

Baccalaureate Alumni Survey

2008 Report

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Acknowledgments

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

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Baccalaureate Alumni Survey 2008 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 2008, 599 alumni responded to the survey, which was conducted by telephone during the summer of 2008. The survey required 10 to 15 minutes to complete, and the College very much appreciates that these alumni gave 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 24.¹ Slightly less than half of the program alumni are women. Caucasians made up half of the alumni surveyed, with the largest minority group consisting of students of Asian or Pacific Island ancestry.
- At the median, the surveyed alumni earned 56 credits at Oakton and a 2.96 GPA (on a 4.0 scale). Fifteen percent of these alumni completed an associate's degree at Oakton.
- Of the survey respondents, 62 percent came to Oakton with no prior college enrollment. Before coming to Oakton, 25 percent had some college experience elsewhere, and another 13 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

- Of the 599 survey respondents, 421 (70%) reported that they attended another college or university after Oakton, and 190 (45%) of the transfers say they earned a bachelor's or associate's degree after transfer.
- Transfer alumni rated their preparedness for using different skills during coursework at their new institutions. The following percentages reflect the top six areas in which students said that they were sufficiently prepared to apply each skill: critical thinking 73%, giving presentations 72%, writing papers 72%, note-taking 70%, using math 69%, and reading textbooks and other assignments 69%.

¹ "At the median" means that half the group is below this age and half the group is above it.

- Of the transfer respondents, 77 percent reported little to no initial difficulty in adjusting to the differences between Oakton and their transfer institution during their first semester or year at that institution.
- Most alumni transferred to schools in the Chicago area. Northeastern Illinois University and DePaul University combined to draw nearly one-third (32%) of the transfer students.
- Of students who did not already have a bachelor's degree and who transferred, 62 percent who last attended Oakton in 2004-2005 had earned their bachelor's degree since leaving Oakton, compared to 37 percent of those who last attended in 2006-2007.²
- The most popular majors for Oakton alumni are in the fields of business, social/behavioral sciences, health-related areas, humanities/fine arts, and education.

Assessment of the Oakton Experience

- Alumni reported high levels of satisfaction with services provided by Oakton's Learning Center, including Study Skills support (96%), the TRiO program (91%), College 101: College Success Seminar (88%), Testing Center (88%), Tutoring (86%), and ASSIST (Services for Students with Disabilities) (72%).
- Of all respondents, 42 percent reported that they felt "connected" or "very connected" to the College. Many of the explanations for why respondents did not feel connected focused on a deliberate decision to not connect with the College because they were part-time students, older students, or seeking to transfer.
- Overall, alumni perceive that Oakton is living up to its core values of compassion (93%), fairness (96%), integrity (98%), responsibility (97%), and tolerance (96%).
- It would be "likely" or "very likely" that they would attend Oakton again if they had to make the decision, as reported by 92 percent of the alumni.

² 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 2008 Report

This year's report of the 2008 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 preparation at Oakton and experiences at the transfer institution. Section IV summarizes alumni 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 transfer program alumni. To be considered a "baccalaureate program alumnus," a student must have earned at least 30 credits or an associate's degree in a transfer program at Oakton and must have last enrolled in either 2004-05 or 2006-07. This year, 2,915 alumni met these criteria, and 599 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; and,
- 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 2008-2009.³ 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.

³ 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 Application for Admission. Just over four out of five alumni were first enrolled at the College before they were 24 years of age, and nearly 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. This year, women comprised slightly less than half of the baccalaureate alumni. Of the three highest responses to race-ethnicity, slightly more than half the baccalaureate alumni identified themselves as Caucasian, 20 percent identified themselves as Asian, and 20 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, 75 percent said their main objective was to take coursework for transfer to another college, 6 percent were taking courses for occupational or career purposes, and 12 percent were taking courses for personal interest or self-development. Overall, 87 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; 35 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-three percent earned 30-44 credits, another 25 percent earned 45-59 credits, and 42 percent earned 60 or more credits. The mean number of credits for the respondents was 56. These data indicate students had a substantial experience at Oakton, an expected finding since the survey includes only students with 30 or more credits.⁴ Students did relatively well, as measured by their grade point averages. The mean GPA for the respondents was 2.88.

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 15 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's degree later, we backed out the 75 respondents who already had bachelor's degrees when they last attended Oakton. Of the 524 respondents remaining, 17 percent of those last enrolled in 2006-2007 and 17 percent of those last enrolled in 2004-2005 earned associate's degrees at Oakton.

Of the 75 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 2008.

Of the 212 (35% of total) respondents who said they intended to earn a degree at Oakton, just 68 (32%) 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, 82 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.

⁴ 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.

III. Preparation for Transfer and Experiences at Transfer Institution

Educational Experiences before Oakton

The survey asked alumni to indicate whether they attended another college or university or earned a bachelor's degree before their last enrollment at Oakton.⁵ Thirty-eight percent of survey respondents said they had attended another college or university before Oakton. Of all respondents, 13 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.

Utility and Quality of Oakton Experience to Courses at Transfer Institution

Beginning in 2001, alumni survey respondents were asked to rate the usefulness of general education skills in courses after transfer. This year's survey asked transfer alumni to rate, on a 5-point scale, the extent to which they were prepared to apply general education skills acquired at Oakton (5 = very well; 1 = very poorly). Respondents could also indicate whether a skill was required of them in courses taken after transfer. Table 1 presents data.

⁵ 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.

Table 1
Preparedness in Each Skill Area

General Skills Area	Level of Preparedness			Did not use skill
	Poorly Prepared	Neutral	Well-Prepared	<i>% of total</i>
Critical thinking	4%	23%	73%	11%
Writing papers	3%	25%	72%	13%
Giving presentations	5%	23%	72%	20%
Note-taking	7%	23%	70%	14%
Reading textbooks and other assignments	7%	24%	69%	15%
Using math	7%	24%	69%	22%
Problem-solving	4%	27%	68%	15%
Time management	14%	24%	68%	16%
Taking in-class essay exams	7%	27%	66%	21%
Teamwork assignments	10%	26%	64%	19%
Using computers	9%	28%	62%	28%
Take-home essay exams	11%	29%	60%	42%

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 particular 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				
		2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Computer skills		36%	26%	54%	23%	28%
Mathematics skills		35%	19%	30%	24%	22%
Speaking (presentation) skills		17%	9%	16%	9%	20%
Teamwork skills		15%	6%	11%	8%	19%
Problem-solving skills		14%	8%	10%	8%	15%
Writing skills		12%	6%	7%	7%	13%

Table 1 data indicate that transfer alumni are generally the most well-prepared in the skill areas that they most commonly use. For example, 89 percent of transfer alumni report using critical thinking in their coursework, and 73 percent of these respondents report that they are well-prepared in applying critical thinking skills. Similarly, 87 percent of transfer alumni wrote papers during coursework at their transfer institution, and 72 percent report that they are well-prepared in this skill area. Only 3 percent of transfer alumni who were required to write papers at their transfer institution reported being poorly prepared to do so.

Data in Table 2 reveal that the percentage of respondents who said these general education skills were not applied after transfer varies across time. In 2008, there are large jumps in the percentage of students who said they did not apply speaking/presentation skills, teamwork skills, problem-solving skills, writing skills, and computer skills. Only mathematics skills are increasingly being applied in the classroom at transfer institutions. Despite the overall increase in the percentage of transfer alumni who indicated that these general skills areas did not apply after transfer, the 2008 survey reveals that transfer alumni are largely applying additional skills at their transfer institutions—including critical thinking, note-taking, reading textbooks and other assignments, and time management. These data suggest that Oakton faculty may wish to continue to incorporate the traditional skills into their courses, but may also want to introduce critical thinking exercises, instruction in note-taking, guidance on time management, and increased reading of textbooks and other assignments in order to provide students with multiple opportunities to learn and sharpen these skills while at Oakton.

Respondents were also asked about the transition from Oakton to a 4-year institution. Seventy seven percent of transfer alumni reported little to no difficulty in adjusting to the differences between Oakton and their transfer institution during their first semester or year at that institution. Alumni offered extensive feedback on how Oakton can better prepare students for the transition to a 4-year institution. The most common responses offered suggestions for both faculty and advising staff.

Faculty-Centered Preparation

- more extensive writing assignments, research papers, and presentations
- more class time devoted to developing computer skills
- greater preparation for the larger classroom setting

Advising-Centered Preparation

- better access to academic counselors
- more opportunities to visit potential transfer institutions
- more guidance on how to transfer properly
- better idea of what to expect from 4-year institutions

In turn, respondents also commented on how their transfer institution could better prepare them for the transition from a community college.

Faculty-Centered Preparation

- more individualized attention and guidance
- more professor—student interaction
- smaller class sizes

Advising-Centered Preparation

- better orientation, advising, and registration, particularly for transfer students
- more outreach to community colleges so transfer students know what to expect
- more guidance about transferring credits

Transfer alumni were also asked about the types of final exams that they take at their transfer institutions. Almost two-thirds of transfer alumni reported attending institutions which have a class schedule during final exams that differs from the class schedule for the rest of the semester. The most common type of exam they took was an exam during “finals week” that was one to two hours long (68%), followed by exams during finals week that are more than three hours long (48%), and exams during finals week that are between two and three hours long (43%). Thirty percent of transfer alumni took a take-home exam. Very few took an exam during regular class meeting time (5%). Seventy-one percent of transfer alumni reported that their coursework at Oakton prepared them well for the types of exams they took at their transfer institution. Transfer alumni suggested several areas of improvement for Oakton.

Improving Final Exams and Preparation at Oakton

- fewer multiple choice exams
- more essay exams with stricter standards
- longer, more extensive exams
- more research papers and critical thinking assignments
- greater workload in writing courses
- more help in note-taking, test-taking strategies, and study sessions

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 599 respondents, 421 (70%) reported they had attended at least one other college or university after Oakton. Chicago-area institutions drew most alumni, with Northeastern Illinois University and DePaul University attracting the largest number of the transfers. It is interesting to note that DePaul University drew slightly more transfers than the University of Illinois at Chicago, despite being significantly more expensive. While about three-quarters of alumni departing Oakton in 2005 graduated from both DePaul University and the University of Illinois at Chicago, over half of 2007 alumni attending DePaul University graduated, compared to 19 percent of University of Illinois at Chicago students. 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
Northeastern Illinois University	80	31%
DePaul University	55	60%
University of Illinois at Chicago	54	37%
Loyola University	19	58%
National Louis University	18	67%
Northern Illinois University	16	63%
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	15	53%
Roosevelt University	10	30%
Northwestern University	11	36%
Columbia College	9	44%
DeVry	8	50%
Harper College	8	0%

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 maintained declines from their peak in 2003. Majors in the Sciences, particularly in biological sciences, increased significantly to their highest level since 2003.

Of students who transferred and did not already have a bachelor's degree, 190 (45%) reported they had earned a bachelor's degree since leaving Oakton. From the 2004-2005 alumni group, 62 percent of the students accomplished this, compared to 37 percent of the students from the 2006-

07 alumni group.

Table 4
Major after Transfer

Area of Major	Survey Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
		(N=373)	(N=378)	(N=336)	(N=380)	(N=391)	(N=421)
Business-related		20%	19%	23%	20%	21%	22%
Computer-related		11%	9%	7%	8%	5%	5%
Education		16%	13%	13%	12%	10%	10%
Social & Behavioral Sciences		19%	17%	15%	16%	17%	16%
Humanities, Fine Arts		14%	10%	11%	13%	13%	12%
Health-related		6%	10%	8%	11%	11%	13%
Engineering		5%	6%	5%	6%	6%	5%
Sciences*		5%	5%	5%	7%	8%	11%
<i>Biological Sciences</i>			4%	4%	5%	3%	6%
<i>Physical Sciences</i>			1%	1%	2%	5%	5%
Mathematics		--	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Other, including undecided		6%	8%	6%	5%	7%	5%

* Prior to 2004 included mathematics

IV. Assessments of the Oakton Experience

This year's survey asked alumni who transferred to another institution after departing Oakton about their experience in science classes and in the Honors Program both at Oakton and after transfer. Additional survey items discussed in this section of the report were asked of all alumni, regardless of whether they transferred after they departed from Oakton. All alumni were asked about Oakton's Learning Center, the core values they experienced at the college, their general satisfaction with Oakton, and any "especially outstanding person, course, or event."

Science Courses at Oakton and After Transfer

This year, the sciences were a special focus of the Alumni Survey. Respondents were asked whether they had taken courses in each science discipline, whether they had taken courses in the same discipline after transfer, and whether they were well-prepared for these courses after transfer. Table 5 provides responses.

Data indicate that fewer than half of the alumni who transferred took courses in the same science discipline both at Oakton and after transfer, with the percentage who did so ranging from a high of 38% in Physics to a low of 17% in Earth Science/Geology. Respondents did feel prepared for continuing their studies in these disciplines after transfer, and more than half indicated that their science coursework at Oakton improved their critical-thinking skills.

Table 5
Preparedness of Students in Continued Studies in the Sciences

Subject Area	Respondents Taking Courses in Subject Area	Respondents Taking Additional Courses at Transfer Institution		Respondents Reporting Well-Prepared in Courses at Transfer Institution	
Biology	257	89	35%	159	94%
Chemistry	171	63	37%	125	94%
Earth Science/ Geology	138	24	17%	--	--*
Physics	104	40	38%	45	82%

*Transfer alumni were not surveyed about their preparedness in Earth Science/Geology courses at their transfer institution

Assessment of Selected Academic Resources Provided by the Honors Program and Oakton's Learning Center

In 2008, we asked transfer alumni about the academic resources provided by the Honors Program and Oakton's Learning Center. Sixteen percent of alumni who transferred to another institution after departing Oakton were members of the Honors Program. Forty-one percent reported that participation in Oakton's Honors Program influenced their ability to transfer to a four year institution. Participation in Oakton's Honors Program influenced the ability to compete for scholarships and/or other financial awards for nearly half (43%) of respondents. Finally, more than half (56%) of Honors Program participants felt that participation in the Honors Program influenced overall academic success at their transfer institution.

All alumni, regardless of whether they transferred to another institution after departing Oakton or not, were asked about their satisfaction with Oakton's Learning Center. Table 6 reports their level of satisfaction. It should be noted that a sizable proportion of the students sampled did not use each of the Learning Center resources. Forty-one percent used the Testing Center, 3 percent used ASSIST (Services for Students with Disabilities), 34 percent received tutoring, 4 percent participated in the TRiO program, 5 percent used Study Skills Support, and 4 percent participated in College 101: College Success Seminar.

Table 6
Satisfaction with Learning Center Services

Learning Center Service	Level of Satisfaction			Used the Service
	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	% of total
Testing Center	3%	9%	88%	41%
ASSIST (Services for Students with Disabilities)	11%	17%	72%	3%
Tutoring	5%	9%	86%	34%
TRiO program	0%	9%	91%	4%
Study Skills support	0%	3%	96%	5%
College 101: College Success Seminar	4%	8%	88%	4%

Alumni were also asked what the collective impact of Learning Center services was on several aspects of their academic career. Table 7 reports their responses. More than half of alumni reported that Learning Center services applied to each aspect of their academic career.

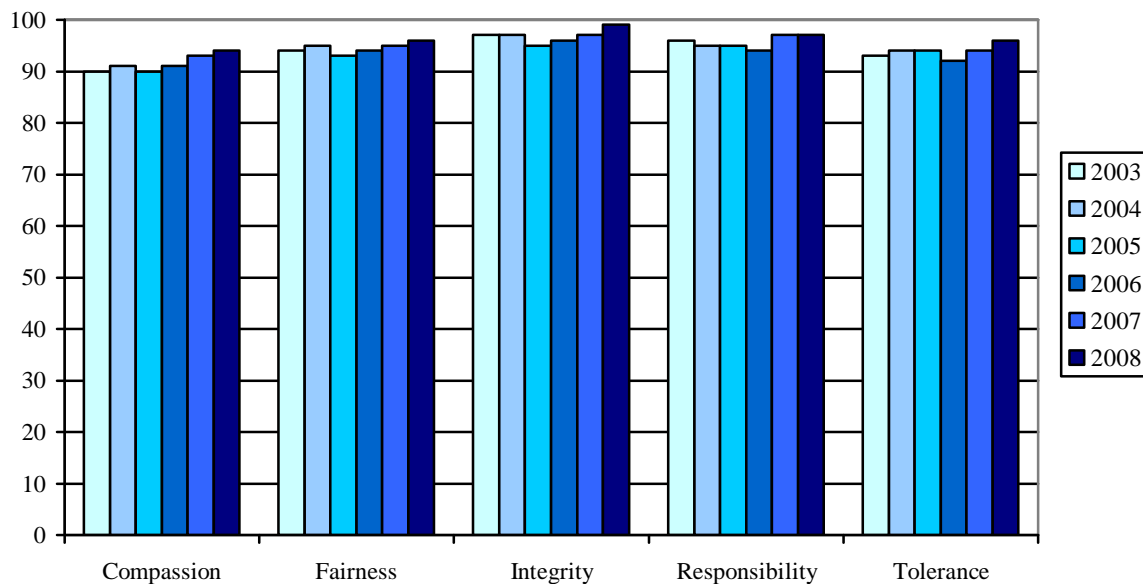
Table 7
Utility of Learning Center Services

“Use of Learning Center services helped me...”	Level of Satisfaction			Does not apply
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	% of total
become more confident as a student	8%	17%	74%	25%
improve my study habits	9%	17%	73%	26%
set academic goals	8%	15%	77%	39%
understand course content in new ways	10%	11%	78%	21%
become more comfortable working with others	8%	22%	70%	40%
learn about other resources at the college	9%	25%	65%	43%
become more connected to Oakton	9%	22%	68%	38%
Services provided by Oakton’s Learning Center played an important role in my overall success at Oakton	9%	20%	70%	29%

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 1 provides a comparison of the findings from surveys of the past six years.

Figure 1
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 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 200 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:

- “All were just excellent. I can’t say enough about how great the teachers are.”
- “[Name] was really tough but he really prepared me so well for Northeastern. His

drive really was inspiring to me, and it is the reason I'm majoring in Environmental Science today."

- "[Name] in Accounting. Very down to earth and very direct in material he had for us. Instructed me on what classes to take. Asked me to be a mentor in Accounting. He really knew how to see strengths of his students."
- "Honors Core Seminar connected me to a lot of core students that I was able to build relationships with that lasted through to other universities."
- "The Early Education seminars. I liked the new ideas, updates, and research I got to learn. I got to update my skills and improve myself in my job."

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?" Of all respondents, 42 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:

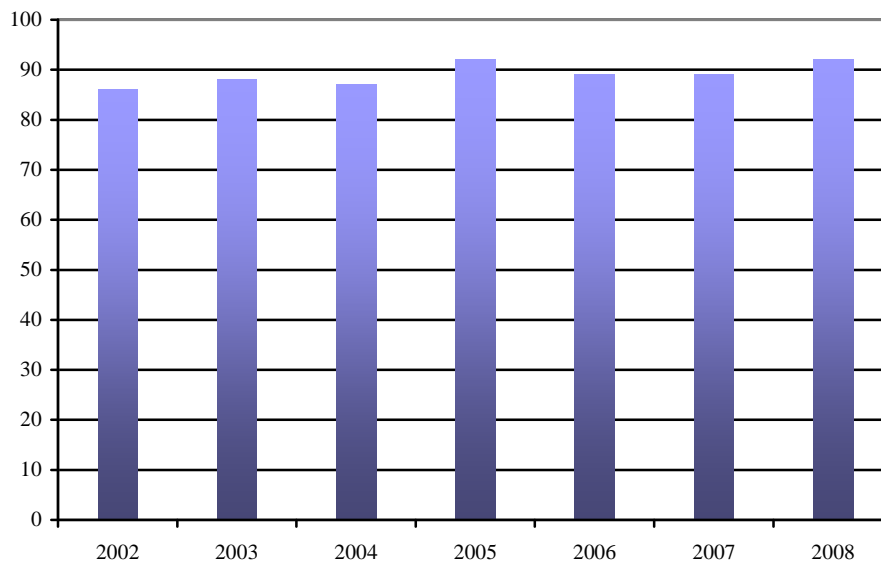
- "A very pleasant environment. Teaching was great. Quiet classrooms and a quiet environment for studying."
- "I enjoyed the professors that I had. Their attitude towards us was extremely helpful, flexible, and attentive."
- "After I received my Associate's, I felt I achieved something for my future, and they offered me continuing education classes."
- "Professors were very helpful, and everyone from the cafeteria to the library and the rest of the staff were very welcoming and friendly."

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 (45% versus 37%, respectively). Additionally, after excluding any students who did not identify their ethnicity, the data showed that Caucasian students were slightly more likely to rate themselves as being connected to Oakton than minority students (42% versus 40%, 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”). Ninety-two percent responded at the 5, 6 or 7 level, indicating that they would be likely to attend Oakton again. Figure 2 presents results from seven years. 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.⁶

Figure 2
Percent Who Would Attend Oakton Again by Survey Year



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,

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

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/>.

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 2008 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, curriculum⁷, 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. 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 2,915 baccalaureate program alumni who met the survey criteria, 1,275 were last enrolled in 2004-2005 and 1,640 in 2006-2007. Of these, 403 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 928 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 928 alumni reduced the effective survey population to approximately 1,917 alumni. Altogether, the vendor completed 599 interviews. Thus, 31 percent of the 1,917 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

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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.

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

standard statistical procedures of SAS software. Microsoft Word and Excel were used in preparing the report, tables, figures, and appendices. Appendix C contains the overall numeric results for each item.

Responses

The 599 alumni with whom telephone interviews were completed constituted 31 percent of the 1,917 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 (25%) and those who had not (22%), and were slightly weaker for those away from the college for three years (18%) than for those last enrolled in 2006-2007 (26%).

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 599 respondents and the whole population (N = 2,915) 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,¹⁰ 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.

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
Alumni Demographic Characteristics of Population and Survey Respondents

Student Characteristic	Population (N=2915)		Survey Respondents (N=599)		Difference Btw Respondents and Population
	n	%	n	%	
Gender					
Male	1499	51 %	303	51 %	- 0 %
Female	1416	49 %	296	49 %	+ 1 %
Entry Age					
Less than 24	2443	84 %	486	81 %	- 3 %
24-25	104	4 %	26	4 %	+ 0 %
26-39	271	9 %	52	9 %	- 0 %
40-59	83	3 %	30	5 %	+ 2 %
60 or older	11	0 %	4	1 %	+ 1 %
Median Age	19.0		19.0		0
Mean Age	21.4		22.0		+ 0.6
Exit Age					
Less than 24	1438	49 %	278	46 %	- 3 %
24-25	420	14 %	78	13 %	- 1 %
26-39	765	25 %	157	26 %	+ 1 %
40-59	256	9 %	71	12 %	+ 3 %
60 or older	36	1 %	14	2 %	+ 1 %
Median Age	24.0		24.0		0.0
Mean Age	27.0		28.3		+ 1.3
Ethnicity					
African American	102	4 %	10	2 %	- 2 %
Asian or Pacific Island	584	20 %	125	21 %	+ 1 %
Caucasian	1471	50 %	310	52 %	+ 2 %
Hispanic	170	6 %	36	6 %	+ 0 %
Native American	7	0 %	1	0 %	- 0 %
Multiple	0	0 %	0	0 %	+ 0 %
Other	283	10 %	52	9 %	- 1 %
No Response	298	10 %	65	11 %	+ 1 %
Credit Hours Earned					
30-44 hours	999	34 %	197	33 %	- 1 %
45-59 hours	745	26 %	148	25 %	- 1 %
60 or more hours	1171	40 %	253	42 %	+ 2 %
Median Hours	53.0		56.0		+ 3.0
Mean Hours	55.2		55.8		+ 0.6
Grade Point Average					
Median	2.85		2.96		+ 0.11
Mean	2.78		2.88		+ 0.10
Oakton Degree Received					
AA	390	13 %	90	15 %	+ 2 %
AFA	0	0 %	0	0 %	+ 0 %
AS	13	0 %	1	0 %	- 0 %
ASE	0	0 %	0	0 %	+ 0 %

Appendix C Baccalaureate Alumni Survey 2008 Results

Which one of the following was your main objective in attending Oakton?	Responses	
	n	%
Take coursework for transfer	449	75%
Take courses for personal interest	69	12%
Improve skills needed in present job	34	6%
Explore courses to decide a career	28	5%
Obtain skills needed for new job	18	3%
Total	598	101%

	n	Not Successful	Neutral	Successful
How successful were you in achieving your objective?	598	3%	10%	87%

When you first enrolled at Oakton, did you plan to earn a degree or only to take courses?	Responses	
	n	%
Degree	212	35%
Courses Only	387	65%
Total	599	100%

Had you attended another college or university BEFORE coming to Oakton?	Responses	
	n	%
Yes	225	38%
No	374	62%
Total	599	100%

Had you already earned a bachelor's degree before you last attended Oakton?	Responses	
	n	%
Yes	75	32%
No	156	68%
Total	231	100%

Did you attend any colleges or universities AFTER leaving Oakton?	Responses	
	n	%
Yes	421	70%
No	178	30%
Total	599	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	190	45%
No	231	55%
Total	421	100%

Since you transferred, what has been your most recent major?	Responses	
	n	%
Business-Related	94	22%
Social and Behavioral Sciences	69	16%
Health-related	54	13%
Humanities/Fine Arts	51	12%
Education	41	10%
Biological Sciences	26	6%
Computer-related	22	5%
Engineering	21	5%
Physical Sciences	20	5%
Mathematics	2	1%
Other or Undecided	21	5%
Total	421	100%

Did you take any science courses at Oakton?

	Responses	
	n	%
Yes	341	81%
No	79	19%

In which of the following areas were your Oakton science courses?

	Responses	
	n	%
Biology	257	75%
Chemistry	171	50%
Earth Science or Geology	138	40%
Physics	104	30%

Since you transferred from Oakton, how many additional courses have you taken at your transfer institution in the following sciences?

	n	Responses				
		0	1	2	3	4+
Biology	344	74%	10%	6%	1%	9%
Chemistry	344	82%	8%	6%	1%	3%
Earth Science or Geology	340	93%	4%	3%	0%	0%
Physics	341	88%	6%	4%	0%	1%

How well did each Oakton science course prepare you for continued study in that subject area at your transfer institution? (Data reported for the 138 respondents who took a science course at their transfer institution)	Ratings (percentages exclude those who did not take course)					Number of respondents taking the course
	Very Poorly				Very Well	
	1	2	3	4	5	
Intro. To Life Science (<i>BIO 101</i>)	0%	4%	4%	13%	79%	24
General College Biology I (<i>BIO 121</i>)	0%	2%	2%	20%	76%	49
General College Biology II (<i>BIO 122</i>)	0%	0%	4%	18%	79%	29
Human Anatomy & Physiology I (<i>BIO 131</i>)	0%	0%	3%	13%	84%	31
Human Anatomy & Physiology II (<i>BIO 132</i>)	0%	0%	12%	12%	77%	26
Microbiology (<i>BIO 151</i>)	0%	9%	0%	18%	73%	11
Introductory Chemistry (<i>CHM 101</i>)	0%	8%	0%	17%	75%	12
Elements of Chemistry (<i>CHM 105</i>)	0%	0%	18%	17%	67%	6
General College Chemistry I (<i>CHM 121</i>)	0%	5%	5%	14%	77%	44
General College Chemistry II (<i>CHM 122</i>)	0%	3%	3%	13%	81%	31
Organic Chemistry I (<i>CHM 221 or 223</i>)	0%	0%	0%	13%	87%	23
Organic Chemistry II (<i>CHM 222 or 224</i>)	0%	0%	0%	6%	94%	17
Applied Physics (<i>PHY 101</i>)	*	*	*	*	*	3
College Physics I (<i>PHY 131</i>)	0%	5%	11%	16%	68%	19
College Physics II (<i>PHY 132</i>)	0%	7%	13%	0%	80%	15
General Physics I (<i>PHY 221</i>)	0%	0%	13%	13%	75%	8
General Physics II (<i>PHY 222</i>)	0%	0%	13%	25%	63%	8
Modern Physics (<i>PHY 223</i>)	*	*	*	*	*	2

* Data only reported for courses with more than 5 respondents

In general, how much did your science coursework at Oakton improve your critical-thinking skills?	n	Rating				
		Not at all	2	3	4	A lot
	338	4%	9%	29%	38%	21%

Were you ever a member of the honors program at Oakton?	Responses	
	n	%
Yes	68	16%
No	348	84%
Total	416	100%

How much influence do you feel that participation in Oakton's Honors Program had on each of the following aspects of your transfer to a 4-year institution?	n	Ratings (percentages exclude those where skills did not apply)				
		Not at All Influential				Very Influential
		1	2	3	4	5
My ability to transfer to a 4-year institution	63	17%	14%	27%	16%	25%
My ability to compete for scholarships and/or other financial aid awards	56	29%	13%	16%	27%	16%
My overall academic success at my transfer institution	67	16%	5%	22%	31%	25%

How well did your coursework at Oakton prepare you for the level of work that was expected of you at your transfer institution in each of the following general skills areas?	n	Ratings (percentages exclude those where skills did not apply)					Does not apply	Average Rating
		Very Poorly				Very Well		
		1	2	3	4	5		
Using math	420	2%	5%	24%	31%	38%	22%	3.98
Giving presentations	420	1%	4%	23%	34%	38%	20%	4.04
Writing papers	420	0%	3%	25%	35%	37%	13%	4.05
Using computers	420	2%	7%	28%	29%	33%	28%	3.84
Problem-solving	419	1%	3%	27%	37%	31%	15%	3.37
Teamwork assignments	420	2%	8%	26%	29%	35%	19%	3.87
Reading textbooks and other assignments	420	1%	6%	24%	36%	33%	15%	3.94
Taking in-class essay exams	419	3%	4%	27%	36%	30%	21%	3.86
Take-home essay exams	419	3%	8%	29%	30%	30%	42%	3.76
Time management	420	2%	12%	24%	38%	30%	16%	3.88
Note-taking	420	1%	6%	23%	36%	34%	14%	3.95
Critical thinking	419	1%	3%	23%	37%	36%	11%	4.04

How well did your coursework at Oakton prepare you for the level of work that was expected of you at your transfer institution in each of the following general skills areas?	n	Ratings (percentages exclude those where skills did not apply)					Does not apply	Average Rating
		Very Poorly				Very Well		
		1	2	3	4	5		
Critical thinking	419	1%	3%	23%	37%	36%	11%	4.04
Writing papers	420	0%	3%	25%	35%	37%	13%	4.05
Giving presentations	420	1%	4%	23%	34%	38%	20%	4.04
Note-taking	420	1%	6%	23%	36%	34%	14%	3.95
Reading textbooks and other assignments	420	1%	6%	24%	36%	33%	15%	3.94
Using math	420	2%	5%	24%	31%	38%	22%	3.98
Problem-solving	419	1%	3%	27%	37%	31%	15%	3.37
Time management	420	2%	12%	24%	38%	30%	16%	3.88
Taking in-class essay exams	419	3%	4%	27%	36%	30%	21%	3.86
Teamwork assignments	420	2%	8%	26%	29%	35%	19%	3.87
Using computers	420	2%	7%	28%	29%	33%	28%	3.84
Take-home essay exams	419	3%	8%	29%	30%	30%	42%	3.76

How much initial difficulty did you experience, if any, in adjusting to the differences between Oakton and your transfer institution during your first semester or year at that institution?	n	Rating				
		Not at all	2	3	4	A lot
	420	62%	14%	14%	7%	2%

Does your transfer institution have a class schedule during the final exam week that differs from the class schedule for the rest of the semester?	Responses	
	n	%
Yes	233	62%
No	140	38%
Total	373	100%

In the courses that you've completed so far at your transfer institution, what have been the types of final exams that you have taken?

(For respondents whose transfer institution has a class schedule during the final exams that differs from the class schedule for the rest of the semester)

	Responses	
	n	%
Exam during "finals week," 1 to 2 hours long	159	68%
Take-home exam	71	30%
Final exam during regular class meeting time	12	5%
Exam during "finals week," 2 to 3 hours long	101	43%
Exam during "finals week," 3+ hours long	113	48%
Other	8	3%

In general, how well has your coursework at Oakton prepared you for these types of exams?	n	Rating				
		Very Poorly	2	3	4	Very Well
	380	2%	4%	23%	39%	32%

How satisfied were you with the following services provided by Oakton's Learning Center?

	n	Ratings (percentages exclude those where skills did not apply)					Used the Service	Average Rating
		Very Dissatisfied		Very Satisfied				
		1	2	3	4	5		
Testing Center	599	1%	2%	9%	23%	65%	41%	4.49
ASSIST (Services for Students with Disabilities)	597	0%	11%	17%	39%	33%	3%	3.94
Tutoring	599	2%	3%	9%	26%	60%	34%	4.38
TRiO program	596	0%	0%	9%	26%	65%	4%	4.57
Study Skills support	598	0%	0%	3%	34%	62%	5%	4.59
College 101 (College Success seminar)	599	4%	0%	8%	38%	50%	4%	4.29

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements regarding the collective impact of any services that you received from the Learning Center on your academic career.

“Use of Learning Center services helped me.....”

	n	Ratings (percentages exclude those where skills did not apply)					Did not Apply	Average Rating
		Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree		
		1	2	3	4	5		
become more confident as a student	288	3%	5%	17%	34%	40%	25%	4.03
improve my study habits	289	3%	6%	17%	33%	40%	26%	4.00
set academic goals	288	3%	5%	15%	37%	40%	39%	4.05
understand course content in new ways	289	5%	5%	11%	37%	41%	21%	4.05
become more comfortable working with others	288	4%	4%	22%	28%	42%	40%	3.99
learn about other resources at the college	287	5%	4%	25%	24%	41%	43%	3.93
become more connected to Oakton	288	4%	5%	22%	28%	40%	38%	3.94
Services provided by Oakton’s Learning Center played an important role in my overall success at Oakton	288	5%	4%	20%	33%	37%	29%	3.93

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	596	1%	6%	30%	64%	3.56
Fairness	598	1%	3%	27%	69%	3.65
Integrity	597	0%	1%	23%	76%	3.74
Responsibility	597	1%	3%	24%	73%	3.69
Tolerance	560	1%	4%	26%	70%	3.65

How connected did you feel to Oakton?	n	Rating				Very Connected
		Not at all Connected	2	3	4	
	599	11%	13%	34%	24%	18%

If you had it to do over, how likely would you be to attend Oakton again?	n	Rating						Very Likely
		Very Unlikely	2	3	4	5	6	
	599	3%	1%	2%	3%	12%	18%	62%

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
Northeastern Illinois University	80	31%
DePaul University	55	60%
University of Illinois at Chicago	54	37%
Loyola University	19	58%
National Louis University	18	67%
Northern Illinois University	16	63%
University of Illinois- Urbana-Champaign	15	53%
Roosevelt University	10	30%
Northwestern University	11	36%
Columbia College	9	44%
DeVry	8	50%
Harper College	8	0%
Illinois State University	7	86%
Triton College	7	43%
Illinois Institute of Technology	6	50%
North Park University	6	50%
Elmhurst College	4	50%
Western Illinois University	4	25%
Wright College-City Colleges of Chicago	4	0%
St. Francis Medical Center	3	0%

Two students attended each of these institutions:

College of DuPage, Concordia University, Dominican University, Iowa State University, Midwestern University (Chicago Coll. Osteopathic Med.), Rush University, Saint Xavier University, Southern Illinois University-Carbondale, Trinity Christian College, Truman College-City Colleges of Chicago, University of Tampa, University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh

One student attended each of these institutions:

Aurora University, Benedictine University, Bradley University, City Colleges of Chicago, College of Lake County, Community College of Southern Nevada, Eastern Illinois University, Elgin Community College, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Evergreen State College, Fashion Institute of Technology, Ferris State University, International Academy of Design & Technology, ITT Technical Institute, Landmark College, Lewis University, Lincoln College, Malcolm X College-City Colleges of Chicago, McHenry County College, Murray State University, North Central College, Olney Central College, Parkland College, Phoenix College, Purdue University, Rollins College, Saint Louis University, Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville, St. Augustine College, State University of New York, University of Arizona, University of California-Irvine, University of Kansas, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, University of Notre Dame, University of Phoenix, University of St. Francis, West Suburban College of Nursing

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

Sixteen of these students (47%) reported that they graduated from their respective institutions.

Two students attended a college outside of the U.S.