



September 2022 Leadership Update

Colleagues,

It's hard to believe that we are already an entire month into our fall term. It's wonderful to see the steady stream of activity on our campuses, with students engaging with faculty, staff and one another. That type of engagement is the heart of the Oakton Experience and is key to creating the supportive and welcoming environment students need to succeed.

So much exciting work is happening at Oakton, and much aligns with our recently adopted Strategic Plan's goals.

You'll recall that one of the Strategic Plan's goals is to strengthen Students' Oakton Experience. Among other strategies, we'll do that by tailoring services to the changing needs of our students.

I'm confident our recently launched Caring Campus initiative will help us move toward that goal by meaningfully engaging staff members in student success efforts. Thank you to those who joined us earlier this month at the Caring Campus kickoff, led by our coach from the Institute for Evidence Based Change.

We were reminded that adopting simple behavioral commitments can significantly improve the student experience. These include wearing name tags, greeting and offering assistance to students within a 10-foot radius, and making warm referrals of students to colleagues who can help them obtain appropriate resources.

Over the next few months, staff members serving on the Caring Campus Working Group will identify specific behavioral commitments for Oakton. They will share findings with their respective departments as we formulate strategies to create a greater sense of connectedness for our students and enhance their Oakton Experience.

I routinely hear examples of faculty, staff and administrators taking an extra step to help students. Let's make sure we take time to acknowledge colleagues who make the effort to ensure our students feel seen, welcomed and supported.

For example, many of this month's lifesavers include colleagues who took the time to walk students to classrooms and offices during the first few days of the semester when students felt lost and had difficulty navigating our campuses. This is what a caring campus looks like, and this is what the Oakton Experience should be for every Oakton student.

The Caring Campus initiative for staff is aligned with the Faculty Persistence Project, which has consistently yielded positive persistence rates for students, as you'll see from the data below.

Of the 1,922 new students who started at Oakton in fall 2021, 975 (50.7%) students returned in fall 2022 or completed a credential during the 2021-2022 academic year. Breakdowns by race/ethnicity can be found below. This is almost a 2% increase from last year's fall-to-fall persistence rate of 49.1% and is getting closer to the steady progress we had made before the pandemic when we reached a 51.4% fall-to-fall persistence rate, on our way to achieving our goal of 54%.

	Fall 2021 Cohort	Persisted	Percent Persisted
Asian/Pacific Islander	397	226	56.9%
Black	182	77	42.3%
Latino	284	155	54.6%
White	805	383	47.6%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	7	5	71.4%
Choose Not to Respond	90	40	44.4%
Multiple Races	59	29	49.2%
International	98	60	61.2%
Total	1922	975	50.7%

In fall 2021, 91 unique faculty participated in the Persistence Project, which impacted 450 new students in their first term. Students new to Oakton who enrolled in a Persistence Project course section persisted from fall to fall at a rate almost 15 percentage points higher than their peers who did not experience the Persistence Project. The impact on students of color was especially noteworthy.

	Fall 2021 Persistence Project Cohort	Persistence Project Persisted	Percent Persisted
Asian/Pacific Islander	120	83	69.2%
Black	33	21	63.6%
Latino	61	42	68.9%
White	183	106	57.9%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2	2	100.0%
Choose Not to Respond	24	15	62.5%
Multiple Races	16	12	75.0%
International	19	17	89.5%
Total	458	298	65.1%

Student persistence and retention is critical to ensuring students achieve their academic goals and are a priority in helping us navigate continued declining enrollments, a nationwide trend experienced by community colleges.

Our 10th day (Census Day) enrollment numbers show a 4% decrease in student enrollment compared to fall 2021, and a 3% decrease in credit hour enrollment (a 3% enrollment decline was forecasted into the FY23 budget). Remember, it's not too late to encourage current and prospective students to register for late start classes. This is an

excellent way for students to progress toward their goals even if they missed the start of the fall term.

Our Strategic Plan also outlines strategies for increasing enrollment, especially among adult (21+) students. Serving adult students will be the focus of our fourth annual College-wide Learning Day on Oct. 26. As a reminder, all employees scheduled to work between 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. are expected to attend and participate. Our campuses will be closed to the public during that time, and no classes should be scheduled before 5 p.m. Keep an eye out for more details in Oakton Matters and communication from the Learning Day committee.

There are several other upcoming opportunities to gather, create connections and celebrate the success of the College, colleagues and students.

I hope to see many of you at the Distinguished Alumni awards at our Des Plaines campus on Sept. 29, during which we will celebrate four Oakton alums who have positively impacted their communities. Also, please mark your calendars for Nov. 3, for our Employee Recognition event, which returns to Café La Cave for the first time in three years. In addition to recognizing employees celebrating milestone anniversaries, we'll also celebrate this year's faculty and staff excellence award winners, our living diversity award winners, and high impact practices award winners. The Office of Human Resources is also coordinating a speed networking event on Oct. 14 and Oakton Spirit days from Nov. 7-10. Stay tuned for more details.

Please also consider attending one (or more) of the many Latinx Heritage Month events taking place now through mid-October, featuring keynote speakers, dance performances and more. October is also Filipino American History Month, and Oakton's COMPASS program is hosting the Para Sa Kultura (for the culture) market on Oct. 14. These are all wonderful opportunities to celebrate Oakton's diverse communities and cultures. Check Oakton Matters and our website for more details.

Finally, I'd like to provide a brief update on our College name change and brand refresh. Our spring semester Opening Day address on Jan. 9, 2023, will serve as our official internal transition from "Oakton Community College" to "Oakton College," and the public change will occur on Jan. 17, 2023. Our brand transition leadership team will share more information in the coming months, and our name change/brand refresh will be the focus of our Community Conversations (formerly coffee and conversations) in November and December.

Yes, a lot is happening on our campuses, and I genuinely appreciate all of your efforts as we continue to work to fulfill our mission of empowering and transforming lives in our diverse communities. That includes this month's lifesavers, recognized by colleagues and students for their outstanding contributions.

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Ragaa Abdalla
Steve Aguilar
Dear Aunaetrakul

Gabriela Ayala
Don Battalia
Vicki Bialek
Michelle Blum

Mario Borha
George Bueno
J Byrd
Cameron Carrera

Victoria Cleary
Sebastian Contreras Jr.
Phil Cronin
John Curtis
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Mindy Finnigan
Marcela Gallegos
Ernie Gest
Cecilia Gomez
Erica Gonzalez
Lauren Hackett
Joe Hanafee
Lea Hartono
Marcus Hayes
Stephanie Herrera
Lindsey Hewitt
Tom Hicks
Alyssa Humbles
Jake Jeremiah
Amanda Johnson
Cheryl Joseph
Nick Klein
Angela Koenigs

Amanda Krause
Gaya Lasam
Dave Lewis
Ellen Lieberman
Ileo Lott
Nikol Maleeva-
Ivancheva
Antonio Mazzarri
Levon McAllister
Jonathan McFarlane
John O' Doherty
Ricardo Olave
Javier Padilla Jr.
Valerie Parilli
Stella Pillay
Rignesha Prajapati
Victoria Przybyl
Sam Pudi
Jennifer Reeb
Bincy Reginold
Amanda Reuter
Camesha Richardson
Brooke Roche
Donna Sacco

Paul Sanburg
Dean Schulz
Grantly Scott
Robin Sluzas
Laura Sewell
Francisco Sosa
Cristian Stoepler
Gwyn Stupar
Toni Surdo
Kari Susens
Samuel Sweeney
Danielle Terry
Nini Tella
Santiago Tapia-Rubio
Aleda Thompson
Bibiana Ukeagbu
Stacey Vanada
Manish Varma
Carlos Velasquez
Rodriguez
John Wade
Ruth Williams
Matthew Wong
Deborah Wyeth

In community,

