

Baccalaureate Alumni Survey 2007 Report

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary: Baccalaureate Alumni Survey, 2007	i
I. Overview and Methodology	1
II. Profile of Baccalaureate Program Alumni	2
<i>Age, Gender, and Racial-ethnic Identity</i>	
<i>Purposes and Intentions</i>	
<i>Credits, Grades, and Oakton Degrees Earned</i>	
III. Preparation for Transfer and Experience at Transfer Institution.....	4
<i>Educational Experiences before Oakton</i>	
<i>Educational Experiences at Oakton</i>	
<i>Utility of Oakton Experience to Courses at Transfer Institution</i>	
<i>Transfer Institutions Attended and Degrees Earned</i>	
IV. Assessments of the Oakton Experience.....	9
<i>Level of Skills Expected at Oakton</i>	
<i>Involvement in Student Activities and Events</i>	
<i>Living Up to Core Values</i>	
<i>Outstanding Persons, Courses, or Events</i>	
<i>Overall Satisfaction with Oakton</i>	
V. Conclusion	13

Appendices

- A. Collection and Analysis of Data**
- B. Student Characteristics – Alumni Population and Survey Respondents**
- C. Survey Results**
- D. Institutions Attended after Oakton**

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Baccalaureate Alumni Survey 2007 Report

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 2007, 565 alumni responded to the survey, which was conducted by telephone during the summer of 2007. 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 enrolled at age 19 and left at age 24.* Slightly more than half of the program alumni are women. Caucasian made up slightly more than half of the alumni surveyed, with the largest minority group consisting of Asian or Pacific Island ancestry.
- At the median, the surveyed alumni earned 53 credits at Oakton and a 3.03 GPA. Sixteen percent of these alumni completed associate's degrees at Oakton.
- Of the survey respondents, 61 percent came to Oakton with no prior college enrollment. Before coming to Oakton 29 percent had some college experience elsewhere, and another 9 percent had already earned a bachelor's degree before their last enrollment at Oakton. Students with a bachelor's degree before coming to Oakton may have taken most of their Oakton courses before earning that degree, but returned to Oakton for just a course or two after earning their bachelor's degree.

Preparation for Transfer and Experience at Transfer Institutions

- Respondents who transferred to other colleges after attending Oakton rated the utility of skills learned at Oakton in the courses taken at their new institutions. The following percentages reflect how many of these students said that each skill was useful: writing 74%, speech/presentation 72%, teamwork 71%, problem-solving 67%, computer 59%, and mathematics skills 58%.

* "At the median" means that half the group is below this range and half the group is above it.

- Respondents who transferred also rated the extent to which, while at Oakton, they improved skills in several areas. The following percentages reflect how many of these students said that they improved in each skill: speech/presentation¹ 65%, writing 63%, problem-solving 55%, teamwork 54%, mathematics 53%, and computer skills 41%.
- Of the 565 survey respondents, 400 (71%) reported that they attended another college or university after Oakton, and 170 (42%) of the transfers say they earned a bachelor's or associate degree after transfer. *
- Most alumni transferred to schools in the Chicago area. University of Illinois at Chicago and Northeastern Illinois combined to draw more than one-third (34%) of the transfer students.
- Of students who did not already have a bachelor's degree and who transferred, 68 percent who last attended Oakton in 2003-2004 had earned their bachelor's degree since leaving Oakton, compared to 30 percent of those who last attended in 2005-2006.
- The most popular majors for Oakton alumni are in the fields of business, social/behavioral sciences, education, health-related areas, and humanities/fine arts.

Assessment of the Oakton Experience

- At least two-thirds of alumni stated that the level of skill expected of them in Math (66%), Writing (74%), Reading (73%) and giving Speeches/Presentations (76%) in their Oakton courses was "just right".
- Of all respondents 47 percent reported that they felt "connected" or "very connected" to the College. Many of the explanations for why students did not feel connected focused on the limited amount of time that these students spent at Oakton.
- Overall, alumni perceive that Oakton is living up to its core values of compassion (92%), fairness (94%), integrity (97%), responsibility (96%), and tolerance (94%).
- It would be "likely" or "very likely" that they would attend Oakton again if they had to make the decision, as reported by 76 percent of the alumni.

* Because a number of respondents had been away from Oakton for only one year, they probably had insufficient time to complete their bachelor's degree prior to the survey and are still attending college

Baccalaureate Alumni Survey 2007 Report

This year's report of the 2007 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 preparation at Oakton and experiences at the transfer institution. Section IV summarizes alumni's assessments of their Oakton experience. Section V concludes the report with an editorial summary. Appendices provide additional information about the methodology as well as detailed statistics of the responses and alumni demographics.

I. Overview and Methodology

Each summer, Oakton Community College conducts a telephone survey of baccalaureate program alumni. To be considered a "baccalaureate program alumnus," a student must have earned at least 30 credits or an associate degree in a transfer program at Oakton, and last have enrolled in either 2003-04 or 2005-06. This year, 2,837 alumni met these criteria, and 565 completed telephone interviews. The survey is not intended to reach all alumni; rather, they are randomly sampled.

Purposes of the survey are to:

- investigate perceptions of 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 2007-2008.² 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. Consequently, we have not differentiated in the discussion below between the population and survey respondents with respect to demographics and credits at Oakton.

² 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.

When responses do not differ by year of last enrollment, the combined responses of alumni from the two years can be reasonably 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 responses are presented in Appendix C. Throughout this survey, scales were consistently constructed so that the highest values represented the most positive responses.

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

Data on age, gender and racial-ethnic identity come from the College's official student records, based on information provided by students on their Applications for Admission. Approximately four out of five alumni were first enrolled at the College before they were 24 years of age, and half had completed their work at Oakton before age 24. These data suggest students who take the equivalent of one year or more of coursework in baccalaureate transfer programs tend to be of traditional college age. As in past years, women comprised slightly more than half of the baccalaureate alumni. Of the three highest responses to race-ethnicity, approximately half the baccalaureate alumni identified themselves as Caucasian, 20 percent identified themselves as Asian, and 19 percent provided no information or said they were "other."

Purposes and Intentions

It helps to understand the purposes alumni had when they enrolled at the College. The survey includes two questions to provide some insight into objectives of these alumni when they were enrolled as students. The first of these questions asked students what their main objective was while attending Oakton. Note that survey respondents were asked to think back to when they first came to Oakton and to identify their objectives at that time. Of survey respondents 78 percent said their main objective was to take coursework for transfer to another college, 14 percent were taking courses for occupational or career purposes, and 8 percent were taking courses for personal interest or self-development. Overall, 83 percent of alumni reported that they were successful or very successful in achieving their objectives. The second question asked whether, when they first enrolled, they planned to earn an Oakton associate's degree or merely take courses, 43 percent said they planned to earn a degree.

Credits, Grades, and Oakton Degrees Earned

Academic data illustrate the extent of the experience of these alumni at Oakton. Thirty-five percent earned 30-44 credits, another 25 percent earned 45-59 credits, and 40 percent earned 60 or more credits. The mean number of credits for the respondents was 53. These data indicate students had a substantial experience at Oakton, an expected finding since the survey includes only students with 30 or more credits.³ Students did relatively well, as measured by their grade point averages. The mean GPA for the respondents was 3.03.

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 14 percent of students eligible to be surveyed received an Oakton associate's degree, and 16 percent 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 53 respondents who already had bachelor's degrees when they last attended Oakton. Of the 512 respondents remaining, 17 percent of those last enrolled in 2005-2006 and 19 percent of those last enrolled in 2003-2004 earned associate degrees at Oakton.

Of the 78 percent of alumni respondents who said their main objective while at Oakton was to take courses for transfer, eighty-three percent did, in fact, transfer after leaving the College. Others might still transfer though they had not done so by summer 2007.

Of the 240 (42% of total) respondents who said they intended to earn a degree at Oakton, just 71 (30%) 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. Interestingly, of those alumni who intended to earn a degree but did not, 71 percent still reported that they were successful in meeting their objectives, which appears to provide support for the third explanation for the discrepancy mentioned above.

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 particular 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.

³ Grade point average and credits are based on college-level courses in which a grade was awarded (A, B, C, D, F, I). 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.

III. Preparation for Transfer and Experiences at Transfer Institution

Educational Experiences before Oakton

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.⁴ Thirty-nine percent of survey respondents said they had attended another college or university before Oakton. Of all respondents, 9 percent said they had already earned a bachelor's degree before they last attended Oakton. 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.

Educational Experiences at Oakton

This year's survey again asked alumni to rate, on a 5-point scale, the extent to which they improved general education skills at Oakton (5 = significant improvement; 1 = did not improve). Figure 1 provides a graphical description of the percent of respondents who said they improved their skill at Oakton (ranked the skill 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale), excluding responses from students who said the skill was not applicable.

Utility and Quality of Oakton Experience to Courses at Transfer Institution

Beginning in 2001, alumni survey respondents were asked to rate the utility of general education skills in courses after transfer, enabling us to compare the percentages from the five surveys for those who said skills learned at Oakton were useful after transfer. This year's survey again asked alumni to rate, on a 5-point scale, how useful these skills were 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 specifically whether a skill was required of them in courses taken after transfer. Table 1 presents data.

⁴ 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 two additional institutions. A standard coding system (federal FICE codes) was used to avoid varied abbreviations of same institutions and to facilitate accurate tallies by institution.

Figure 1
Percent Saying They Improved Skills at Oakton
By Year of Survey

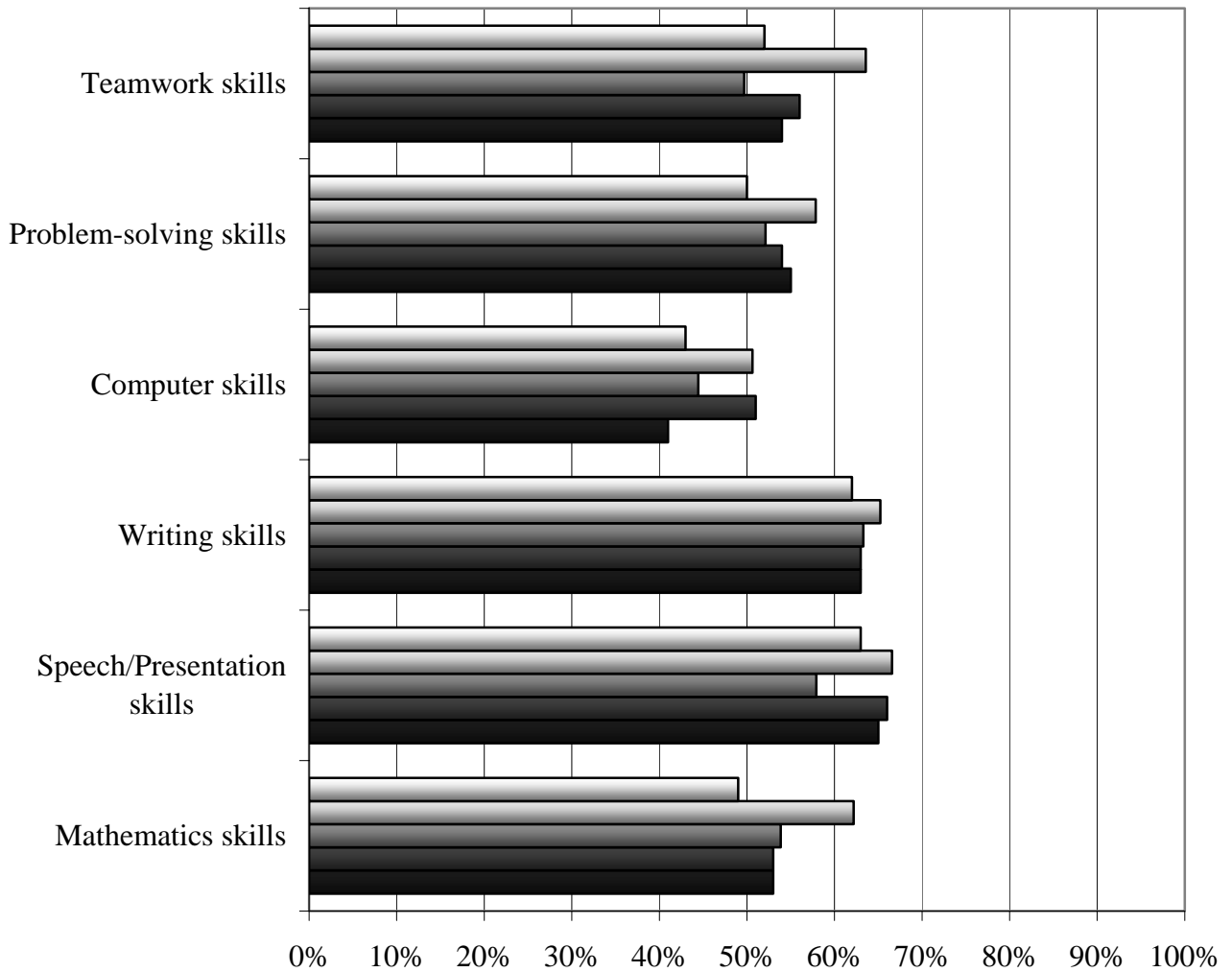


Table 1
Usefulness of Skills Learned at Oakton in Courses Taken After Transfer
By Year of Survey

(Percentages exclude those who said skill was not applicable after transfer)

Skill	Survey Year	Pct. Indicating Skill was Useful After Transfer						
		2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Speaking (presentation) skills		74%	70%	67%	72%	69%	65%	72%
Writing skills		69%	69%	66%	66%	71%	64%	74%
Teamwork skills		50%	61%	58%	69%	61%	60%	71%
Problem-solving skills		62%	65%	56%	65%	61%	58%	67%
Mathematics skills		68%	61%	54%	62%	62%	57%	58%
Computer skills		53%	50%	50%	59%	53%	49%	59%

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 2.

Table 2
Skills Not Applied After Transfer by Year of Survey

Skill	Survey Year	Pct. Respondents Who Transferred & Indicated Skill Not Applied After Transfer				
		2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Computer skills		25%	36%	26%	54%	23%
Mathematics skills		21%	35%	19%	30%	24%
Speaking (presentation) skills		11%	17%	9%	16%	9%
Teamwork skills		12%	15%	6%	11%	8%
Problem-solving skills		8%	14%	8%	10%	8%
Writing skills		8%	12%	6%	7%	7%

Data in Table 1 indicates that the usefulness of skills learned at Oakton appears to vary over time in most areas. However, it appears that, overall, the utility of the skills listed has rebounded from some slight declines over the last two years and returned to percentages not observed since the 2004 survey. Data in Table 2 reveal that the percent of respondents who said these skills were not applied after transfer varies, as well. The large jumps in the percentage of students who, in 2006, said they did not apply computer skills or mathematics skills after transfer seemed to be anomalous. In 2007, the percent who said they did not use these skills declined to be more in line with results from the 2003 through 2005 surveys. It continues to be clear that key skills of speaking/giving presentations, working in teams, problem solving and writing are expected after transfer, whereas computer and mathematics skills are not as widely expected. This may in part be due to students' majors after transfer. Combined with the relatively high level of perceived utility of the other skills learned, this suggests Oakton faculty may wish to continue to incorporate presentation, teamwork, problem-solving and writing assignments into their courses to provide students with multiple opportunities to learn and sharpen these skills while at Oakton.

Transfer Institutions Attended and Degrees Earned

Respondents were asked whether they had attended another college or university after Oakton and, if so, whether they earned a degree. Table 3 presents results, which are duplicated headcounts. That is, a student who attended more than one institution is counted for each institution. (Appendix D contains the complete list of transfer schools identified by respondents). Of the 565 respondents, 400 (71%) reported they had attended at least one other college or university after Oakton. Chicago area institutions drew most alumni, with the University of Illinois at Chicago and Northeastern Illinois University attracting the largest number of the transfers. It is interesting to note that in the past DePaul University drew nearly as many transfers as the University of Illinois – Chicago, despite being significantly more expensive, but this pattern did not hold with respondents to the 2007 survey. The attractiveness of local colleges and universities to Oakton alumni remains consistent over time.

Table 3
Colleges and Universities After Oakton

School	Total Students Attending	Pct. Graduated
University of Illinois - Chicago	71	55%
Northeastern Illinois University	66	44%
DePaul University	34	26%
Loyola University	24	38%
Northern Illinois University	20	40%
National Louis University	19	21%
Columbia College	17	41%
Triton College	15	47%
Roosevelt University	14	50%
Harper College	12	17%
University of Illinois - Urbana-Champaign	11	45%
Wright College, Chicago City Colleges	10	40%

In Table 4 we present data from the last eight alumni surveys indicating self-reported majors selected at institutions after Oakton. Business-related curricula continue to draw a large percentage of transfers, with Social and Behavioral Sciences majors continuing to draw the second-highest percentage of Oakton transfers. Computer-related and Education majors continued to decline from their 2001 peak and 2002 peaks, respectively.

Of students who transferred and did not already have a bachelor's degree, 163 (43%) reported they had earned a bachelor's degree since leaving Oakton. From the 2003-2004 alumni group, 68 percent of the students accomplished this, compared to 30 percent of the students from the 2005-06 alumni group.

In 2007, we were interested in exploring the criteria by which alumni based their decisions about where to transfer. The literature about college choice, nationally, focuses on students' choice of their first college or university. Virtually nothing is known about factors affecting the choice of transfer institutions, despite the fact that, nationally, more than half of students who eventually earn a baccalaureate degree attend more than one school before completing the degree.

Table 4
Major after Transfer

Survey Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Area of Major	(N=331)	(N=134)	(N=227)	(N = 385)	(N=373)	(N=378)	(N=336)	(N=380)	(N=391)
Business-related	18 %	25 %	21 %	20%	19%	23%	20%	21%	23%
Computer-related	*	10 %	16 %	11%	9%	7%	8%	5%	7%
Education	8 %	10 %	15 %	16%	13%	13%	12%	10%	11%
Social & Behavioral Sciences	19 %	18 %	12 %	19%	17%	15%	16%	17%	15%
Humanities, Fine Arts	15 %	9 %	9 %	14%	10%	11%	13%	13%	12%
Health-related	11 %	11 %	8 %	6%	10%	8%	11%	11%	15%
Engineering	7 %	3 %	5 %	5%	6%	5%	6%	6%	5%
Sciences**	12 %	7 %	6 %	5%	5%	5%	7%	8%	8%
<i>Biological Sciences</i>					4%	4%	5%	3%	6%
<i>Physical Sciences</i>					1%	1%	2%	5%	2%
Mathematics					2%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Other, including undecided	10 %	5 %	8 %	6%	8%	6%	5%	7%	5%

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

** Prior to 2003 included mathematics

We gave respondents a list of factors that could influence the choice of a transfer institution. Table 5 provides the list and respondents' ratings for each factor. Clearly, transfer students want to go where their credits will transfer and to schools with strong reputations and programs they want. The perceived value of articulation and transfer agreements can be viewed as another indicator of the importance of students' receiving credit for their Oakton work. Affordability and location are somewhat less important factors, and personal relationships such as family encouragement, having friends at the school and being encouraged by a representative of the transfer institution are of substantially less importance.

Table 5
Factors Affecting the Choice of Transfer Institution
 (5-point Scale, with 1 = Not at all important and 5 = Very important)

How important was each of the following in choosing your transfer school?	n	Pct rating 4 or 5
Credits transferred easily	399	88%
Good reputation	387	83%
Had programs I wanted	399	82%
Articulation or transfer agreements	399	78%
Liked location	399	76%
High quality faculty	398	71%
Affordable	399	70%
Close to home	399	63%
Good financial aid	399	42%
Close to work	395	35%
Family encouraged me	397	31%
Had friends there	398	29%
Representative from institution encouraged me	398	16%
Attended the school before	398	10%
Oakton advisor/instructor encouraged me	397	10%
Employer encouraged me	395	9%

IV. Assessments of the Oakton Experience

Survey items discussed in this section of the report were asked of all alumni, regardless of whether they transferred after they departed from Oakton.

Level of Skills Expected at Oakton

In 2007, we wanted to explore how alumni evaluated the level of basic academic skills expected of them in their Oakton courses, not just courses in the discipline itself, but across all courses taken at Oakton. We asked respondents to tell us whether they perceived the skill level expected of them in each of the areas listed in Table 6 to be “too easy,” “just right,” or “too hard.” Our telephone interviewers indicated some respondents had a difficult time understanding the question, so we present these findings in Table 6 with caution. In general, however, they suggest expectations and grading standards for assignments incorporating these skills are perceived to be appropriate.

Table 6
Expectation of Skill Levels in Oakton Courses

	n	Rating		
		Too Easy	Just Right	Too Hard
Mathematics	562	16%	66%	18%
Writing	562	18%	74%	8%
Reading	562	22%	73%	4%
Speeches/Presentations	562	14%	76%	10%

Involvement in Student Activities and Events

Also in 2007, we asked alumni about their participation in a variety of student organizations and events. These data are germane for the Department of Student Activities program review, to be conducted in 2007-08, and to provide insights into the wider college community about ways in which students engage with the College. As noted in the literature about student success, students who are connected with an institution through relationships with faculty, staff and peers generally persist and have a more positive experience than students who are isolated or don't converse with others. The survey included a list of student activities and events; respondents were asked whether they ever participated in or attended any of them. Of the 565 respondents, 95 (17%) participated in one or more of these organizations: 10 percent of all respondents had participated in a student club, 5 percent in a campus organization, 3 percent in intercollegiate athletics and 2 percent in intramural athletics.

Respondents were also given a list of activities and events they might have attended, and were asked if they had ever done so. Of all respondents, 316 (56%) said they had attended at least one event. The breakdown by events listed is in Table 7.

Table 7
Activities and Events Attended at Oakton

Activity / Event	Pct. Attended	Activity / Event	Pct. Attended
Cafeteria Performances	26%	Fashion/Talent Shows	13%
Theater Events	23%	Fall Fest (or other outdoor fest)	12%
Free Food	22%	Attend Meetings for Club that I'm not a member of	9%
Free Movies	21%	Leadership Workshops	7%
Lectures or Poetry Readings	16%	"Make-Your-Own" Activities	7%

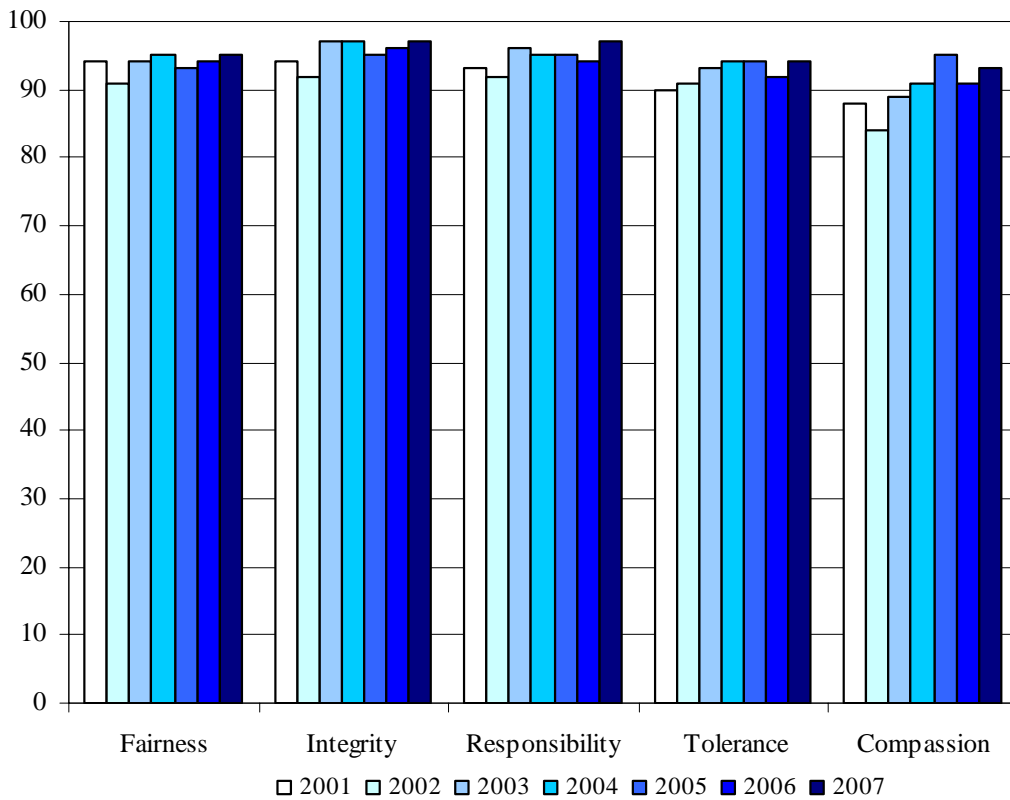
When asked the reasons for nonparticipation in organizations or events, respondents cited lack of time due to work, schoolwork or family obligations as the primary impediment. Only seven percent of respondents said they didn't know about organizations, and only 11 percent said they didn't know about activities and events.

Living up to Core Values

Oakton has placed substantial emphasis on its core values, which are central to ethical conduct. The College values fairness, integrity, tolerance, responsibility, and compassion. As in the past, respondents to the baccalaureate alumni survey were asked to rate College staff members (faculty, administrators, and others) on the extent to which they lived up to these values.

Figure 2 provides a comparison of the findings from surveys of the past seven years.

Figure 2
Living up to Oakton’s Core Values by Survey Year
 (Percent Responding 3 or 4 on 4-point scale, where 1 = very poorly and 4 = very well)



A comparison of these findings from surveys over seven years shows relative stability across

s the values. It should be noted that a relatively small shift in the number of respondents providing a rating can affect the percentages. Unless changes are fairly dramatic, variations in the percentage of respondents giving scores of 3 and 4 should be interpreted as random fluctuations across time.

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 more than 175 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.

Sample comments reflect the general tone of comments received:

- “There were just so many wonderful instructors as well as students; the instructors left impressions that will last a lifetime, the students are friends forever.”
- “I loved the professor responsible for the art gallery.”
- “Philosophy coursework. The professor was very tolerant and open to ideas -- had good explanation -- opened your mind to ideas.”
- “Earth science professor. A lot of background knowledge made material interesting; always available after class.”
- “[Name], she taught a career fields course; she was a director of a program for people having a hard time making the grade; she kept on you hooked you up with tutors and made it work for me.”

The Office of Research consolidated comments about any single individual and sent memos and letters conveying these comments to the recipient. Comments about former instructors and staff members were sent to them or their surviving family members. 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.

Overall Satisfaction with Oakton

To elicit alumni perceptions of their experience at the College as a whole, we asked two questions:

“When you were at Oakton, how connected did you feel to the college?” and “If you had it to do over, how likely would you be to attend Oakton again?” The first was a new question. Of all respondents, 47 percent said that they felt either “connected” or “very connected” to the college (ratings of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale). Reasons that these individuals gave included:

“All the teachers were real friendly and I enjoyed the small classes.”

“Faculty was accessible; more than a 4-year school.”

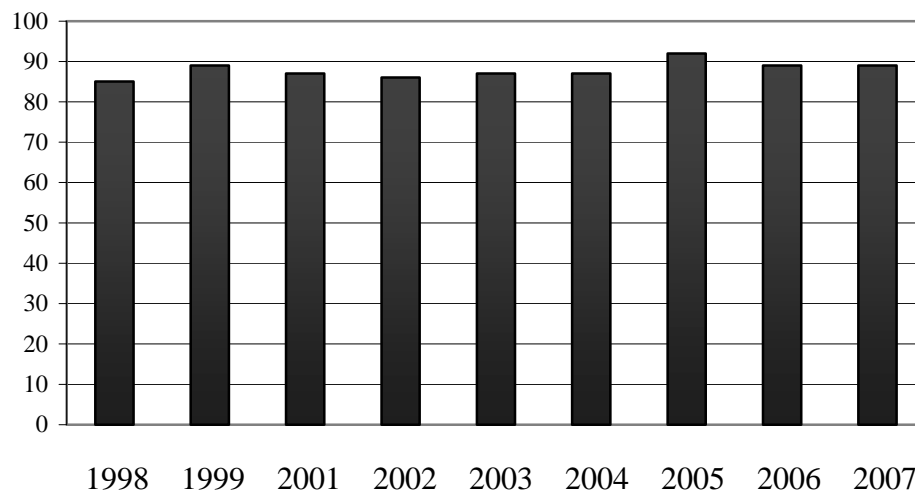
“I knew almost everyone at Oakton; the students and faculty members.”

To learn more about the characteristics of students who felt they were or were not connected to Oakton, we collapsed their answers into three categories: “not connected” (ratings of 1 or 2), “somewhat connected” (rating of 3), and “connected” (ratings of 4 or 5). We then cross-tabulated responses to this question with student characteristics of age (below 24, or 24 and above), gender and race/ethnicity (Caucasian, everyone else). The data show that there was no gender difference in ratings of “connectedness to Oakton”. However, there was a pronounced impact of age, where older students were more likely to rate themselves as being connected with Oakton than younger students (54% versus 41%, respectively). Additionally, after excluding any

students who did not identify their ethnicity, the data showed that minority students were more likely to rate themselves as being connected to Oakton than Caucasian students (55% versus 43%, respectively).

For the second question, asked for many years on the Baccalaureate Alumni Survey, a seven-point scale was used, (1 = “Very unlikely”, 7 = “Very likely”). Eighty-nine percent responded at the 5, 6 or 7 level, indicating that they would be likely to attend Oakton again. Figure 3 presents results from nine years (note we did not ask this question in the 2000 survey). 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, between 85 and 92 percent.⁵

Figure 3
Percent Who Would Attend Oakton Again by Survey Year



Yet another perspective on feelings toward Oakton can be gleaned from respondents’ interest in joining an Alumni Association. To the question: “Would you be interested in becoming a charter member of a new Oakton Alumni Association?” 21 percent responded affirmatively.

V. 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.

⁵ Again, findings refer to alumni who meet criteria for inclusion in the annual Baccalaureate-Transfer Alumni 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/>.

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. The sample selection process began in June 2007 when 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, curriculum⁶, earned credit, cumulative GPA, and Oakton degree information.⁷

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. In July, the telephone 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, approximately 300 respondents for each year of last enrollment.

Of the 2,837 baccalaureate program alumni who met the survey criteria, 1,246 were last enrolled in 2003-2004 and 1,591 in 2005-2006. Of these, 386 alumni had earned Associate's degrees from Oakton.

Telephone logs show that some alumni were called as often as twelve times. Where possible, messages were left, and where changed telephone numbers were available, they were followed up. Nonetheless, our vendor experienced 994 disconnected or otherwise invalid telephone numbers.⁸ The vendor indicated this percentage of disconnected or invalid numbers is typical for a population like Oakton's baccalaureate alumni.

Subtracting these 994 alumni reduced the effective survey population to approximately 1,843 alumni. Altogether, the vendor completed 565 interviews. Thus, 31 percent of the 1,843 alumni in the effective population completed the survey.

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 these forms for keying to electronic files. The electronic data files were read into databases using SAS software by Office of Research staff. The student identification number was used to merge the survey data and the biographic-demographic data. Data were analyzed using standard statistical procedures of SAS software. Microsoft Word and Excel were used in

⁶ If a student was not awarded a degree, then the self-reported major during the last term of enrollment (from the term table of the student database) represents that student's curriculum. If a student was awarded a degree, the curriculum code for the degree awarded (from the awards table of the student database) always superseded the curriculum code from the term table. If more than one degree was awarded, the code for the most recent degree program was selected.

⁷ A significant advantage to using the telephone method for this survey is that data from the student database can be reliably associated with each respondent.

⁸ Data available in the student database do not reflect phone numbers changed since last enrollment.

preparing the report, tables, figures, and appendices. Appendix C contains the overall numeric results for each item.

Responses

The 565 alumni with whom telephone interviews were completed constituted 31 percent of the 1,843 alumni in the effective survey population, not significantly different than in prior years. The telephone survey method has shown itself to have several advantages over the mail survey method. It does not allow for the potential bias, often associated with mail surveys, of under-sampling respondents who procrastinate by setting aside mail surveys to be done “later”. However, out-of-date telephone numbers and public skepticism engendered by telemarketers claiming to be “conducting a survey” have also adversely affected response rates.

Response rates were comparable for alumni who earned an Oakton degree (24%) and those who had not (19%), and were slightly weaker for those away from the college for three years (14%) than for those last enrolled in 2005-2006 (25%).

Response Bias

Can information about these respondents be interpreted as representative of the population surveyed when interviews were completed with only a subset of the population? The argument that it can depends on the comparison between the 565 respondents and the whole population (N = 2,837) on a variety of key demographic variables.

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,⁹ credit earned, grade point average, and whether awarded an Oakton degree — differences between the two groups are small, suggesting that the respondent group is highly representative of all alumni who met criteria for inclusion in the study.

⁹ 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
Alumni Demographic Characteristics of Population and Survey Respondents

Student Characteristic	Population (N=2837)		Survey Respondents (N=565)		Difference Btw Respondents and Population
	n	%	n	%	
Gender					
Male	1317	46 %	263	47 %	+ 0 %
Female	1520	54 %	302	53 %	- 0 %
Entry Age					
Less than 24	2329	82 %	452	80 %	- 2 %
24-25	114	4 %	20	4 %	- 0 %
26-39	284	10 %	61	11 %	+ 1 %
40-59	105	4 %	30	5 %	+ 2 %
60 or older	5	0 %	2	0 %	+ 0 %
Median Age	19.0		19.0		0
Mean Age	21.5		22.1		+ 0.6
Exit Age					
Less than 24	1438	51 %	281	50 %	- 1 %
24-25	362	13 %	61	11 %	- 2 %
26-39	716	25 %	128	23 %	- 3 %
40-59	278	10 %	75	13 %	+ 3 %
60 or older	43	2 %	20	4 %	+ 2 %
Median Age	23.0		24.0		+ 1
Mean Age	27.2		28.7		+ 1.5
Ethnicity					
African American	111	4 %	16	3 %	- 1 %
Asian or Pacific Island	583	21 %	111	20 %	- 1 %
Caucasian	1430	50 %	305	54 %	+ 4 %
Hispanic	149	5 %	26	5 %	- 1 %
Native American	8	0 %	0	0 %	+ 0 %
Multiple	0	0 %	0	0 %	+ 0 %
Other	298	11 %	56	10 %	- 1 %
No Response	258	9 %	51	9 %	- 0 %
Credit Hours Earned					
30-44 hours	1008	36 %	199	35 %	- 0 %
45-59 hours	726	26 %	140	25 %	- 1 %
60 or more hours	1103	39 %	226	40 %	+ 1 %
Median Hours	53.0		53.0		0.0
Mean Hours	54.6		54.8		+ 0.2
Grade Point Average					
Median	2.82		3.03		+ 0.21
Mean	2.79		2.92		+ 0.13
Oakton Degree Received					
AA	368	13 %	85	15 %	+ 2 %
AFA	1	0 %	1	0 %	+ 0 %

Student Characteristic	Population (N=2837)		Survey Respondents (N=565)		Difference Btw Respondents and Population
	n	%	n	%	
AS	16	1 %	5	1 %	+ 0 %
ASE	1	0 %	0	0 %	- 0 %

Appendix C
Baccalaureate Alumni Survey 2007 Results

Which one of the following was your main objective in attending Oakton?	Responses	
	n	%
Take coursework for transfer	435	78%
Explore courses to decide a career	25	4%
Improve skills needed in present job	33	6%
Obtain skills needed for new job	21	4%
Take courses for personal interest	45	8%
Total	559	100%

	n	Not successful	Neutral	Successful
How successful were you in achieving your objective?	564	7%	10%	83%

When you first enrolled at Oakton, did you plan to earn a degree or only to take courses?	Responses	
	n	%
Degree	240	43%
Courses Only	323	57%
Total	563	100%

Had you attended another college or university BEFORE coming to Oakton?	Responses	
	n	%
Yes	218	39%
No	345	61%
Total	563	100%

Had you already earned a bachelor's degree before you last attended Oakton?	Responses	
	n	%
Yes	53	24%
No	165	76%
Total	218	100%

Did you attend any colleges or universities AFTER leaving Oakton?	Responses	
	n	%
Yes	400	71%
No	165	29%
Total	565	100%

(See Appendix D for list of colleges/universities attended)

If yes, did you graduate (earn a degree) from these colleges/universities?	Responses	
	n	%
Yes	170	42%
No	230	58%
Total	400	100%

How important was each of the following in choosing your transfer school?	n	Rating					Average Rating
		Not at All Important		Very Important			
		1	2	3	4	5	
Credits transferred easily	399	3%	2%	8%	20%	68%	4.48
Had programs I wanted	399	7%	2%	9%	15%	67%	4.32
Good reputation	387	3%	2%	11%	29%	54%	4.29
Articulation or transfer agreements	399	8%	4%	11%	22%	56%	4.14
Liked location	399	6%	4%	15%	24%	52%	4.13
Affordable	399	8%	5%	17%	20%	50%	3.99
High quality faculty	398	8%	4%	17%	29%	42%	3.94
Close to home	399	13%	7%	17%	20%	43%	3.74
Good financial aid	399	34%	8%	16%	12%	30%	2.94
Close to work	395	33%	11%	21%	12%	23%	2.82
Family encouraged me	397	43%	9%	17%	15%	16%	2.51
Had friends there	398	48%	9%	15%	14%	15%	2.38
Rep. From institution encouraged me	398	59%	11%	14%	8%	8%	1.96
Oakton advisor/instructor encouraged me	397	64%	10%	15%	5%	5%	1.77
Attended the school before	398	78%	5%	8%	3%	7%	1.56
Employer encouraged me	395	77%	6%	8%	3%	6%	1.54

Since you transferred, what has been your most recent major?	Responses	
	n	%
Business-Related	91	23%
Health-Related	57	15%
Social and Behavioral Sciences	57	15%
Humanities / Fine Arts	46	12%
Education	43	11%
Computer - Related	27	7%
Biological Sciences	23	6%
Engineering	19	5%
Physical Sciences	6	2%
Mathematics	2	1%
Other or Undecided	20	5%
Total	391	100%

To what degree did you learn or improve at Oakton in each of the following skills?	n	Ratings (percentages exclude those who did not use skills at Oakton)					Did not use	Average Rating
		Did not Improve		Significant improvement				
		1	2	3	4	5		
Math Skills	400	7%	11%	28%	30%	23%	18%	2.89
Presentation Skills	400	3%	9%	24%	38%	27%	6%	3.53
Writing Skills	400	4%	7%	25%	33%	30%	5%	3.59
Computer Skills	400	12%	17%	30%	22%	19%	21%	2.52
Problem-Solving Skills	399	4%	13%	28%	33%	22%	7%	3.30
Teamwork Skills	399	7%	14%	24%	29%	25%	6%	3.29

Thinking back over what you learned at Oakton, what has been especially useful to you in courses you have taken at your transfer institution?	n	Ratings (percentages exclude those where skills did not apply)					Did not Apply	Average Rating
		Not Very Useful		Extremely Useful				
		1	2	3	4	5		
Math Skills	397	12%	10%	21%	28%	30%	24%	2.68
Presentation Skills	397	4%	5%	19%	31%	41%	9%	3.65
Writing Skills	394	4%	8%	15%	28%	46%	7%	3.73
Computer Skills	394	6%	12%	23%	25%	34%	23%	2.85
Problem-Solving Skills	395	4%	4%	24%	30%	37%	8%	3.61
Teamwork Skills	396	4%	7%	19%	25%	46%	8%	3.72

Are you planning to enroll in college in the coming year?	Responses	
	n	%
Yes	300	53%
No	257	46%
Total	557	100%

Was the skill level expected of you at Oakton appropriate?	n	Rating (percentages exclude those where skills did not apply)			Not Applicable
		Too Easy	Just Right	Too Hard	
Math	562	16%	66%	18%	15%
Writing	562	18%	74%	8%	6%
Reading	562	22%	73%	4%	9%
Speeches/Presentations	562	14%	76%	10%	13%

During your time at Oakton, were you ever involved in:	"Yes" Responses (n=565)	
	n	%
Student Clubs	54	10%
Campus Organizations	28	5%
Intercollegiate Athletics	15	3%
Intramural Athletics	13	2%
Involved in at least one		
Yes	95	17%
No	470	83%

If "None", why didn't you participate in any student groups?	"Yes" Responses (n=470)	
	n	%
No Time because of WORK	239	51%
Had No Interest	174	37%
No Time because of SCHOOLWORK	93	20%
No Time because of FAMILY	85	18%
Didn't Know About Them	31	7%
Other	31	7%

During your time at Oakton, did you ever attend:	"Yes" Responses (n=565)	
	n	%
Cafeteria Performances	147	26%
Oakton Theater Events	130	23%
Free Food Giveaways	125	22%
Free Movies in TV Room/Cafeteria	118	21%
Lectures or Poetry Readings	89	16%
Fashion/Talent Shows	74	13%
Fall Fest or other outdoor Fest Activities	67	12%
Meetings for Groups/Clubs that I wasn't a member of	53	9%
Leadership Workshops	38	7%
"Make-Your-Own" Activities	37	7%
Attended at least one?		
Yes	316	56%
No	249	44%

If "None", why didn't you participate in any student groups?	"Yes" Responses (n=249)	
	n	%
No Time because of WORK	110	44%
Had No Interest	102	41%
No Time because of SCHOOLWORK	47	19%
No Time because of FAMILY	45	18%
Didn't Know About Them	27	11%
Other	4	2%

How well did Oakton College staff members live up to the following values?	n	Rating				Average Rating
		Very Poorly		Very Well		
		1	2	3	4	
Compassion	560	2%	6%	34%	59%	3.50
Fairness	560	1%	5%	27%	68%	3.61
Integrity	559	1%	2%	22%	75%	3.72
Responsibility	560	1%	3%	28%	69%	3.64
Tolerance	560	0%	6%	25%	69%	3.64

How connected did you feel to Oakton?	n	Rating				
		Not at all Connected	2	3	4	Very Connected
	563	7%	14%	32%	28%	19%

If you had it to do over, how likely would you be to attend Oakton again?	n	Rating						
		Very Unlikely	1	2	3	4	5	6
	564	5%	2%	2%	3%	13%	16%	60%

Appendix D**All Institutions Attended after Oakton****(Note: total count includes students who attended multiple institutions after leaving Oakton)**

School	Total Students Attending	Pct. Graduated
University of Illinois - Chicago	71	55%
Northeastern Illinois University	66	44%
DePaul University	34	26%
Loyola University	24	38%
Northern Illinois University	20	40%
National Louis University	19	21%
Columbia College	17	41%
Triton College	15	47%
Roosevelt University	14	50%
Harper College	12	17%
University of Illinois - Urbana-Champaign	11	45%
Wright College, Chicago City Colleges	10	40%
Elmhurst College	9	33%
North Park University	9	22%
Illinois State University	8	50%
DeVry	7	29%
Illinois Institute of Technology	7	29%
Northwestern University	7	29%
Dominican University (Rosary College)	5	60%
Indiana University at Bloomington	3	67%
Robert Morris College	3	33%
Southern Illinois University-Carbondale	3	33%

Two students attended each of these institutions:

College of Lake County, Eastern Illinois University, Illinois Wesleyan University, Lake Forest College, Saint Xavier University

One student attended each of these institutions:

Art Institute of Atlanta, Bradley University, Concordia University, Elgin Community College, Governors State University, International Academy of Merchandising & Design, Kansas State University, Kendall College, Kishwaukee College, Lincoln College, Marquette University-Wisconsin, Midwestern University (Chicago Coll. Osteopathic Med.), North Central College, Northwestern Business College, Rush University, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, St. Francis Medical Center College of Nursing, Truman College-Chicago City Colleges, University of California-Los Angeles, University of Colorado-Boulder, University of Nevada - Las Vegas, West Suburban School, Western Illinois University

Twenty-eight students attended another U.S. institution outside of Illinois that they did not identify

Ten of these students (36%) reported that they graduated from their respective institutions.

One student attended a college outside the U.S.