

LEARNING TOGETHER



2003 - 2008

Strategic Plan



LETTER FROM BOARD CHAIRMAN AND PRESIDENT

July 2003

As we move forward into the new millennium—and leave behind some of the most turbulent times in recent American history—it is heartening to reexamine Oakton’s mission, vision, and values, and to remind ourselves how profoundly the College touches thousands of people in the communities we serve.

Indeed, by providing access to the tools of literacy and learning to everyone who wishes to use them, Oakton symbolizes what it means to be a democracy. As uncertainty continues to weave through the fabric of our lives, Oakton’s mission becomes more important than ever—to enable people of all ages and backgrounds to become empowered, knowledgeable, and principled citizens of the world. While Oakton enjoys a reputation as one of the finest learning communities in the nation, we are mindful that we must continue to raise the bar as we prepare our students to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

A meaningful commitment to educational excellence begins with consensus about the most important goals for student learning. During 2002 and 2003, members of the Oakton community came together to puzzle out how the College can build on its proud heritage of preparing students to be among the best in their chosen fields and to be productive contributors to society.

The following pages set forth a new strategic plan for the College—ambitious goals and objectives that serve not only to reinforce Oakton’s mission, but also to guide our thinking and decision-making through 2008. Affirming an invigorated commitment to teaching and learning, the strategic goals point the way toward an even richer learning environment within which students and faculty can see themselves, their possibilities, and responsibilities, with greater clarity and adaptability.

In the months ahead, we look forward to working and learning together as we begin to implement these goals that will take Oakton to an even higher level of achievement.



Joan DiLeonardi
Chairman
Board of Trustees



Margaret B. Lee
President

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Joan DiLeonardi
Chairman, Oakton Board of Trustees

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret B. Lee".

Margaret B. Lee
President

OUR VISION, MISSION AND VALUES



Oakton's vision, mission and values are based on long-standing and fundamental principles guiding the College's work and the relationships among all those who work and study at Oakton, as well as members of the community and professional colleagues throughout the nation. The vision, mission and values were formally ratified by the Board of Trustees on October 20, 1998. They were reaffirmed by the Board on October 15, 2002.

We are the Community's College

- We are dedicated, first, to excellence in teaching and learning.
- We challenge our students to experience the hard work and satisfaction of learning that leads to intellectual growth and we support them academically, emotionally, and socially.
- We encourage them to entertain and question ideas, think critically, solve problems, and engage with other cultures, with one another and with us.
- We expect our students to assume responsibility for their own learning, to exercise leadership and to apply ethical principles in their academic, work, and personal lives.
- We demand from ourselves and our students tolerance, fairness, responsibility, compassion, and integrity.

We are a Community of Learners

- We provide education and training for and throughout a lifetime.
- We seek to improve and expand the services we offer in support of the people in the communities we serve.
- We promote a caring community of staff and faculty members, students, administrators, and trustees who, in keeping with our values, work together to fulfill our mission.

We are a Changing Community

- We recognize that change is inevitable and that education must be for the future.
- We respond to change informed by our values and our responsibility to our students and our communities.
- We challenge our students to be capable global citizens, guided by knowledge and ethical principles, who will shape the future.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

In accordance with the Illinois Community College Act, Oakton provides, at minimum, the following educational programs and services:

- Baccalaureate and general education for students planning to transfer to four-year colleges and/or to earn an associate degree in liberal arts, science, engineering or fine arts.
- Occupational education to provide students with career training suitable for obtaining employment or enhancing occupational skills.
- General or developmental studies for students requiring additional preparation before they can begin college-level education.
- Continuing education for residents, employers and employees of the community desiring classes without having to enroll in formal college-level courses.
- Public service activities to meet specialized needs of the community; such activities may include workshops, seminars and customized employee training programs offered on or off campus.
- Student services, such as counseling and advisement, testing and tutoring.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The strategic planning process began in 2002. The Board of Trustees and President Lee agreed that Oakton's process should be based on these principles:

- The process will be inclusive, involving students, faculty, staff, administrators, the Board and the community;
- The process will be simple, building as much as possible on regularly scheduled meetings and existing data and information about the College, the geographic area we serve, and the broader state, national and global environments that affect higher education in general and Oakton in specific;
- The process will link with other key Oakton initiatives, including marketing, assessment, budgeting and the next North Central Association self-study;
- The process will be enjoyable as well as instructive and productive for participants.

The strategic planning process resulted in both broad-based strategic goals and recommended procedures for developing objectives and budget requests that link with the strategic goals. The procedures remain simple and do not require voluminous paperwork.

Specific activities comprising the process included the following:

Spring 2002

Oakton Board of Trustees affirmed extension of 1999-2002 strategic goals through 2002-2003 academic year. Oakton faculty, staff and administrators engaged in informal discussions about what they are experiencing at the College and in the community that might impact Oakton's programs and services.

Summer and Fall 2002

The major strategic planning activities occurred during Summer and Fall 2002. They included:

- Four focus groups with community residents on July 16-17, 2002.
- Community survey distributed with fall credit class schedule mailed to all homes and businesses in the district. The survey obtained community input about perceptions of Oakton, use of the media, and desired programs/services. Over 1000 surveys were returned.
- Data and information about Oakton and the community distributed to all Oakton personnel in September 2002; this material provided the basis for subsequent strategic planning discussions at all levels.
- Board of Trustees Committee of the Whole, October 15; Board affirmed Oakton's vision, mission and values.



- Multiple meetings with Oakton faculty, staff, administrators, students and board members to explore what is happening in Oakton and the community and to identify key attributes and potential strategic goals.
- Oakton representatives met with leaders of school districts and with Career Program Advisory Committees to explore what is happening in business, industry and education throughout the area. Leaders were asked to talk about Oakton, their businesses and industries, and their perceptions of what the College should be doing over the next six years.
- Follow-up discussions with Advisory Committee members at Recognition Dinner, November 18, 2003. Tom Champoux, Effectiveness Institute, Colorado, presented an overview of what's happening with respect to the nation and the world in the economy and education.
- Oakton faculty, staff and administrators asked to tell a story about an experience or memory of Oakton that best exemplifies what they want Oakton to be—or not to be—in the next five to six years.
- Strategic Planning Committee formulated draft strategic goals and objectives.

Spring 2003

- Draft strategic goals and objectives disseminated throughout the College for feedback.
- Based on feedback, Strategic Planning Committee revised proposed strategic goals and objectives and presented them to President's Council.
- May, 2003, Board of Trustees adopted strategic goals and objectives for 2003-08.

Years 2003-2007

Each department in the College will work on objectives to move Oakton toward achieving strategic goals. Objectives will be used as a basis for building budgets for fiscal year 2004 and after.

Year 2008

College will review vision, mission and values statement and strategic goals in light of prior years' experience, Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association Self Study and Fall 2007 accreditation visit, and other key events. A new strategic plan will be developed. Affirmation or revision of Oakton's vision, mission and values will take place as appropriate.

External Environment

Oakton's external environment is shaped by trends and characteristics of residents, businesses, educational institutions, public agencies and governments, other organizations and the economy. The external environment provides the setting within which the College develops and offers programs and services that respond to student, employer and community needs. The external environment also affects resources available to the College.

To learn about the external environment, we held numerous conversations with local, state and national leaders; convened meetings with employers; reviewed public and professional literature; and analyzed data and information about the area, the state and the global economy. Based on these studies, Oakton identified these important factors describing our external environment:

Population

The district's population is stable in terms of size (an estimated 450,000 individuals). Projections indicate the population will rise to about 458,000 by the year 2020.

The district is becoming increasingly diverse with respect to ethnicity, race, nation of origin, culture, religion, educational background, English language competency and household composition (for example, single-parent families and multiple generation households).

The population is well-educated, upper middle class. For example, 49 percent of adults age 25 and above have a college degree, compared to 26 percent statewide and 24 percent nationally. The 1999 median household income in Oakton's district was \$68,940, compared to \$46,590 statewide and \$41,990 nationally.

K-12 public school systems are strong. Recent federal and state legislation has raised the importance of K-12 high-stakes testing and focused on education in basic areas such as reading, writing, numeracy, problem solving and critical thinking. The district also contains a number of private and parochial schools that offer all levels of education through high school.

The number of school-age children is slowly growing, although projected enrollments do not reach peaks of the early 1980s. For example, public high schools in Oakton's district enrolled 22,700 students in 2001-02 and project enrollments of 24,600 in 2007-08; these numbers are well below the 37,000 students enrolled in these schools in the early 1980s.

Business and Industry

Employers continue to voice concerns about recruiting and retaining qualified employees, particularly in entry-level service, office support, manufacturing, and selected computer information and technology positions.



Vendor and industry-sponsored certification examinations have grown in number and visibility, especially in the information technology fields. Such certification is viewed by employers as assurance that an individual has acquired a known set of knowledge and skills.

The Area

The geographical base is largely developed, with minimum potential for new housing. New housing units are being built on land previously occupied by the Glenview Naval Air Station; eventually this area will contain some 1,600 new housing units ranging from condominiums to single family dwellings.

Local public governments, including five townships and 13 municipalities, as well as library and park districts, have traditions of high-quality service and relative autonomy.

There is a growing number and diversity of schools, organizations and commercial vendors offering education and training to residents and employees through distance education, in traditional classroom settings and at the workplace.

The area has a developed transportation infrastructure, with no significant changes anticipated in either main thoroughfares or public transportation. Discussions and debates continue about expanding O'Hare Airport and/or constructing a third major airport in Peotone.

Financial Base

The assessed value of taxable property in Oakton's district is more than \$15.47 billion. Unless approved by public referendum, the College's property tax rate increases are restricted to the consumer price index percentage for the prior December-to-December period.

Despite an uncertain economy and downturns beginning in the year 2000, the district's economy remains relatively strong. Oakton's district houses more than 25,000 businesses of all sizes. The labor market includes substantial numbers of employees in service, financial, health care and related occupations at all levels. Unemployment remains low.

Illinois faced a budget shortfall of over \$8 billion in FY2003. Like other states, Illinois is reducing support for higher education. It is unlikely the state's financial health will improve substantially over the next several years.

State agencies, legislators, accreditation agencies, the federal government and the public continue to demand more accountability from schools at all levels, including colleges and universities.

Internal Environment

In addition to examining trends and characteristics shaping the external environment, participants in Oakton's strategic planning process looked at trends and characteristics describing the College's programs, services, personnel, facilities and other resources.

Students

Nearly one-quarter of Oakton students already have a bachelor's degree or higher college degree.

Students have a broad range of educational goals and objectives. Forty-five percent plan to transfer, 44 percent enroll primarily for career or occupational reasons, 10 percent take courses mainly for personal interest or self-development, and 1 percent enroll to upgrade their basic academic skills.

Some 16 percent of Oakton students do not speak English as their native language. Oakton students speak more than 50 different languages. Over 1,000 students enroll in credit and 3,000 students enroll in non-credit English as a second language (ESL) courses each year.

There are over 15,000 enrollments in the Alliance's continuing education courses for health professionals each year, generating over 15,000 credits eligible for state reimbursement.

Oakton students transfer to over 640 different colleges and universities across the country. Schools in the Chicago area attract the largest number of transfers from Oakton.

Programs

Oakton offers associate degrees in liberal arts, science, engineering, art and music, as well as in 30 different career fields. The College also offers over 100 certificates in career fields.

Each term Oakton offers some 1,500 classes and the Alliance offers over 1,000 classes.

Four-fifths of credit enrollments are at the Des Plaines campus; one-fifth are at the Ray Hartstein Campus. Alliance courses are offered at over 150 different sites.

The College continues to expand course options with respect to scheduling, packaging and delivery modes. For example, it provides online and interactive television classes; classes scheduled for 5-8 weeks rather than the traditional semester; paired and sequenced courses focusing on specific themes; and media-based courses. A Fast-Track associate in arts program for returning adults permits students to earn a degree in seven terms, including summers, by attending classes one day a week.

The College has entered into a number of partnerships with area high schools, colleges and universities, and businesses to expand the number and nature of educational programs and services available to students and employees.



Faculty and Staff

Oakton employs 154 full-time faculty and some 500 part-time faculty to teach credit courses. The Alliance for Lifelong Learning employs over 700 part-time faculty members to teach non-credit adult and continuing education courses.

Over one-quarter of the 154 full-time faculty members joined Oakton within the past two years, and over 40 percent came to Oakton within the past four years. Half the administrators first came to Oakton or moved from faculty or staff into administrative positions in the past two years.

Over 800 people volunteer at Oakton each year as members of the Board of Trustees, the Oakton Educational Foundation, Advisory Committees, the VITA program, and special groups such as theater ushers and the Oakton Education Foundation Development Council.

Faculty and Technology

The College has high-quality, well-maintained facilities at both campuses. A 60,000-square-foot Tech Center will open at the Ray Hartstein Campus in 2005.

The College has made significant investments in technology over the past several years; it anticipates continuing to invest in technology for instructional as well as for administrative purposes. In fiscal year 2003 the college had over 1600 desktop computers in instructional laboratories, open labs, libraries, faculty and staff offices. The college will select and begin installation of a new student system in fiscal year 2004. A four-year replacement cycle for computers ensures that students, faculty and staff have access to current technology.

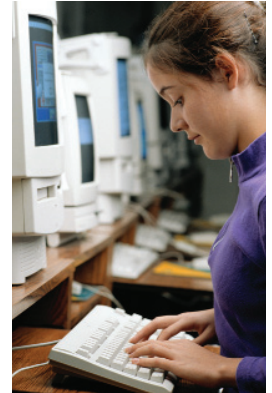
Finances

The College continues its course of prudent fiscal management while aggressively pursuing alternative funding sources. The total FY03 budget was \$80,934,485, including a \$7.11 million College contribution for planning and construction of the Ray Hartstein Campus Tech Center and upgrading institutional information systems.

Oakton receives revenues from these sources: local property taxes (39.1%); state government (23.0%); student tuition and fees (18.0%); other sources such as sales, service and auxiliary revenue (15.7%); and the federal government (4.2%).

A typical homeowner in Oakton's district pays just 2.39% of his property tax bill to Oakton.

The Oakton Educational Foundation has assets of over \$5 million.



Goals and Objectives

Quality Learning as the Core

We will continue to build and sustain academic programs and services of exemplary quality, making learning the core focus for students and employees.

- Continually review and revise offerings, adding and eliminating where appropriate.
- Maintain an innovative and rich array of professional development and training programs for all employees.
- Assess student learning at the classroom, course, program and institutional levels through a comprehensive assessment endeavor.
- Expand and strengthen the array of services and resources to support learning across the institution, in the classroom and beyond.
- Continue to recruit and retain high caliber, creative faculty.

Focus on Students

We will sustain Oakton's vigorous commitment to students, helping them learn, succeed and make wise choices with regard to their educations and futures.

- Maintain and enhance student support services as essential corollaries to helping students achieve their goals.
- Foster improved relationships among Oakton students and employees as well as community residents, employers and potential students.

Diversity

We will recognize, embrace and build on the rich diversity of students and communities in Oakton's district, and continue to work to enhance the diversity of Oakton's employees.

- Offer credit, noncredit and co-curricular courses and activities that reflect our community and that examine issues of diversity.
- Recruit and retain diverse employee and student groups.

Learning and Working Environment

We will maintain a first-rate learning and working environment for students, faculty, staff and administrators.

- Make people aware of Oakton's core values.
- Practice Oakton's core values.



Entrepreneurship and Innovation

We will be a leader and partner in developing creative new credit and noncredit programs, courses and services to meet emerging interests and demands.

- Set aside appropriate resources to support experimentation and risk-taking, recognizing that some projects will succeed and others may fail.

Community Partnerships and Workforce Development

We will strengthen partnerships and visibility within Oakton's district so residents, employees and employers recognize and use what Oakton offers and so that Oakton serves community needs.

- Strengthen the involvement of advisory committees.
- Involve college personnel in community outreach and organizations.
- Seek community and employer input on a regular basis.
- Develop new partnerships.
- Develop partnerships with community businesses and industries to help establish programs beneficial to them and to provide practicum, internship and work-based learning opportunities for our students.

Technology

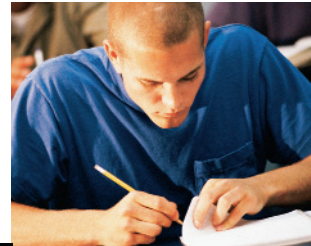
We will harness emerging and current technology to provide exemplary support for instruction, for administrative purposes and for the appropriate needs of Oakton students and employees.

- Ensure funds are allocated to acquire and replace equipment.
- Offer continual training.
- Develop and review Oakton's technology vision and plans, maintaining an appropriate balance among Oakton's commitment to working with students in person, providing contemporary instructional alternatives, such as online and Web-enhanced courses, and using technology for delivering services.

Responsibility

We will manage resources prudently both to maximize the use of existing assets and to preserve optimum flexibility for an uncertain future.

- Budget strategically (fund high priority strategic items first; make hard choices about what to reduce from budget areas for reallocation to fund innovations and bring the budget into balance).
- Aggressively seek external funds.
- Remain fiscally accountable.



IMPLEMENTATION

Each Oakton program and department will plan its activities and develop its budget to support Oakton's strategic goals and objectives. Within the College, areas are encouraged to work collaboratively, to build on complementary strengths and to minimize duplication or overlap.

While this strategic plan identifies objectives that will, in all likelihood, remain important through the life of the plan, it is important to recognize that new objectives might emerge as well. Thus the College expects that, over time, additional objectives will become important. They will be identified through program reviews, planning and budgeting; through continual work with external constituencies; through ongoing assessments of student learning outcomes and evaluations of programs and services; and through the impact of state and federal legislation, reporting requirements, and funding opportunities.

Departments will provide information about strategic goal implementation through the Semester Highlights reports and other communication vehicles.

Additional References

Additional information about Oakton Community College is available on the Oakton Web site www.oakton.edu and in a number of publications, including the College's *Annual Report*, the Oakton Community College Catalog, and brochures and newsletters. For more information, call the Office of College Relations, 847-635-1811.

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(as of July 2003)

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