



Open Pathway Quality Initiative Report

Institutional Template

The enclosed Quality Initiative Report represents the work that the institution has undertaken to fulfill the Improvement Process of the Open Pathway.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joianne Smith".

August 22, 2017

Signature of Institution's President or Chancellor

Date

Joianne Smith, Ph.D.

President

Printed/Typed Name and Title

Oakton Community College

Name of Institution

Des Plaines, IL

City and State

The institution uses the template below to complete its Quality Initiative Report. The institution may include a report it has prepared for other purposes if it addresses many of the questions below and replaces portions of the narrative in the template. This template may be used both for reports on initiatives that have been completed and for initiatives that will continue and for which this report serves as a milestone of accomplishments thus far. The complete report should be no more than 6,000 words.

Quality Initiative Reports are to be submitted by August 31 of Year 9. HLC recommends that institutions with comprehensive evaluations in the first half of Year 10 submit their report at least six months prior to their Assurance System lock date. Submit the report as a PDF file to pathways@hlcommission.org with a file name that follows this format: QI Report No Name University MN. The file name must include the institution's name (or an identifiable portion thereof) and state.

Date: August 1, 2017

Contact Person for Report: Maya Evans, Executive Director of Research and Planning

Report Categories

Overview of the Quality Initiative

1. Provide a one-page executive summary that describes the Quality Initiative, summarizes what was accomplished and explains any changes made to the initiative over the time period.

Oakton Community College selected its participation in Achieving the Dream, beginning in 2013, as the Quality Initiative to support its accreditation process through the Open Pathways model of the Higher Learning Commission. Achieving the Dream (ATD) is a national initiative designed to improve the academic outcomes of community college students, especially those who are low-income or students of color. Oakton's Achieving the Dream initiative is led by the Student Success Team, which is composed of 19 faculty, staff, and administrators on the core team and 12 members on each of three initiative team.

This Quality Initiative has had a significant impact on processes, policies, technology, curricula, and student learning and success. The initiative led to:

- Creation of a committee to review, research, and make recommendations on academic policies and procedures;
- Development of a new strategic plan using Achieving the Dream's seven capacities of a student-focused culture;
- Creation of a policy that mandates enrollment in a developmental reading course;
- Creation of a policy that mandates placement information for all students;
- Development of a data warehouse, in its initial stages;
- Redesign of the developmental math course sequence;
- Creation of curricular pathways, in its initial stages;
- Declaration of a "wildly important goal" on persistence;
- Innovation through an institutional initiative for employee engagement in student success;
- Delivery of professional development to administrators on executing student success initiatives;
- Creation of a first year experience program, in its initial stages; and
- Development of an initiative to increase faculty/student connections

These initiatives and activities result from a data-driven effort that relied upon longitudinal cohort analyses, a student success data dashboard, and data summits to increase awareness of student outcomes and direct intervention efforts.

The initiative resulted in a number of successes, based upon its goals. The percentage of students with no placement information decreased, an increase in the number of methods and measures to place students is in process, policies for mandatory placement and enrollment were instituted, the percentage of developmental/ESL students matriculating into college level increased for English (albeit not for math), and fall-to-spring and fall-to-fall persistence rates increased. Members of the college community also reported improvements in various measures of leading a student-focused culture.

The initiative requires improvements in its leadership by the Student Success Team, the availability of data and updates about the effort, and building a sense of urgency around student success.

Scope and Impact of the Initiative

2. Explain in more detail what was accomplished in the Quality Initiative in relation to its purposes and goals. (If applicable, explain the initiative's hypotheses and findings.)

The ATD approach provides the tools, supports, and knowledge base to develop and execute a comprehensive student success strategy and to “take risks, innovate [and] take on a tough challenge”—precisely the focus of the Open Pathways Quality Initiative project. The approach also helps community colleges build a culture of evidence by using data to examine how students are performing and to identify barriers to their success. Colleges are expected to develop intervention strategies that are designed to improve student outcomes, to conduct further research and evaluation to understand how these strategies impact student success, and to bring effective programs to scale.

Oakton Community College shares its goals for this Quality Initiative project with other institutions in the Achieving the Dream network: improved student success outcomes, increased focus on equity and reducing achievement gaps, broad engagement around the student success agenda, amplified commitment to student success by college leadership, increased capacity to gather and analyze data, increased program evaluation to ensure intervention strategies, and improved planning and accreditation processes for student success. The proposal for this Quality Initiative outlined student success indicators and measures from the ATD Principles Survey, administered to a select group of Oakton employees, that would be used to measure success at achieving these goals. The following data documents the initiative's success at achieving these goals.

Initiative Goal One: Improve Student Success Outcomes

The most significant goal of the Quality Initiative is to improve student success, and the college uses a longitudinal cohort analysis to track students as a group over a specified period of time. The results allow the college community to identify groups of students who are succeeding or falling behind and the points in the educational pipeline where they may falter. In 2014, the Student Success Team conducted a baseline analysis of five main performance measures:

- Percentage of students who complete developmental coursework and advance to college-level courses
- Percentage of students who enroll in and complete gateway courses, the first-level college courses that are prerequisites for degrees and generally have high withdrawal and failure rates
- Percentage of students who successfully complete their courses with a grade of C or higher
- Percentage of incoming first-year students who re-enroll for a second semester, and the percentage who re-enroll for a second year
- Percentage of students who earn certificates and/or degrees, and the percentage of students who transfer

Based upon this baseline analysis, the college developed goals, as outlined in the Quality Initiative Proposal, to improve specific student success outcomes. The following details the college's success in achieving these

Outcome One: Decrease the number of new students with no placement information in reading, writing, and math.

For the fall 2016 entering cohort, the percentage of students with no placement information decreased to its lowest level in nine years. The implementation of the mandatory new student orientation policy, which folds in mandatory placement information, led to this significant decrease. The table below details the percentage of students with no placement information for fall entering cohorts.

Percentage of Students With No Placement Information			
	Reading	Writing	Math
2008	35%	36%	33%
2009	37%	38%	36%
2010	35%	36%	35%
2011	35%	35%	32%
2012	39%	38%	35%
2013	36%	33%	32%
2014	40%	37%	34%
2015	36%	31%	30%
2016	29%	28%	25%

Outcome Two: Increase the number of methods and measures that can be used to place students.

Contrary to current practice at Oakton, recent research calls into question the accuracy of high-stakes placement tests as a primary or sole measure for placement. Prior academic performance, as measured by high school grade point average, is the single best predictor of success in college-level English and Math courses. In 2017-2018, the college will pilot the use of hierarchical multiple measure—including high school grade point average, placement test results, and performance on standardized college entrance exams—to place Oakton students in reading, writing, and math. The pilot will use unweighted cumulative grade point averages of graduates (within the past three years) of high schools with which Oakton has existing data sharing agreements.

Outcome Three: Increase the success of students in college-level courses by determining which developmental and ESL courses should require mandatory enrollment.

A data-based examination determined the importance of enrollment in EGL094: Reading Improvement, a course that emphasizes approaches to reading that apply to college-level courses across the disciplines, to student outcomes. As a result of this examination, the college approved a proposal to mandate enroll in EGL094. Section 3 explains the college’s implementation of this policy.

Outcome Four: Increase the percentage of students with developmental or ESL placements who matriculate to college-level writing and math within three years.

The Quality Initiative has resulted in an increase in the percentage of students with developmental or ESL placements who matriculate into college-level writing within three years. The same results have not been achieved for math, despite increasing success rates in developmental math. The table below details the results for fall entering cohorts. Because there is no college-level reading course at Oakton, no results are provided for students with developmental or ESL reading placements.

Percentage of Developmental/ESL Students Matriculating Into College-Level Within Three Years		
	Writing	Math
2008	50%	40%
2009	54%	40%
2010	54%	33%
2011	55%	30%
2012	57%	28%
2013	57%	27%

Outcome Five: Increase the fall-to-spring and fall-to-fall student persistence rates.

During the Quality Initiative project, persistence became the college’s “wildly important goal,” as persistence serves as both a leading and lagging indicator for student success outcomes. The college’s fall-to-fall persistence rate is the lowest among its peer institutions, and several projects were developed to positively impact the college’s persistence rates. The table below documents an increase in persistence rates, returning to their levels circa 2008.

Persistence Rates			
	Fall to Spring	Fall to Fall	Fall to Two Falls Later
2008	66%	49%	35%
2009	66%	48%	33%
2010	66%	48%	33%
2011	66%	48%	33%
2012	65%	45%	34%
2013	64%	46%	33%
2014	63%	47%	34%

2015	68%	49%	--
2016	68%	--	--

The following results stem from Achieving the Dream’s Principles Survey, an annual survey administered to a select group of faculty, staff, and administrators. Results are used, in part, to assess the college’s areas of improvement through the Achieving the Dream initiative. The Quality Initiative Proposal created a crosswalk between the goals of the Quality Initiative and corresponding questions on the ATD Principles Survey. The tables below provide the percentage of employees who report that the college’s effort in each area is at least “improving.” Overall, the data provide evidence of improvements in each goal area, as reported by members of the college community.

Initiative Goal Two: Increased Focus on Equity and Reducing Achievement Gaps

	2013	2014	2015
The institution has a climate of respect for inclusiveness.	92%	93%	89%
The institution consistently demonstrates a commitment to equity for all students.	90%	89%	89%
Multicultural perspectives are integrated throughout the curriculum.	74%	73%	77%

Initiative Goal Three: Broad Engagement around the Student Success Agenda

	2013	2014	2015
College communications, including website and news releases, emphasize a student success agenda.	69%	75%	86%
Part-time or adjunct faculty are actively engaged in institutional efforts to improve student success.	47%	43%	50%
College secures active student participation in efforts to improve student outcomes.	45%	37%	76%

Initiative Goal Four: Amplified Commitment to Student Success by College Leadership

	2013	2014	2015
CEO and leadership team actively supports efforts to improve student learning and completion, not just increase enrollments.	80%	64%	88%
The board expects, and the CEO provides, regular reports on student outcomes and the impact of efforts to improve success rates.	75%	81%	88%
Senior leaders demonstrate willingness to support changes in policy, procedures, and resource allocation to improve student success.	67%	71%	83%

Initiative Goal Five: Increased Capacity to Gather and Analyze Data

	2013	2014	2015
IT capacity is adequate to meet the demand for data and institutional research.	63%	64%	70%
Policies and procedures are in place to ensure integrity of data collected.	73%	92%	89%
IR staff capacity is adequate to meet demand for data and research.	39%	46%	65%

Initiative Goal Six: Increased Program Evaluation to Ensure Effective Intervention Strategies

	2013	2014	2015
College regularly conducts surveys and focus groups with students, faculty, and staff to identify weaknesses in programs and services and opportunities for improvement.	57%	48%	78%
College routinely engages personnel from across the campus community to review data on student achievement and help develop and refine strategies for addressing priority problems.	62%	59%	79%
College routinely evaluates the effectiveness of efforts to improve student success and uses the results to improve policy and practice.	51%	54%	82%

Initiative Goal Seven: Improved Planning and Accreditation Processes for Student Success

	2013	2014	2015
College has established a strategic planning process that relies on data to set goals for student success and measures of goal attainment.	77%	82%	89%
Plans for a given year are driven by a limited set of strategic priorities that have a focus on student success.	71%	74%	90%
The student success agenda is integrated with on-going accreditation activity.	67%	67%	91%

3. Evaluate the impact of the initiative, including any changes in processes, policies, technology, curricula, programs, student learning and success that are now in place in consequence of the initiative.

The Quality Initiative has had a significant impact on processes, policies, technology, curricula, programs, and student learning and success at Oakton.

Processes

Creation of the Educational Standards Review Board

When Oakton first joined Achieving the Dream and the Student Success Team was created, members noted a gap in process mapping of the Team's work. Data would be collected and analyzed, initiatives would be piloted, and successful initiatives would be brought to scale – but what happens when an initiative results in recommendation for policy change or a new policy? Certainly Academic Council (composed of deans, assistant vice presidents, and the vice president of Academic Affairs) would review and approve academic policies, but what about policies that reach across Academic Affairs and Student Affairs? Additionally, who would grant approval to policy recommendations that required resource allocation? To resolve these questions, former Oakton president Margaret Lee agreed to create the Educational Standards Review Board, a standing committee of the college that reviews, researches, and makes recommendations on a wide range of policies and procedures. The committee reflects a commitment to shared governance by drawing upon a wide array of constituent groups in the decision-making process. Proposals reviewed by the ESRB since 2015 include:

1. Revision to the late registration permit (approved)
2. Mandatory enrollment in EGL094 (approved)
3. Elimination of the Illinois State Constitution proficiency from Oakton graduation requirements (approved)
4. Change to the regular registration cutoff date (denied)
5. Mandatory placement for all credential-seeking students (approved)
6. Change to grades due date (denied)
7. Short-term extension to grades due date and long-term guidelines for grades due date (approved)
8. Change to online description of hybrid courses and days of the week key (approved)
9. Proposal to adopt plus/minus grade scale (denied)
10. Multiple measures for placement (deferred for pilot)

In 2016-2017, the ESRB will evolve into the Academic Policies and Procedures Committee. The APPC will work closely with Academic Affairs, including the new Dean of Curriculum and Instruction position, to establish a calendar and schedule for regular review of existing academic policies and procedures. Academic Affairs will create the calendar and central cataloging system for academic policies and

procedures; the APPC will review substantive proposed changes to policies and procedures that results from these reviews.

Strategic Planning Process

The development of *Success Matters*, the college's 2018-2022 strategic plan, aligned with Achieving the Dream's seven capacities for leading a student-focused culture. The college hosted 28 strategic conversations with faculty, staff, students, and trustees in a focus group setting to discuss areas to improve institutional capacity to serve students and to seek input into the development of goals, objectives, activities, and outcomes. As a result of these strategic conversations, which were focused on creating and sustaining a student-focused culture, *Success Matters* features four strategic commitments with goals that are focused upon student success.

Strategic Commitment One: Equity Matters - We will create an environment that supports the inclusion, engagement, and learning of all students through resource allocation, curriculum development, inclusive policies and procedures, and ongoing support.

Strategic Commitment Two: Teaching and Learning Matter - Building on our commitment to academic excellence, we will be responsive to the changing environment and will promote student success through innovative pedagogical practices.

Strategic Commitment Three: Community Matters - We will increase our positive impact on the community by deepening Oakton's relationships with external organizations and fostering students' sense of social responsibility and engagement.

Strategic Commitment Four: Planning Matters - We will promote the long term success of Oakton by planning strategically for the future and responsibly investing in employees, infrastructure, and marketing.

Policies

Mandatory New Student Orientation

Prior to 2015, Oakton's new student orientation was a voluntary program that connected students to the college, introduced students to resources, provided advisors for academic planning, and created a setting for students to connect with peers. Program assessment revealed that students who attended orientation had an 11 percent higher fall-to-spring persistence rate compared to those who did not attend. Based upon this data, the college instituted the mandatory new student orientation. In fall 2015, all new, traditional-aged, and all adult, full-time students were required to attend new student orientation. The completion of the phase-in will occur in 2017 when orientation will be required for all new students, including part-time students.

Mandatory Enrollment in EGL094

Studies conducted by the Student Success Team determined that students who place into English 094 are underprepared to meet the literacy demands of college. EGL094 is designed to help students both navigate the transition to reading for college, and to empower students to become independent learners throughout their academic careers. A 2014 study of EGL094 students found that the average ACT score was 14 in English and 15 in Reading. The ACT college readiness benchmark score is 18 in English and 22 in Reading. Students who place into and take EGL094 have higher persistence rates than the general college population. Students who placed into and took EGL094 were considerably more likely to be enrolled two fall terms later (51%) than the general population (28%). Further, students who do not enroll in EGL094 complete fewer courses than those who do, 13 compared to 17. The Educational Standards Review Board approved, and the English department implemented, a policy that mandates English 094 for all students who place into it. Under this proposal, EGL094 must be taken in the semester immediately following placement.

Mandatory Placement for All Students

Prior to 2015, Oakton only required reading, writing, and placement information for students who sought to enroll in a math or composition course or other courses with math or composition prerequisites; new traditional-age students as part of the mandatory new student orientation policy; students after their first semester of full-time enrollment; and students placed on academic probation who were required to complete English placement. The primary concerns with the college's placement policies were that: (a) placement information was not required for all students; (b) placement information was not required at the beginning of students' academic career; (c) students could enroll as part-time students and never be required to take placement tests; and (d) students' academic readiness was not aligned with the academic skills required of their coursework. As a result, the college created a two-phase implementation of the mandatory placement policy. In phase 1, beginning in fall 2016, all new, degree-seeking students were required to complete placement before registering for any classes. In phase 2, beginning in spring 2018, all students in Career and Technical Education certificate or career programs will be required to complete department-specific placement before registering for any classes.

Technology

Data Warehouse

In fall 2016, the offices of Institutional Research and Information Technology will collaborate to explore, acquire, and implement a data warehouse solution for the college. The data warehouse will support strategic decision-making by allowing departments to take control of their information and produce performance reports and metrics for their function. Information will be integrated across functional areas into an institution-wide information environment with effective and accurate reporting and analyses.

Curricula

Developmental redesign

Oakton's Math Department has undergone a complete redesign of the developmental math sequence. Adopting a model from the National Center for Academic Transformation (NCAT), the department implemented an emporium model design, in which students work at their own paced based upon mastery of content, with significant one-on-one learning from classroom instructors and tutors. As a result of this redesign, Oakton is now in the 74th percentile for developmental math success rates, according to the National Community College Benchmarking Project.

Curricular Pathways

The Student Success Team and its Curricular Pathways subcommittee is overseeing a process to implement curricular pathways, or suggested educational plans that help students achieve their goals, earn credentials, and/or prepare for transfer. Curricular pathways allow students to express their educational goals in the language of college programs. They grant students a clear idea of what courses must be taken to complete a program, but they also allow students to view their educational goals with a wide lens. Academic programs which serve the largest number of students at Oakton will be the first to develop their curricular pathways. From these, development and implementation will be scaled up in a gradual manner throughout other areas of the college.

Programs

Wildly Important Persistence Goal

Oakton has a high transfer rate, and its course retention rate is 95 percent, which is in the 94th percentile nationally. However, the college's fall-to-fall persistence rate of 45 percent is lower than peer institutions and ranks in the 11th percentile nationally. President Joianne Smith, acknowledging this gap between high course retention and low persistence, brought additional focus and priority to student persistence. In her 2015 address to the college, President Smith set a "wildly important goal" to increase fall-to-fall persistence from 45 percent to 54 percent, which would align Oakton's persistence rate with that of its peers. Cultivating student connections became the framework for all initiatives supporting Oakton's Wildly Important Goal (WIG) of persistence.

All for One/One for All

Oakton's focus on student success and engagement with students has been driven by President Joianne Smith's targeted focus on student outcomes through the All for One/One for All initiatives. After data revealed that Oakton loses, on average, five students per day, President Smith issued a challenge during the fall 2015 All-College Breakfast to retain just one more student per day. To demonstrate that student success is the work of

all employees and not just faculty, all employees were given a card with the name and email address of a new, at-risk student, defined as an adult student, a student with a developmental placement, and/or a student of color. Employees were encouraged to contact students at five key points in the semester to deliver encouragement, support, and information about important college deadlines and resources. The program was improved during spring 2016 to provide clearer, more targeted messages for employees to share with students. Although many employees reported few responses from students, the All for One/One for All initiatives served to increase awareness and participation in student success and the student-centered mission from faculty to finance to facilities.

Four Disciplines of Execution

Oakton's administrative team participated in a common reading of *The 4 Disciplines of Execution*, and each administrator executed a unique project to help the college reach its wildly important goal for persistence. Projects included tripling the outreach to students by the Counseling and Wellness department, improved communication to students through social media, improving the response time for data requests related to the wildly important goal, and increasing the number of students who complete the FAFSA early. In 2016-2017, the administrative team expanded its work to focus on increasing persistence rates for particular student groups, including African-American students who primarily enroll at the college's Ray Hartstein campus, adult students, and students with developmental placements.

Learning and Success

First Year Experience

The First-Year Experience subcommittee of the Student Success Team is charged with assessment and affirmation of current college initiatives in light of best practices that will support an effective first year experience for Oakton students. The subcommittee is organizing and developing a First Year Experience program at Oakton with a target of piloting a program during the 2018-2019 academic year. In 2016-2017, the First Year Experience subcommittee identified First Year Experience initiatives at other institutions, identified and assessed current Oakton First Year Experience practices, and completed a philosophy statement to guide work moving forward.

Faculty Initiative for Student Persistence

The Faculty Initiative for Student Persistence is charged with supporting, scaling, and evaluating activities in the student-faculty engagement project, including collaboration with the professional development committee and other groups to create opportunities to share best practices. This initiative provides a framework of specific classroom activities that foster connections between faculty and students. Faculty members who volunteer for the project agree to incorporate four activities based on best practices of highly effective classrooms. These activities incorporated within the first three weeks include: Learn the names of students as quickly as possible and create community in the classroom by having students learn the names of peers; schedule a fifteen minute conference with each student; present class requirements clearly and set high academic standards; and make an appropriate assignment as early as possible in order to give students early feedback.

4. Explain any tools, data or other information that resulted from the work of the initiative.

Because data-informed decision-making for student success is the foundation of Achieving the Dream, the effort has particularly enhanced the data and tools available at the college.

- **Student Success Data Dashboard:** The college joined the National Community College Benchmarking Project, and data are submitted annually to create the college's Student Success Data Dashboard. The data dashboard tracks the following areas: success in developmental reading courses, success in developmental writing courses, success of developmental writing students in college-level writing, success in developmental math courses, success of developmental math students in college-level math, success in college-level courses, grades, persistence, and student completion and transfer. The dashboard is presented to the Board of Trustees, and is currently being refashioned into a public accessible accountability dashboard with the college's key performance indicators. In 2016-2017, the college will also participate in the Voluntary Framework of Accountability and Student Achievement Measure and add indicators from these sources to the data dashboard.
- **Longitudinal Cohort Analysis:** The Office of Research and Planning produces an annual longitudinal cohort analysis, which tracks students across time with the goal of increasing successful student outcomes. An analysis of the fall entering cohort tracks completion of a developmental education sequence and progression into first-level credit bearing courses, successful course completion, successful gateway course completion, term to term persistence, and completion and/or transfer. Data are also disaggregated by race/ethnicity, sex, Pell status, and age.
- **Data Summit:** To increase awareness of the longitudinal cohort analysis, the Office of Research hosts an annual data summit. This college-wide presentation shares valuable data about student success, helps the college monitor its progress on the student success effort, and sparks discussions that create engagement with the Achieving the Dream effort.

5. Describe the biggest challenges and opportunities encountered in implementing the initiative.

In February 2017, Oakton's Achieving the Dream coaches hosted the college's Capacity Café. The Capacity Café is based upon Achieving the Dream's Institutional Capacity Framework, which outlines the seven essential elements necessary for institutions to achieve their aspirations for student success. The Capacity Café offers employees the opportunity to review Oakton's results from the Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool (ICAT) and discuss our strengths, areas to improve, and necessary actions to build capacity. Thirty employees participated in the Capacity Café, providing actionable insights to increase Oakton's capacity to strengthen its student-focused culture. Participants identified the following areas for ongoing work in Oakton's student success effort:

- . During Capacity Café, participants identified several barriers to full implementation.
 - A moderate understanding of student success that varies widely by role.
 - A tendency to over-plan, seek perfection, and operate without a sense of urgency.

- A tendency to create interventions that impact a subset of the student population and not interventions that go to scale.
- A lack of faculty buy-in and a persistent “right to fail” culture.
- A tendency to work on student success, not share or celebrate successes, and perceive that everything is failing.
- Low staffing levels in institutional research and information technology that slow access to data, particularly complex analyses.
- Outdated technology that does not help students meet their needs related to success and fails to prepare them for transfer and the workforce, as well as outdated technology that does not support real-time data analytics and visualization.
- A lack of a shared understanding and operational definition of equity, and a lack of tools that allow equity to be evaluated at the departmental and divisional levels.
- A failure to better disaggregate data to be better informed, set targets for improvement, and insert equity into decision-making.
- An ability to communicate priorities in an age of competing priorities and limited resources.
- A multi-year budget impasse in Illinois that has limited the financial and human resources available for innovation and initiative development.

Commitment to and Engagement in the Quality Initiative

6. Describe the individuals and groups involved at stages throughout the initiative and their perceptions of its worth and impact.

The first iteration of the Student Success Team was led by Michael Carr, Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Sebastian Contreras, Jr., Dean of Student Success. The current configuration of the Student Success Team, called “Student Success Team 2.0,” is led by Karl Brooks, Vice President for Student Affairs, and Ileo Lott, Vice President of Academic Affairs. Maya Evans, Executive Director of Research and Planning, provides data leadership for the effort. Joianne Smith, President, also serves on the Student Success Team. In total, the core team is composed of 19 members: eight administrators, five academic chairs/coordinators, 3 faculty, and three staff. The Student Success Team has primary responsibility for implementing the initiative, and there is a subcommittee that oversees work on each priority area. Each subcommittee has two co-chairs, and twelve members that are either faculty, staff, or administrators. Members of the Student Success Team and its subcommittees are from different departments and labor groups in order to ensure that different perspectives are heard and to provide a mechanism for the college to provide feedback to the Team and its subcommittees. Membership on the Student Success Team and/or its subcommittees includes four members of President’s Council, five members of Academic Council, six members of the Student Affairs Leadership Team, the president of the full-time faculty association, 16 full-time or part-time faculty, and staff representatives from Information Technology, College Relations, Financial Aid, Registrar Services, Advising Services, Business and Finance, the Learning Center, and the Access and Disability Resource Center.

7. Describe the most important points learned by those involved in the initiative.

Participants in the Achieving the Dream initiative have learned many lessons about changing institutional culture and building broad-based engagement for student success.

Leadership of the initiative: Much effort has gone into determining the right configuration of the Student Success Team. Members learned that the team is not a governance body, but instead an advisory body of influencers whose value is in leadership and the strength and brilliance of its ideas. The team struggles to figure out how to be a body that is not just focused on initiative development and implementation, but instead a body that guides an entire institutional culture for student success.

Data and Communication: The initiative has also taught the importance of mastering communication. Members of the Student Success Team felt they were communicating data but learned that all communication is not effective communication. While there are certainly good practices in place, such as the data summit, the team needs to share meeting minutes and regular communications with the college. Data awareness must also increase on the team, with data shared at each meeting. Ultimately, data communications must include an analysis that follows the WIIFM principle: *What's In It For Me?*

Sense of Urgency: Members of the Student Success Team realized a persistent problem with execution of initiatives. Oakton's Achieving the Dream coaches continually shared that Oakton's effort lacked a sense of urgency and needed to be presented with scenarios that created an understanding of the consequences of not improving student success.

Resource Provision

8. Explain the human, financial, physical and technological resources that supported the initiative.

Achieving the Dream costed \$75,000 per year for the first three years of the commitment (2013-2016). Each additional year costs \$20,000, which Oakton has paid for 2017. In addition, the college pays travel expenses for a team to attend the required Kick-Off Institute, a three-day event during the summer of initial membership. The college also pays travel expenses for attendees at the 3-day DREAM Institute. The total college commitment of direct expenses for the ATD fee, travel to the Kick-Off Institute, annual travel to the DREAM Institute, and miscellaneous meeting expenses is approximately \$305,000. Human resources committed to this initiative include the Student Success Team; members of the Placement, Developmental Education, Persistence, Curricular Pathways, First-Year Experience, Faculty Initiative for Student Persistence, and Mandatory Placement Implementation committees; Higher Learning Commission Open Pathways Steering Committee; and offices of Institutional Research and Information Technology. Technology resources include a budget allocation of \$150,000 to support the development of a data warehouse, with additional future allocations projected. Financial resources include the general fund and special funding requests, as well as access to grant opportunities made available only to Achieving the Dream institutions.

Plans for the Future (or Future Milestones of a Continuing Initiative)

9. Describe plans for ongoing work related to or as a result of the initiative.

The Student Success Team plans to continue implementation of four key initiatives:

- **Faculty Initiative for Student Persistence:** Charged with supporting, scaling, and evaluating activities in the student-faculty engagement project, including collaboration with the professional development committee and other groups to create opportunities to share best practices.
- **Curricular Pathways for Students:** Charged with developing guidelines and templates for departments in order to contribute to curricular pathways that clarify steps for students to achieve their academic goals.
- **First Year Experience:** Charged with assessment and affirmation of current initiatives in light of best practices that will support an effective first-year experience for Oakton students. Make recommendations for the implementation of future practices that will engage students inside and outside of the classroom with a goal of increasing student persistence outcomes.
- **Mandatory Placement Implementation:** Charged with coordination of the mandatory placement policy to determine placement for CTE programs within the coming academic year.

During the February 2017 Capacity Café, participants identified the following areas for ongoing work in Oakton’s student success effort:

1. Leadership and Vision – The commitment and collaboration of the institution’s leadership with respect to student success and the clarity of the vision for desired change.

- Encourage members of the college community to take risks and innovate and experiment for student success, ensuring that the culture accepts failure
- Increase data-driven decision-making by tracking more data, increasing access to data, and increasing use and awareness of the student success data dashboard
- Examine resource allocation and align resources, such as information technology and institutional research, with the needs of a student-focused culture

2. Data and Technology – The institution’s capacity to collect, access, analyze, and use data to inform decisions, and to use powerful technology to support student success.

- Develop a robust data warehouse that allows end users to access a variety of data for real-time decision-making
- Survey students about technology needs that support student success
- Survey employees on the tools they need to promote efficiency and allow them to better serve students

3. Equity – The commitment, capabilities, and experiences of an institution to fairly serve low income students, students of color, and other at-risk student populations with respect to access, success, and campus climate.

- Identify a clear space to support diverse students and further equity work
- Build a shared understanding of equity through strategic planning and professional development
- Ensure that the data warehouse allows disaggregation of data for a variety of student identities

4. Teaching and Learning – The commitment to engaging full-time and adjunct faculty in examination of pedagogy, meaningful professional development, and a central role for them as change agents within the institution. Also, the college’s commitment to advising, tutoring, and out-of-classroom supports as well as restructuring developmental education to facilitate student learning and success.

- Support professional development for English faculty to accelerate developmental education in reading and writing
- Increase communication from Academic Affairs leadership to profile teaching and learning successes
- Extend data collection to study instructional practices that lead to improved student outcomes
- Create an administrator position that supports faculty in developing curricular pathways
- Create full-time position that supports professional development

5. Engagement and Communication – The creation of strategic partnerships with key external stakeholders, such as K-12, universities, employers, community-based organizations, and internal stakeholders across the institution to participate in the student success agenda and improvement of student outcomes.

- Continue to create and reinforce a culture of student success and help everyone understand that student success is everyone’s responsibility
- Use the data to regularly communicate a “call to action”
- Broadcast clear reasons when recommendations are made related to student success
- Align department initiatives to work in concert for student success
- Celebrate successes

6. Strategy and Planning – The alignment of the institution with the umbrella goal of student success and the institution’s process for translating the desired future into defined goals and objectives and executing the actions to achieve them.

- Improve external relationship-building and be more strategic with grant efforts in order to diversify fiscal resources
- Increase professional development for staff on student success-related topics and increase funding to attend conferences
- Improve communication and relationship between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs
- Develop strategic annual planning for Academic Affairs
- Build broader responsibility for student success execution outside of the Student Success Team

7. Policies & Practices – The institutional policies and practices that impact student success and the processes for examining and aligning policies and practices to remove barriers and foster student completion.

- Increase communications to and opportunities for engagement for all student groups (i.e. adult, online, transfer)
- Evaluate policies and practices on a regular basis/set schedule
- Develop first year experience in a timely manner to address different groups
- Connect students with advisors and career services early and at specific progression points

10. Describe any practices or artifacts from the initiative that other institutions might find meaningful or useful and please indicate if you would be willing to share this information.

Faculty Initiative on Student Persistence

The Faculty Initiative on Student Persistence supports the faculty/student connection. This initiative provides a framework of specific classroom activities that foster connections between faculty and students. Faculty members who volunteer for the project agree to incorporate four activities based on best practices of highly effective classrooms. These activities incorporated within the first three weeks include:

- Learn the names of students as quickly as possible and create community in the classroom by having students learn the names of peers;
- Schedule a fifteen minute conference with each student;
- Present class requirements clearly and set high academic standards; and
- Make an appropriate assignment as early as possible in order to give students early feedback.

In the fall 2016 semester, 132 faculty participated, which impacted over 1,200 students and 25 percent of course sections. Evidence of the importance and tremendous impact of faculty connection can be found in the data. Data indicate that students who were enrolled in a course section had a 17 percent higher fall-to-spring persistence rate. The impact on fall-to-spring persistence rates for students of color was especially noteworthy.

Fall-to-Spring Persistence Rates for the Faculty Initiative on Student Persistence by Race/Ethnicity		
	Participated in the Project	Did Not Participate in the Project
Asian	80%	66%
Black	68%	55%
Latino	79%	64%
White	79%	62%
Other	81%	61%
Total	79%	62%

One for All/All for One

Oakton’s focus on student success and engagement with students has been driven by President Joianne Smith’s targeted focus on student outcomes through the All for One/One for All initiatives. After data revealed that Oakton loses, on average, five students per day, President Smith issued a challenge during the fall 2015 All-College Breakfast to retain just one more student per day. To demonstrate that student

success is the work of all employees and not just faculty, all employees were given a card with the name and email address of a new, at-risk student, defined as an adult student, a student with a developmental placement, and/or a student of color. Employees were encouraged to contact students at five key points in the semester to deliver encouragement, support, and information about important college deadlines and resources. The program was improved during spring 2016 to provide clearer, more targeted messages for employees to share with students. Although many employees reported few responses from students, the All for One/One for All initiatives served to increase awareness and participation in student success and the student-centered mission from faculty to finance to facilities.