), and the remainder (43%) said there was no difference (response 4). In the 2001 survey one-third of respondents said Oakton required more and one-third said there was no difference.

Figure 2a
Usefulness of Speaking Skills After Transfer
By Major

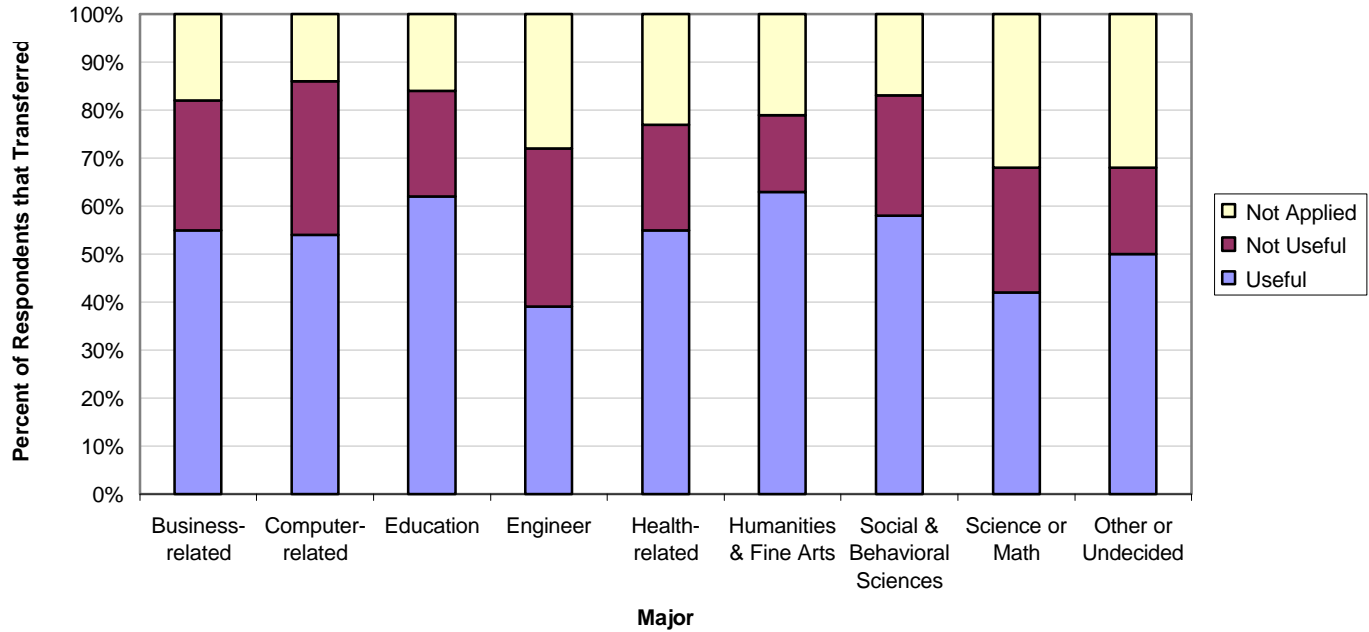


Figure 2b
Usefulness of Writing Skills After Transfer
By Major

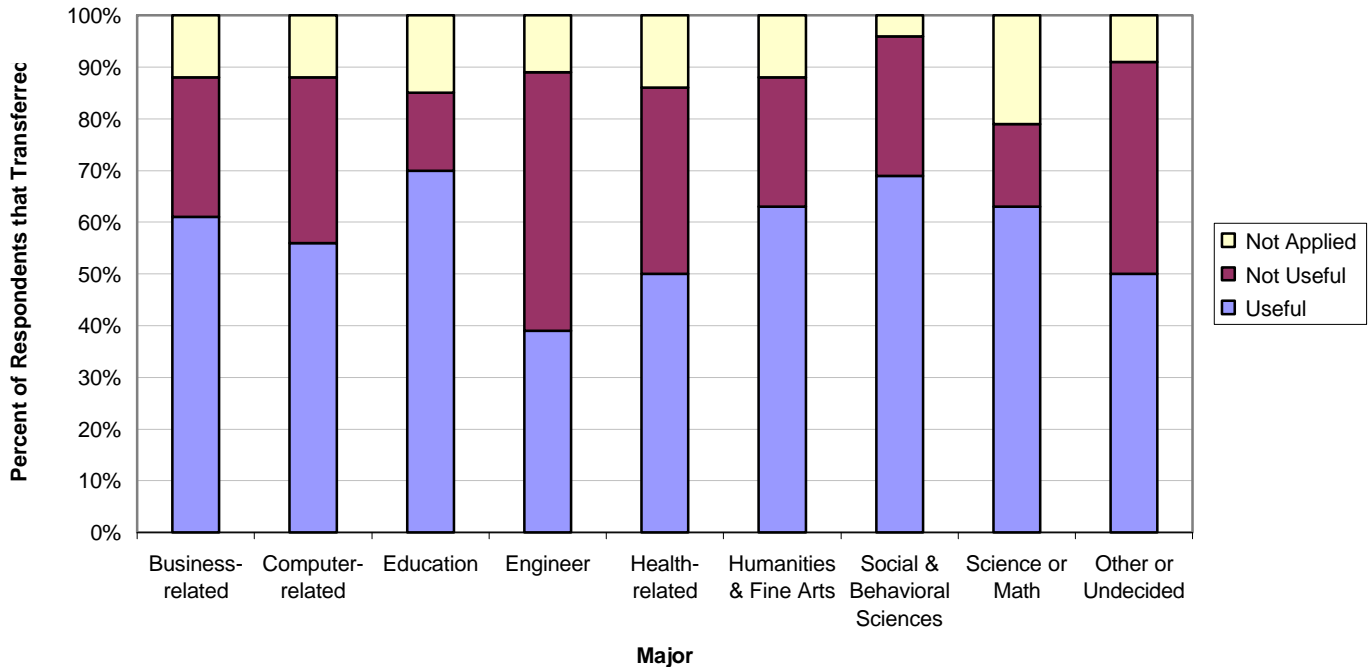


Figure 2c
Usefulness of Other People Skills After Transfer
By Major

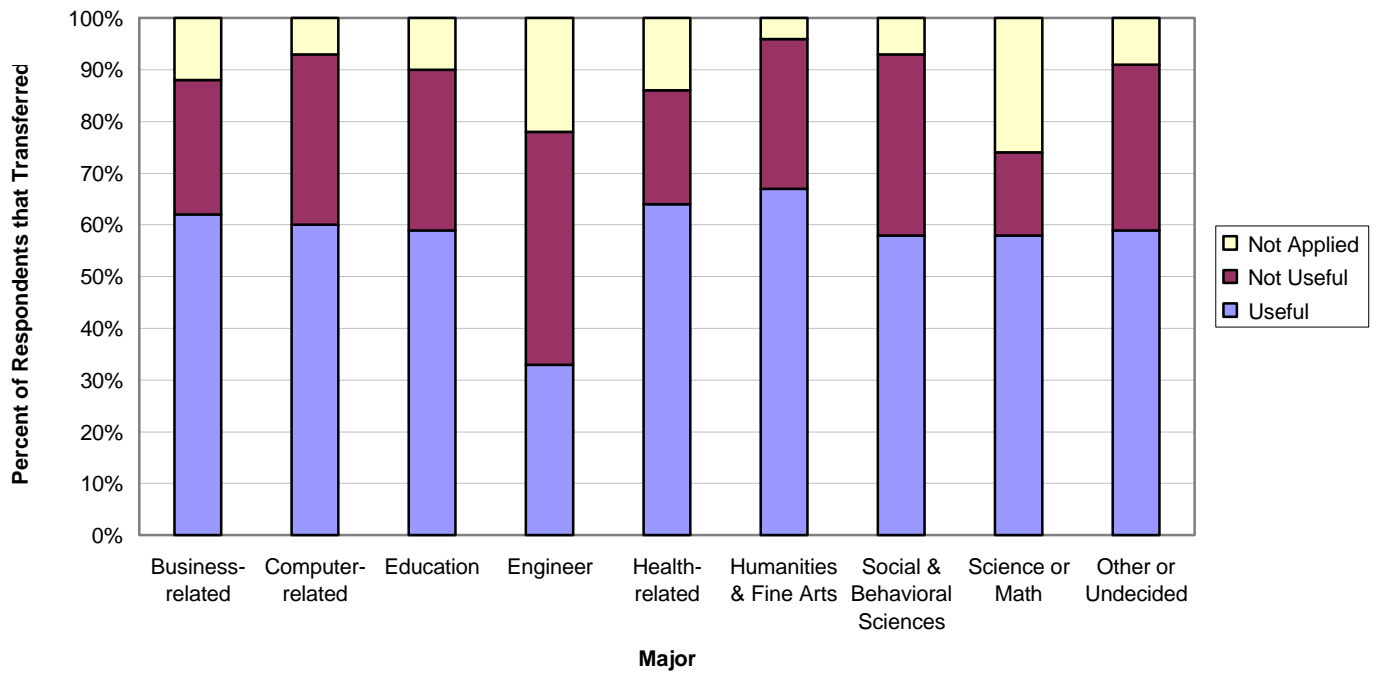


Figure 2d
Usefulness of Problem-Solving Skills After Transfer
By Major

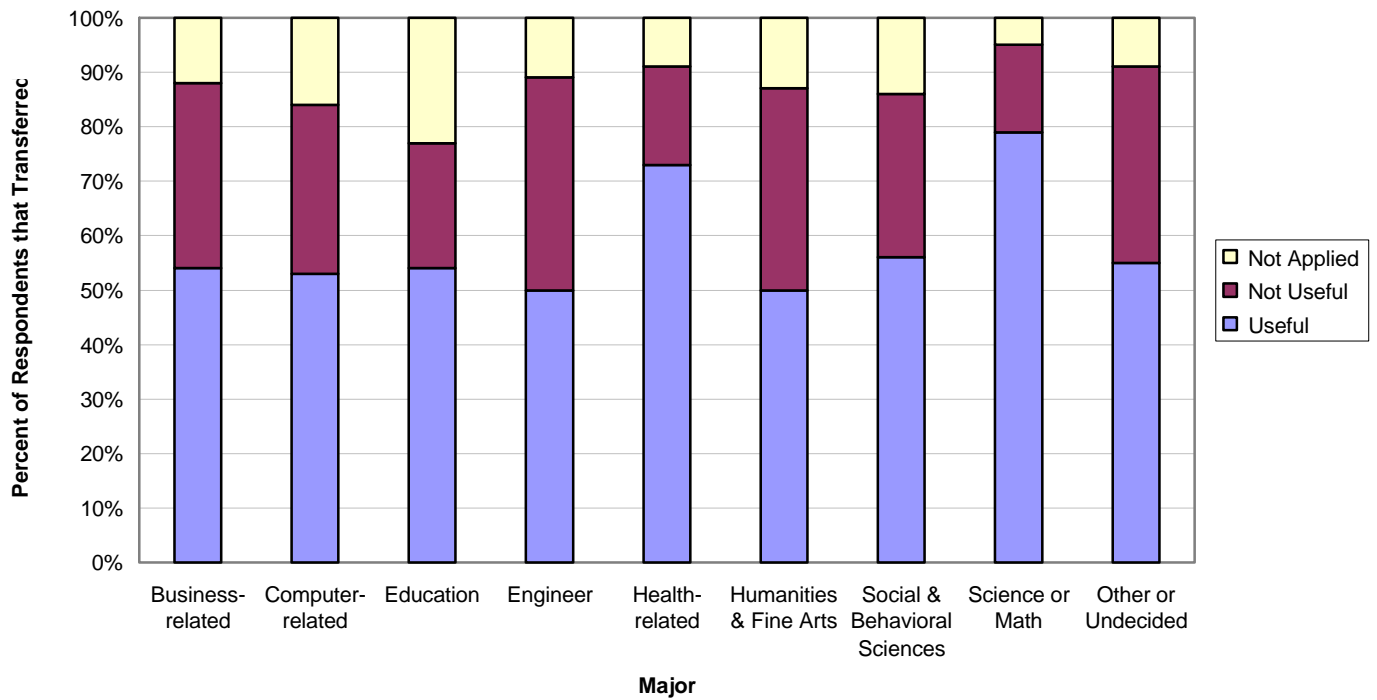


Figure 2e
Usefulness of Mathematics Skills After Transfer
By Major

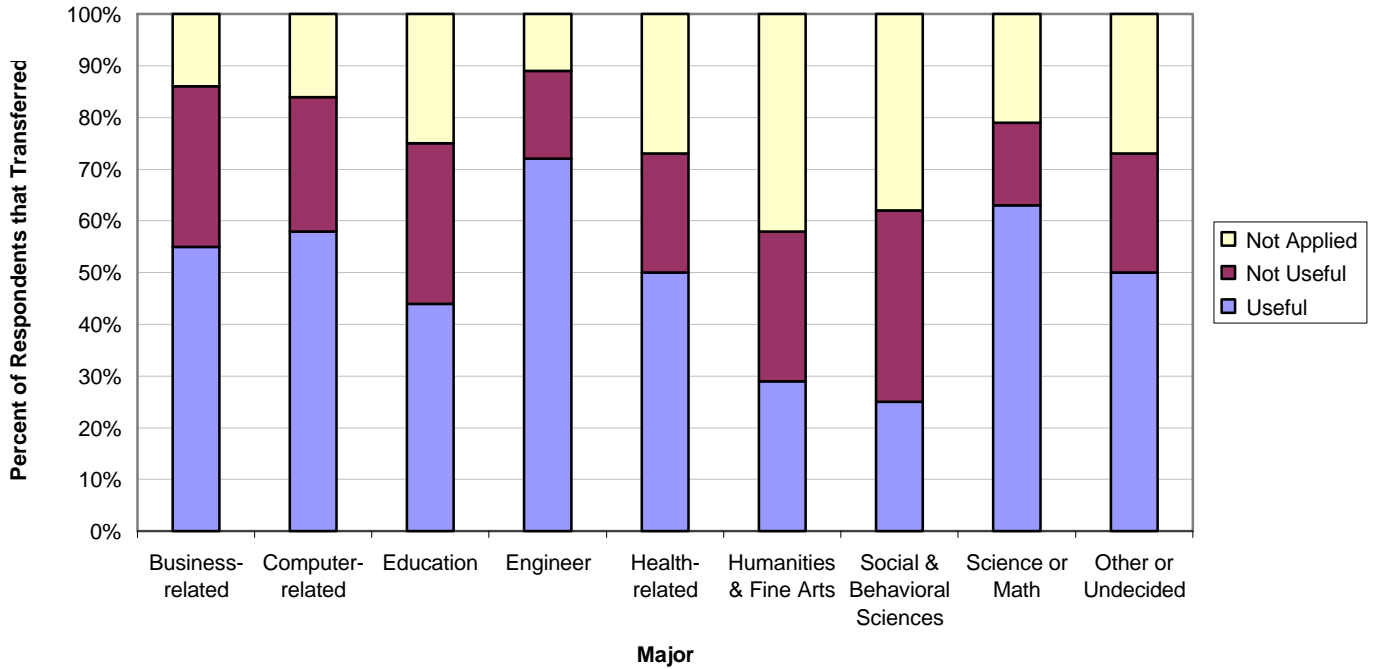


Figure 2f
Usefulness of Teamwork Skills After Transfer
By Major

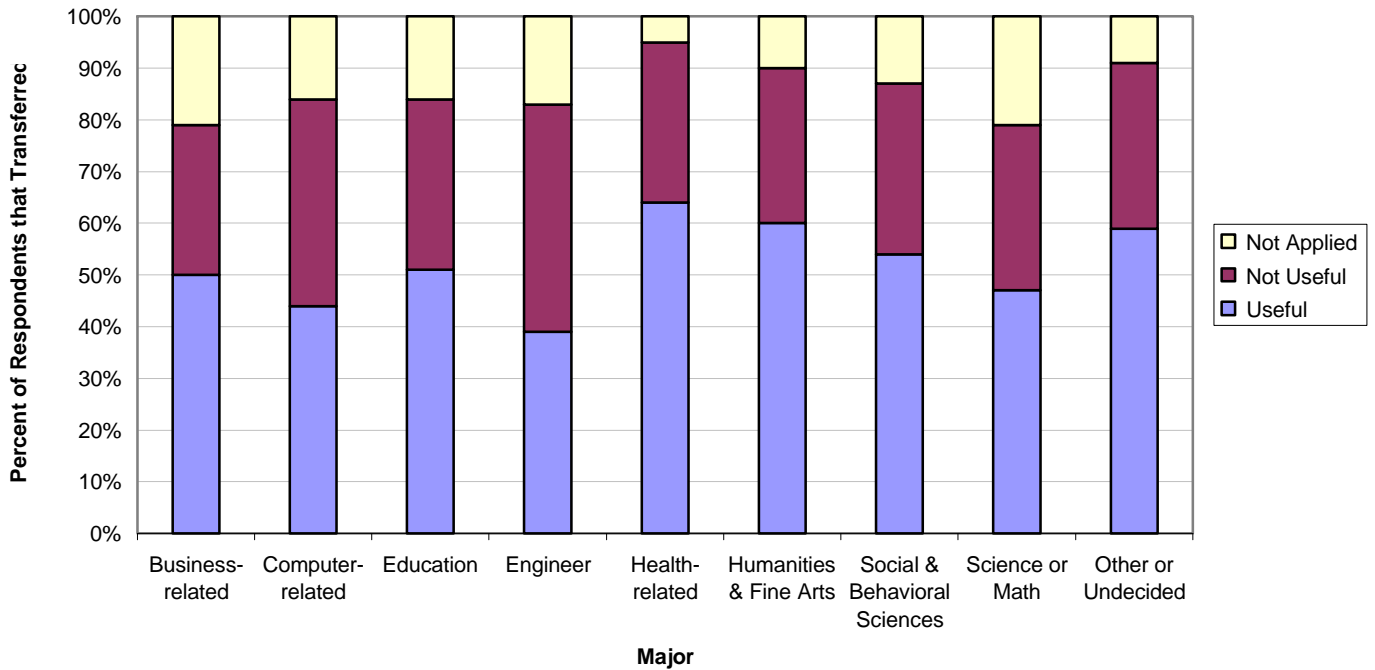


Figure 2g
Usefulness of Ethics Skills After Transfer
By Major

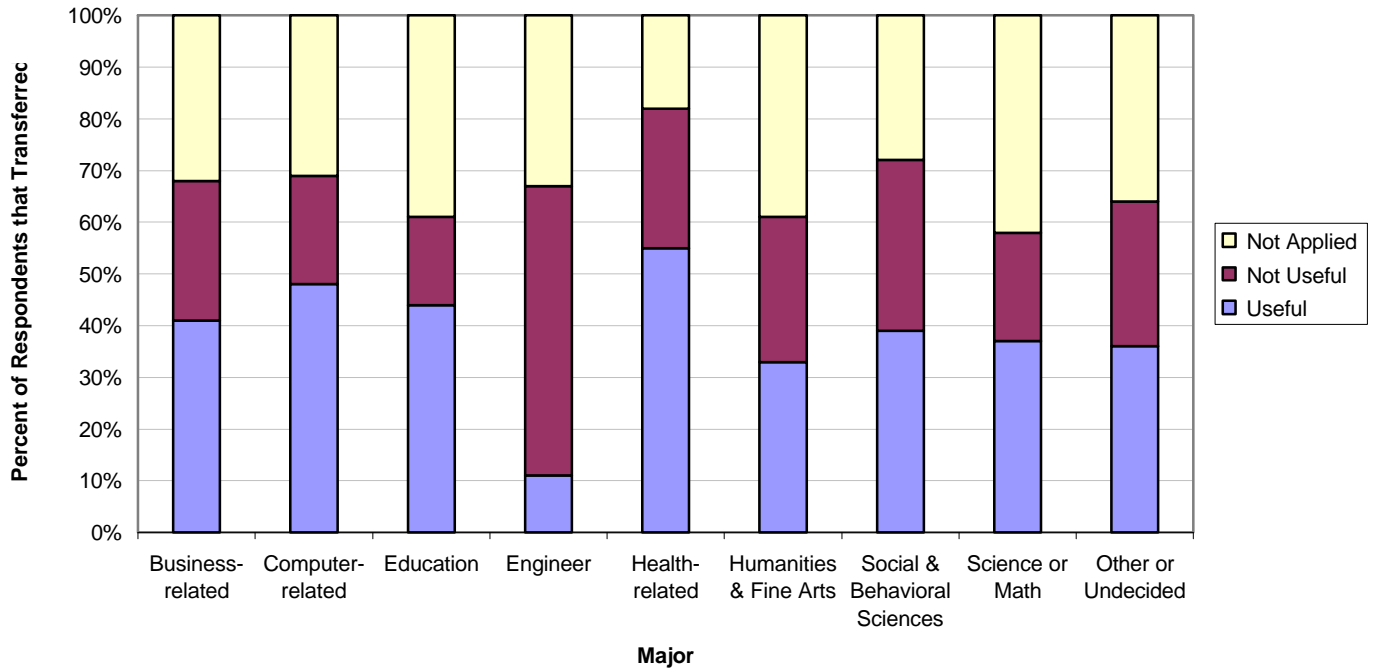


Figure 2h
Usefulness of Skills Related to Major After Transfer
By Major

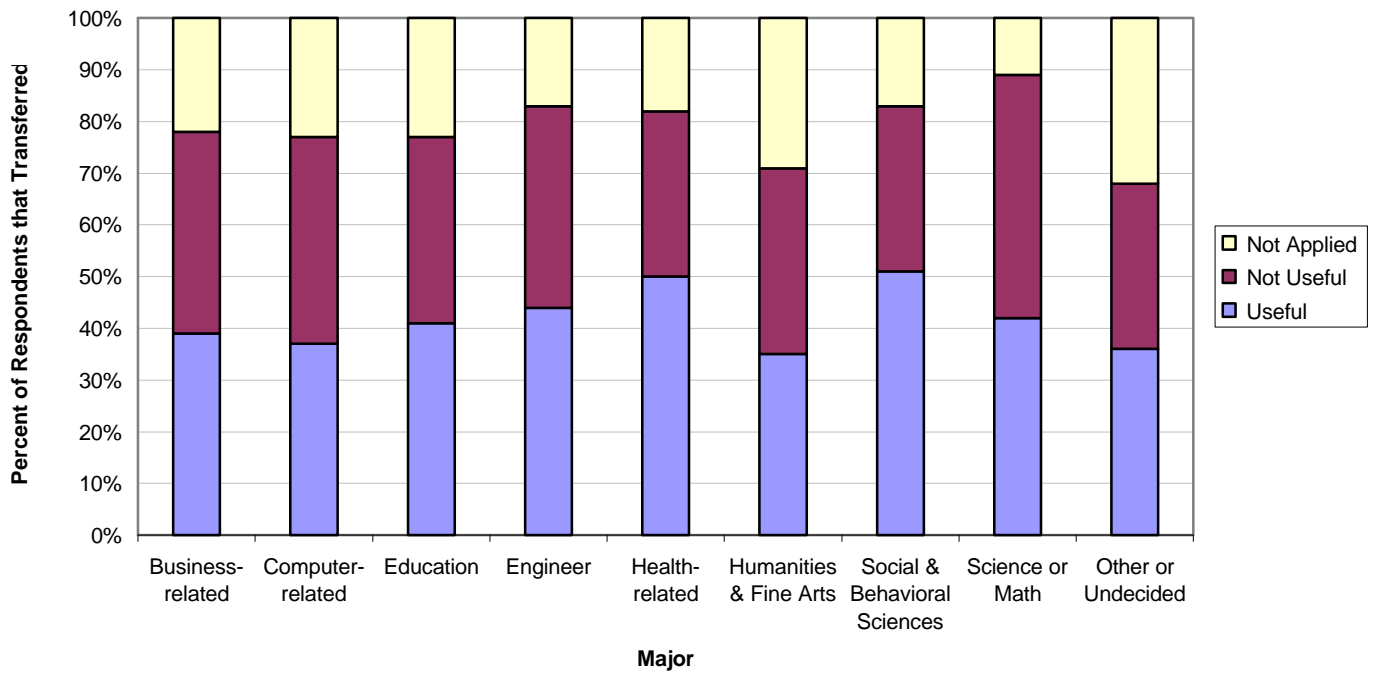


Figure 2i
Usefulness of Skills Not Related to Major After Transfer
By Major

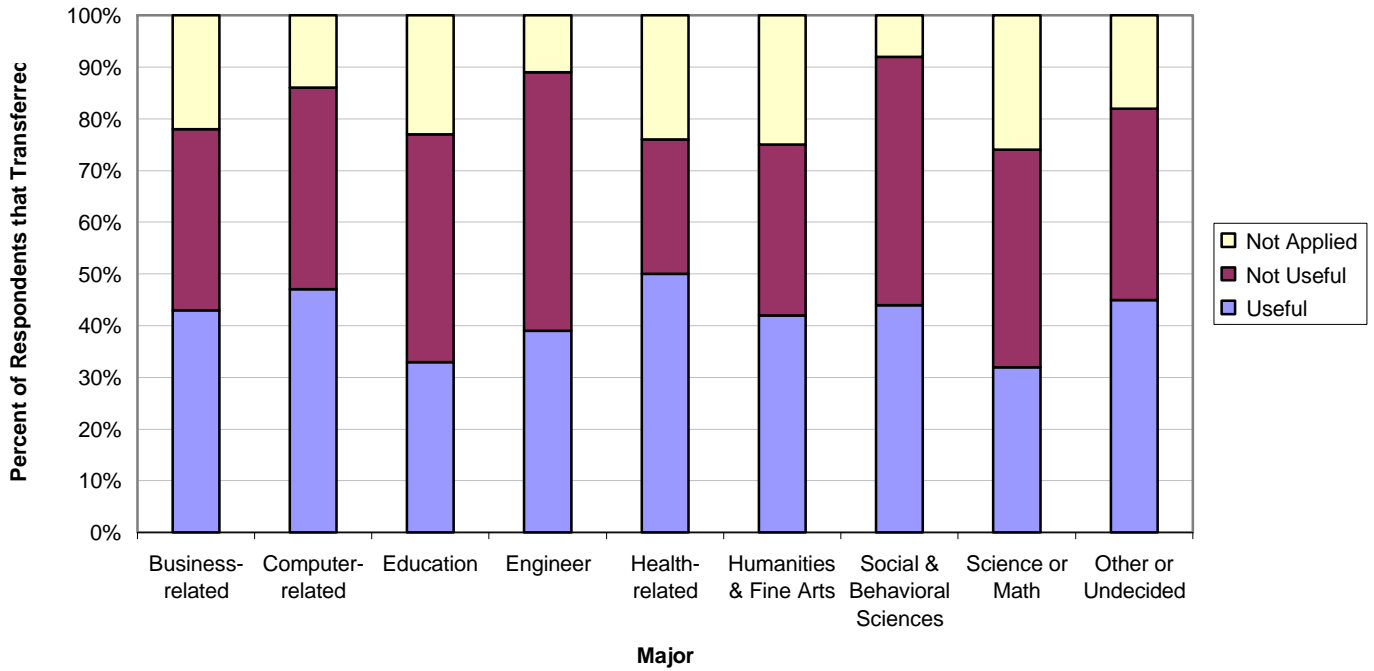
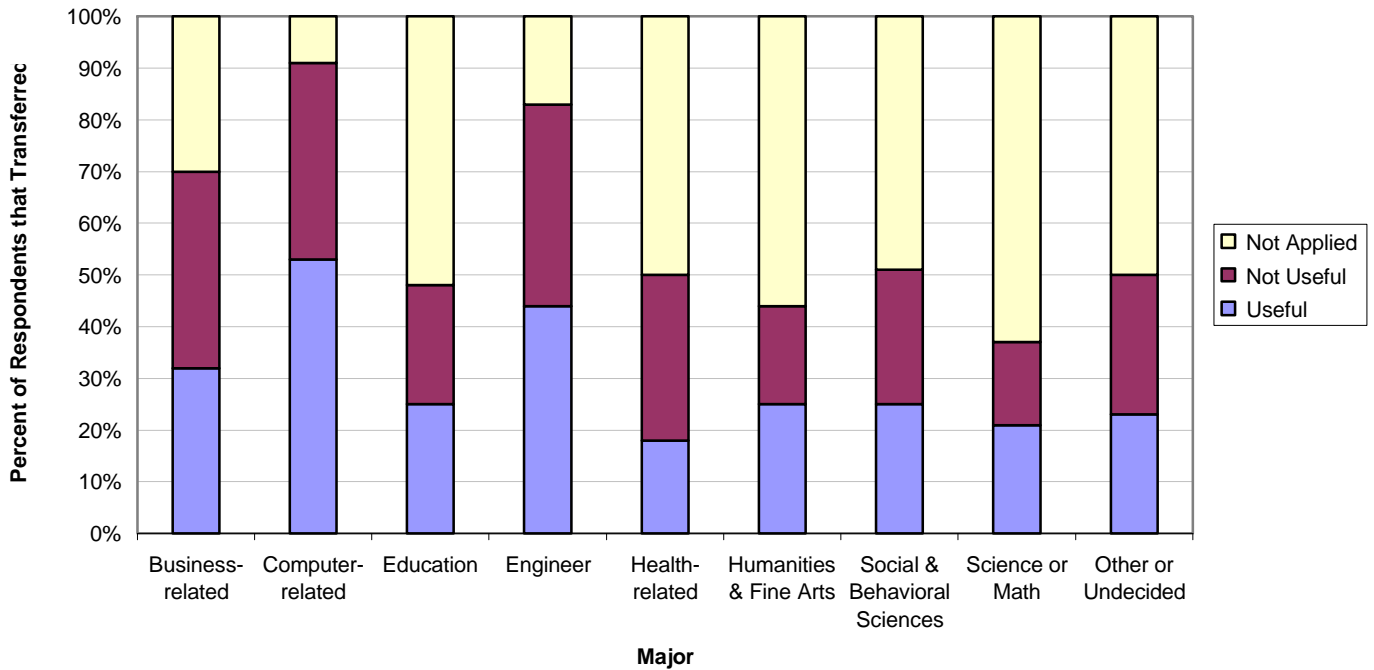


Figure 2j
Usefulness of Computer Skills After Transfer
By Major



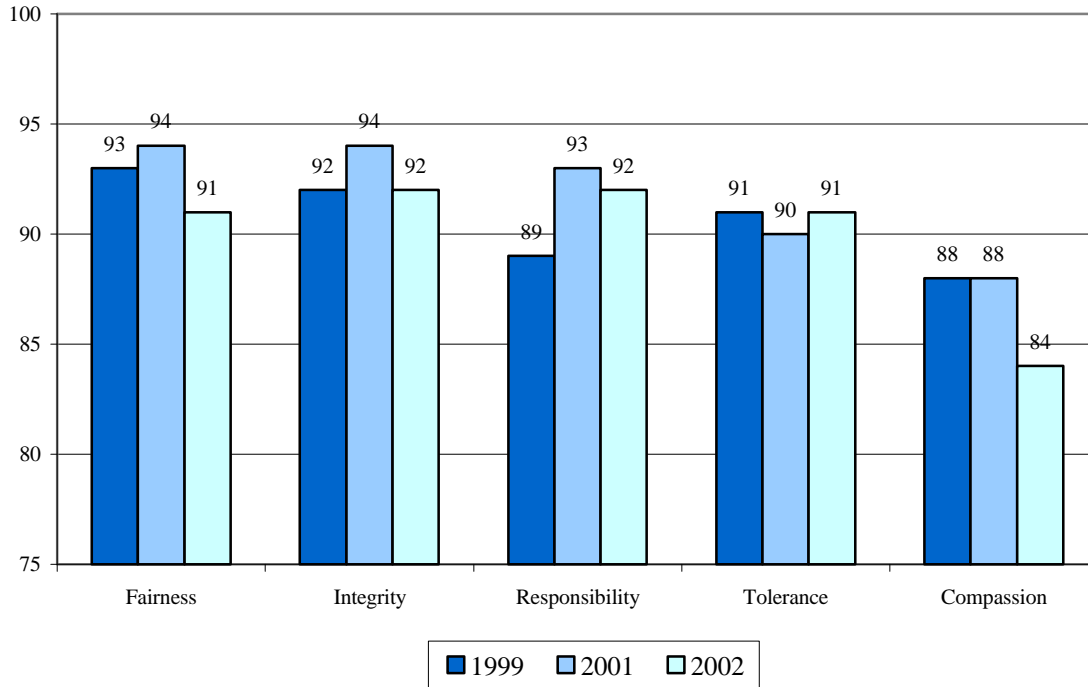
IV. Experience at Oakton

Survey items discussed in this section of the report were asked of all alumni, regardless of whether they transferred after they departed from Oakton. This year's survey asked these alumni about academic rigor in their classes, about core values they experienced at the College, and about their general satisfaction with the College as measured by responses to the question "If you had it to do over, how likely would you be to attend Oakton again?"

Academic rigor was measured by alumni responses to the question "How easy or hard was it to earn grades of 'A' at Oakton?" Respondents used a seven-point scale in which "1" meant "very easy" and "7" meant "very hard." On this scale, a response of "4" could be interpreted as non-committal, and ratings of "5" through "7" could be interpreted as positive, if one believes that difficulty in earning A grades is a positive assessment of academic rigor. Two in five (41%) registered positive responses, and another 22 percent were non-committal. Put another way, over one-third of alumni (37%) said it was fairly easy to earn A grades at Oakton.

Oakton has placed substantial emphasis on its core values, which are central to ethical conduct. College values fairness, integrity, tolerance, responsibility, and compassion. In 1999, 2001 and again in 2002, a question was included in the baccalaureate alumni survey that asked alumni to rate College staff members (faculty, administrators, and others) on the extent to which they lived up to these values. Figure 2 below provides a comparison of the findings from these three surveys.

Figure 3
Living up to Oakton's Core Values
Percent Responding 3 or 4 on 4-point scale, where 1 = very poorly and 4 = very well



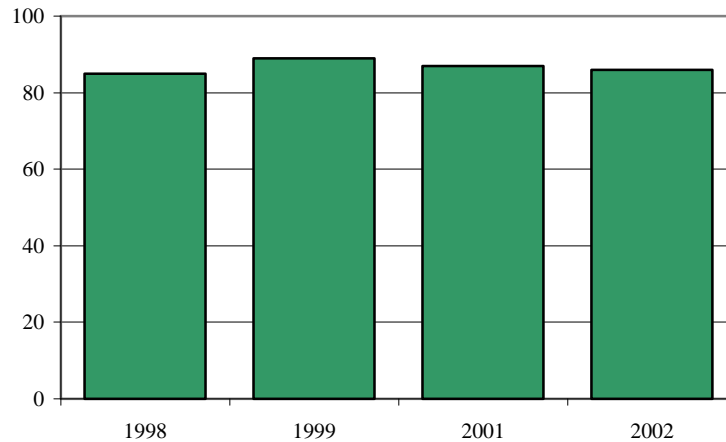
Comparison of these findings from these three surveys shows relative stability across the values, with no more than a four percent change in any one from 2001 to 2002. However, the overall pattern from this year to last year may prompt consideration, since only the value of tolerance received an increased percentage of positive responses compared to last year, and all other values declined somewhat. Therefore, to examine this in more detail, we compared responses of the two alumni groups surveyed in 2002, those who were last at Oakton in 1998-99 and those last at the College in 2000-01. We found a modest decline in the percent who gave scores of 3 or 4 to each value between 1998-99 to the 2000-01 students. The average percent of students last at Oakton in 1998-99 who gave scores of 3 or 4 to the five values was 92.5, while the average percent for students last at Oakton in 2000-01 was 87.8 percent.

Two items in the survey elicited alumni perceptions of their experience at the College as a whole. The first question asked how successful respondents were in achieving their objective at Oakton. On a five-point scale (1 = "Not at all successful", 5 = "Very successful"), 84 percent gave ratings of 4 or 5, only 4 percent gave ratings of 1 or 2, and 11 percent gave the rating of 3. In the surveys conducted in the years 2000 and 2001, 81 percent and 83 percent, respectively, rated their success in achieving their objectives at the 4 or 5 level. These findings indicate that, over time, over eight of ten alumni⁵ indicate they met their objectives at Oakton.

⁵ Note this refers to alumni who meet criteria for inclusion in the annual Baccalaureate-Transfer Alumni survey.

The second question asked to elicit perceptions of alumni's Oakton experience was "If you had it to do over, how likely would you be to attend Oakton again?" A seven-point scale was used, (1 = "Very unlikely", 7 = "Very likely"). Six out of seven respondents (85%) responded at the 5, 6 or 7 level. The same question was asked in the 1998, 1999 and 2001 alumni surveys. Figure 3 presents results from these surveys. Data show that, over time, the percent of alumni who, if they had it to do over again, would still have attended Oakton remains high. Well over 80 percent of alumni say they would attend Oakton again.⁶

Figure 4
Percent Who Would Attend Oakton Again



Outstanding Persons, Courses, or Events

As it has for some years, the survey included an open-ended qualitative item providing alumni an opportunity to identify and describe any "especially outstanding person, course, or event" at Oakton. The telephone interviewers were asked to probe to elicit as complete a response as possible. Alumni mentioned 160 different individuals in their comments. Almost all comments were highly laudatory and provide additional evidence of the general satisfaction of our alumni with their experience at Oakton. The Office of Research consolidated comments about any single individual, and sent memos and letters conveying these comments to the recipient or, if the individual was deceased, to his or her immediate family. Copies were provided for administrative supervisors. Anecdotal feedback from recipients indicates that this mailing is much appreciated by members of the College faculty, staff, and administration.

⁶ Again, findings refer to alumni who meet criteria for inclusion in the annual Baccalaureate-Transfer Alumni survey.

VI. Conclusion

The annual Baccalaureate Alumni survey continues to provide Oakton with information about and perceptions of alumni of baccalaureate transfer programs. What respondents tell us is valuable in planning for new initiatives and improving existing programs. Much of this information can be obtained from no source other than direct feedback from alumni. Alumni survey topics and specific questions are constructed in consultation with administrators, departments, and offices doing program reviews. In this way, the research needs of many constituencies can be met with a single survey.

Alumni perceptions of Oakton continue to be highly positive, both in terms of overall evaluations of the College and comments about individuals who made a significant impact on students. The College can take pride in the quality of programs and services provided, the high regard alumni have for faculty and staff, and the institution's commitment to continuing its research to identify not just strengths, but also areas in need of attention.

Additional copies of this report are available at the College Office of Research. The Report is also posted on the Office of Research web site at <http://www.oakton.edu/resource/oir/resmenu.html>.

Appendix A Collection and Analysis of Data

As has been the case for some years, baccalaureate program alumni were selected for the survey if they had last attended the College either one or three years previously, and either had been awarded an associates' degree or had earned at least 30 college level credit hours at Oakton.⁷ Initially, in June 2002, student ID numbers, home phone numbers, names and other relevant biographic-demographic variables were downloaded from files extracted from the College's student database. These additional variables included gender, birth year, race-ethnicity, first and last terms of enrollment, curriculum, earned credit, cumulative GPA, and Oakton degree information.⁸

Two telephone lists were prepared, with separate lists for each year of last enrollment. Telephone interviewing was out-sourced to a firm specialized in such surveys. Survey forms and telephone lists were prepared in matching colors, a set for each of the two years of last enrollment at Oakton. In July, the phone lists, survey scripts, and a list of commonly used college and university FICE were sent to the interviewing firm. The firm used trained telephone interviewers who did the calling on site, with a supervisor present. Oakton asked for no more than 600 interviews, 300 for each of the two lists.

Of the 2,521 baccalaureate program alumni who met the survey criteria, 1,114 were last enrolled in 1998-99 and 1,407 in 2000-01. Of these, 339 alumni had earned Associate's degrees from Oakton.

Telephone logs show that some alumni were called as often as ten times. Where possible, messages were left, and where changed telephone numbers were available, they were followed up. Nonetheless, our vendor experienced 780 disconnected or otherwise invalid telephone numbers.⁹ The vendor indicated this percentage of disconnected or invalid numbers is typical for a population like Oakton's baccalaureate alumni.

Subtracting these 683 alumni reduced the effective survey population to 1,741 alumni. Altogether, the vendor completed 515 interviews.

Interview responses were entered on forms with pre-coded response positions. Upon completion of the telephoning, the vendor entered student identification numbers from identity codes on each survey, and college code numbers for those colleges less often attended. The vendor then outsourced the forms for keying to electronic files. When survey data were delivered, by e-mail and floppy disk, the data were read into SAS software using a personal

⁷ Since curriculum codes are carried forward in the student base from previous terms unless updated, codes were initially selected from the term table for the last term of enrollment. Then, since new codes are entered when degrees or certificates are awarded, any award table codes superseded term table codes. If more than one degree was awarded, the code for the most recent degree program was selected.

⁸ An advantage to using the telephone method for this survey is that data from the student database can be associated reliably with each respondent.

⁹ Data available in the student database do not reflect phone numbers changed since last enrollment.

computer in the research office. The student identification number was used to merge the survey data and the biographic-demographic data. Data were analyzed using standard statistical procedures and SAS software. Microsoft Word and Excel were used in preparing the report, tables, figures, and appendices. Appendix C contains the survey instrument and the over-all numeric results for each item.

Responses

The 515 alumni with whom telephone interviews were completed constituted 30 percent of the 1,741 alumni in the effective survey population, slightly more than has been obtained in recent years (21% in 2001, 27% in 2000, 30% in 1999, and 28% in 1998). The telephone survey method has shown itself to have several advantages over the mail survey method. It is not biased against those who set aside mail surveys to be done “later,” and reduces the time frame for responding to “now.” However, out-of-date telephone numbers and public skepticism engendered by telemarketers claiming to be “conducting a survey” appear to adversely affect responses.

Responses were slightly stronger for alum who earned an Oakton degree (27%) than for those who had not (19%), and was slightly weaker for those away from the college for three years (19%) than that for those last enrolled one year previously (21%).

Response Bias

Can information about these respondents be interpreted as representative of the population surveyed when interviews were completed with 30 percent of the population? The argument that it can depends on comparison on a variety of key demographic variables for the 515 respondents and for the whole population (N = 2,521).

Appendix B shows the data for these two groups. On all of the standard demographic variables — gender, racial-ethnic identity, age at entry, age at exit,¹⁰ credit earned, grade point average, and whether awarded an Oakton degree — differences between the two groups are small, suggesting the respondent group is highly representative of all alumni who met criteria for inclusion in the study.

¹⁰ Ages when first and last enrolled were calculated as the year of the first or last enrollment minus the birth year. This takes account of differences for alumni last enrolled three years or one year before the survey.

Appendix B

Student Characteristics – Alumni Population and Survey Respondents

Alumni Characteristic	Alumni Population (N=2521)		Survey Respondents (N=515)		Difference Btwn Respondents and Population
	n	%	n	%	
Gender					
Male	1,354	54 %	283	55 %	+ 1 %
Female	1,167	46 %	232	45 %	- 1 %
Entry Age					
Less than 24	2,077	82 %	387	75 %	- 7 %
24-25	82	3 %	13	3 %	- 1 %
26-39	240	10 %	67	13 %	+ 3 %
40-59	111	4 %	45	9 %	+ 4 %
60 or older	11	<1%	3	1 %	+ 0 %
Mean Age	21.8		23.4		1.6
Median Age	19.0		19.0		0.0
Exit Age					
Less than 24	1,210	48 %	229	44 %	- 4 %
24-25	334	13 %	56	11 %	- 2 %
25-39	677	27 %	118	23 %	- 4 %
40-59	263	10 %	97	19 %	+ 8 %
60 or older	37	1 %	15	3 %	+ 1 %
Mean Age	27.5		30.2		2.6
Median Age	24.0		24.0		0.0
Ethnicity					
African American	68	3 %	16	3 %	+ 0 %
Asian or Pacific Island	440	17 %	70	14 %	- 4 %
Caucasian	1,621	64 %	347	67 %	+ 3 %
Hispanic	95	4 %	21	4 %	+ 0 %
Native American	4	0 %	0	0 %	- 0 %
Other/No Response	293	12 %	61	12 %	+ 0 %
Credit Hours Earned					
30-44 hours	942	37 %	174	34 %	- 4 %
45-59 hours	615	24 %	136	26 %	+ 2 %
60 or more hours	964	38 %	205	40 %	+ 2 %
Mean Hours	53.9		55.2		1.3
Median Hours	52.0		53.0		1.0
Grade Point Average					
Mean	2.78		2.93		0.15
Median	2.82		2.94		0.12
Oakton Degree Received					
AA	326	13 %	86	17 %	+ 4 %
AFA	1	<1%	1	<1%	+ 0 %
AS	12	<1%	3	1 %	+ 0 %

Appendix C
Survey Instrument with Results

Oakton Community College

SUMMER 2002 TELEPHONE SURVEY OF FORMER STUDENTS
Enrolled in transfer program courses

_____ ID Number of this respondent. **(FROM CALL LIST)**

Hello, This is _____ calling former students from Oakton Community College. May I speak to _____ please? **(MAKE USUAL NOTE FOR RETURNING CALL, ETC.)**

_____ **If you find that a former student is deceased, please enter a code 2 at the left.**

Hi _____. I am calling on behalf of Oakton Community College. The College is surveying students formerly enrolled in courses that transfer to 4-year colleges or universities. Information and insights you have are important to the College as it reviews its programs and services. We have some questions about your experience at the college that we'd like to ask you. *There are no right or wrong answers.* We are interested in your honest opinion. Your privacy will be fully protected. Responses will be statistically summarized along with those of other former students, and nothing will be reported that could identify you individually. Is that OK?

(CIRCLE ONLY ONE RESPONSE) unless otherwise directed

EVERYONE (Questions 1 – 6)

1. First, I will read you five objectives often given for enrolling at Oakton. Please tell me, which one best reflects your main objective when you were at Oakton? **(Circle one.)**

N = 515

- 68% Take coursework for transfer to another college.
- 8% Explore courses to decide on a career.
- 5% Improve skills needed in my present job.
- 6% Obtain skills needed for entry into a new or different job.
- 12% Take courses for personal interest or self-development.

2. When you first enrolled at Oakton, did you plan to earn an Oakton degree, or only to take courses? N = 513 37% **Degree** 63% **Courses only**

3. How successful were you in achieving your objective? Please use a 5-point scale where 1 means “Not at all Successful” and 5 means “Very Successful.”

	Not at all Successful						Very Successful
	1	2	3	4	5		
N = 514	2%	2%	11%	21%	63%		

4. Had you attended another college or university BEFORE coming to Oakton?

N = 515 42% **Yes** 58% **No**

(If “No”, skip to Question 6.)

5. Had you already earned a bachelor’s degree before you last attended Oakton?

N = 215 19% **Yes** 81% **No**

6. Did you attend any colleges or universities AFTER leaving Oakton? 75% **Yes** 25% **No**

(If “Yes”, continue with Questions 6a, 6b. If “No”, skip to Question 12.)

6a. Which colleges or universities have you attended after leaving Oakton?

6b. Did you GRADUATE (earn a degree) from these colleges/universities?

(For each school mentioned, check column if attended and earned degree. Read back for accuracy. If an “other” school is mentioned, probe for its city, state, country).

	<u>Question 6a</u> Attended?	<u>Question 6b</u> Earn Degree?
De Paul University	_____	_____
DeVry Institute of Technology (in Illinois)	_____	_____
Illinois State University	_____	_____
Loyola University	_____	_____
National-Louis University	_____	_____
Northeastern Illinois University	_____	_____
Northern Illinois University	_____	_____
Roosevelt University	_____	_____
Southern Illinois University at Carbondale	_____	_____
University of Illinois at Chicago	_____	_____
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	_____	_____
College of DuPage	_____	_____
College of Lake County	_____	_____
Harper College	_____	_____
Wright College of the City Col. of Chicago	_____	_____
Other (Name) _____	_____	_____
(Location) _____		
Other (Name) _____	_____	_____
(Location) _____		

FOUR-YEAR TRANSFERS ONLY (Questions 7 – 11)

7. Please tell me how many courses you took at Oakton in...
(Circle one.)

(N=385-386)	0	1	2	3 or more
Mathematics	17%	16%	26%	41%
Computer Science (not CIS, Computer Information Systems)	68%	16%	10%	6%

(If “0” for both, skip to Question 9.)

8. Please rate that course or courses on how well it or they prepared you for more advanced courses in that area after you transferred. If you did not take more courses in that field, please tell me that. Use a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means, did not prepare me at all well, and 5 means, prepared me very well. (Skip those marked “0” in the question above.)

	Took no more courses		Did take more courses					Very Well
			Not at all Well					
			N	%	1	2	3	
Mathematics	319	15%	271	5%	6%	25%	35%	29%
Computer Science (not CIS, Computer Information Systems)	131	20%	105	5%	7%	22%	34%	32%

9. Since you transferred, what has been your most recent major? (Do not read the list aloud. Just circle the best fit for the response. Confirm the major as given.)

(N=385)

- 20% Business-related (accounting, finance, marketing, management, etc.)
- 11% Computer-related (computer information systems, computer programming, computer science, computerized graphic design, information technology, telecommunications, **but for computer engineering, use engineering, # 4**)
- 16% Education (early childhood, elementary, secondary, special, etc.)
- 5% Engineering (chemical, civil, computer, electrical, mechanical, etc.)
- 6% Health-related (nursing, allied health, medical technology and records, etc.)
- 14% Humanities, fine arts (art, communications, film, language, literature, music, philosophy, theater; also general liberal arts, cultural studies, etc.)
- 19% Social and behavioral sciences, studies (anthropology, economics, geography, history, political science, psychology, sociology, social problem studies, etc.)
- 5% Sciences or mathematics (astronomy, biology, chemistry, geology, mathematics, physics, mathematics, etc.)
- 6% Other, including undecided: (**Please specify**) _____)

10. Thinking back over what you learned at Oakton, what has been especially useful to you in courses you have taken at your transfer institution? Please rate the following on a 5-point scale where 1 means "Not very Useful", and 5 means "Extremely Useful." Or if this does not apply for you, please tell me that. (If respondents say this does not apply or doesn't much apply, mark "0.")

	Not Very Useful					Extremely Useful	Did Apply	Did not apply
	1	2	3	4	5	N	0	
(N=386-387)								
Mathematics skills	7%	6%	26%	33%	28%	286	26%	
Speaking skills	2%	5%	24%	35%	35%	310	20%	
Writing skills	1%	5%	25%	35%	34%	344	11%	
Computer skills	10%	11%	29%	28%	22%	227	41%	
Skills applying ethics to fields in which you may work	5%	7%	29%	31%	28%	259	33%	
Problem-solving skills	3%	5%	27%	42%	23%	333	14%	
Teamwork skills	3%	8%	28%	37%	24%	330	15%	
Other "people" skills	2%	6%	25%	39%	28%	347	10%	
Information about content in your major field	9%	14%	24%	27%	26%	303	22%	
Information about content in other fields	5%	10%	34%	34%	17%	313	19%	

11. Considering all the colleges or universities attended since you left Oakton, please compare the amount of reading that Oakton required with that required at other colleges or universities. Use a 7-point scale where 1 means that "Oakton Required Much Less" and 7 means that "Oakton Required Much More" than another school. If you think there was no difference, use 4.

	Oakton Required Much Less						Oakton Required Much More	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
N = 385	6%	10%	16%	43%	16%	4%	4%	

EVERYONE (Questions 12 – End)

12. Are you planning to enroll in college in the coming year? 53% **Yes** 47% **No** N = 505

13. How easy or hard was it to earn grades of “A” at Oakton? Please use a scale where 1 means “Very Easy” and 7 means “Very Hard.”

	Very Easy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very Hard
N = 511		6%	13%	18%	22%	30%	7%	4%	

14. While you were a student, were you aware that your registration gave you the benefit of an Oakton computer account? 54% **Yes** 46% **No** N = 512

15. How well did Oakton College staff members (faculty, administrators, and others) live up to these values? (Please use a 4-point scale where 1 means “Very Poorly” and 4 means “Very Well”.)

	Very Poorly			Very Well
(N = 511-514)	1	2	3	4
Compassion	3%	14%	34%	50%
Fairness	2%	7%	32%	59%
Integrity	2%	6%	26%	66%
Responsibility	2%	6%	30%	62%
Tolerance	2%	8%	33%	57%

16. Was there an especially outstanding person, course, or event at Oakton? Please describe: **(Probe)**

17. If you had it to do over, how likely would you be to attend Oakton again? Please use a 7-point scale where 1 means “Very Unlikely” and 7 means “Very Likely.”

	Unlikely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very Likely	Very
N = 514		4%	1%	4%	6%	13%	16%	57%		

18. Would you like to receive a summary of the findings from this survey?

N = 513 46% **Yes** 54% **No**

Appendix D
Institutions Attended After Oakton
(In Alphabetical Order)

Institution	Number*	Institution	Number*
American Academy of Art	1	New York University	1
Aurora University	2	North Central College	1
Barat College	1	North Park University	1
Bradley University	2	Northeastern Illinois U	82
California State University - Fullerton	1	Northern Illinois U	14
California State University - Los Angeles	1	Northwestern U	4
Carthage College, WI	2	Parkland College	1
College of Lake County	3	Prairie View A and M University, TX	1
Colorado State University	1	Robert Morris College	1
Columbia College-Illinois	18	Rockford College	1
Concordia University	1	Roosevelt University	20
DePaul University	48	Saint Norbert College, WI	1
DeVry Inst of Tech	6	Saint Xavier University	1
Dominican University (Rosary C)	1	School of the Art Institute of Chicago	1
Eastern Illinois University	6	Shimer College	1
Elmhurst College	3	Southern Illinois Univ, at Carbondale	7
Ferris State University, MI	1	Southwestern College, CA	1
Governors State University	1	Triton College	3
IL Institute of Technology	1	Truman College (Chic. City Colleges)	1
Illinois Institute of Art	2	University of Arizona	2
Illinois State University	14	University of California, Los Angeles	1
Kendall College	2	University of IL at Chicago	63
Kishwaukee College	1	University of IL at Urbana-Champaign	11
Lake Forest College	3	University of Miami, FL	1
Lewis University	2	Western Illinois University	4
Loyola University	17	William Rainey Harper College	8
Marquette University, WI	4	Wright College, (Chic. City Colleges)	3
McHenry County College	2		
Midwestern Univ. (Chgo C of Osteo Med)	2	U.S., not identified	6
Naropa University, CO	1	Other than in the United States	1
National-Louis University	16		

* Includes 36 respondents who transferred to more than one institution. Fifteen respondents said they transferred but did not give name of transfer institution.