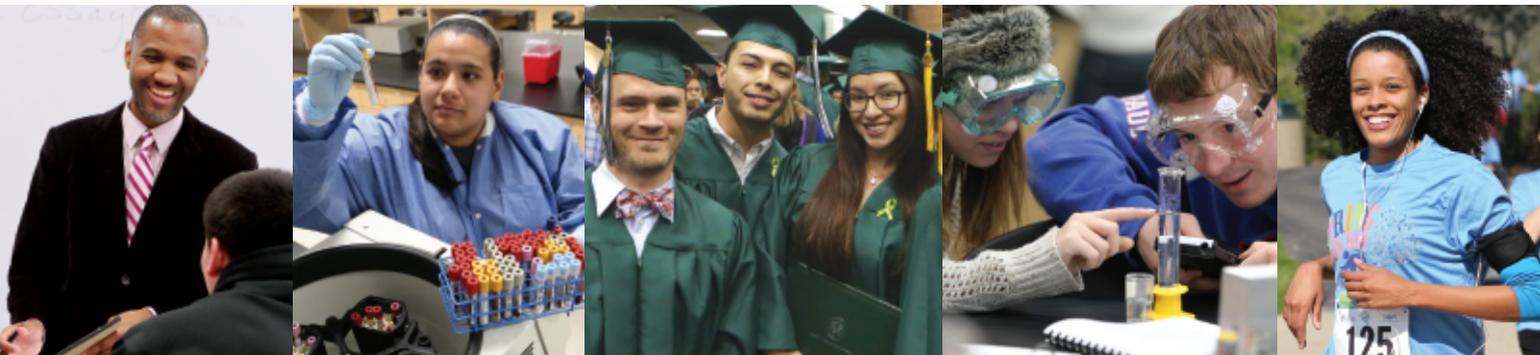


success matters

Oakton Community College 2018-2022 Strategic Plan



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Message from the President



In 2016 and 2017, Oakton Community College embarked on a comprehensive effort to examine its role within the communities the college serves and update its plan for the future.

The college closely examined the internal and external environments in which it functions, reviewing past successes and shortcomings, opportunities and challenges. Competitive pressures, reduced state investment, public expectations, and rapidly changing technology put nearly every aspect of higher education under the microscope, and now more than ever, success matters.

An institution's mission, vision, and values statement serves as the foundation for its identity, purpose, and work, guiding decision-making and establishing a standard against which actions can be assessed. The rigorous examination of the forces at work within and outside the college has yielded updates to this statement, building upon Oakton's core values in service to the community as it empowers and transforms lives, putting students at the center of each of the college's values and institutional commitments.

Approved by the Board of Trustees in March 2017, the *Success Matters* strategic plan is an outgrowth of Oakton's mission, vision, and values. The plan commits the college to equity, teaching and learning, fostering community, and planning for future needs of students, employees, infrastructure and communication guided by the mission, vision, and values statement. Together, through our collective efforts and combined expertise, these commitments will be engrained in our culture of continuing improvement, ensuring a vibrant and sustainable institution well into the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joianne L. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joianne L. Smith

President

Mission

Oakton is the community's college. By providing access to quality education throughout a lifetime, we empower and transform our students in the diverse communities we serve.

Vision

Dedicated to teaching and learning, Oakton is a student-centered college known for academic rigor and high standards. Through exemplary teaching that relies on innovation and collaboration with our community partners, our students learn to think critically, solve problems, and to be ethical global citizens who shape the world. We are committed to diversity, cultural competence, and achieving equity in student outcomes.

Values

A focus on Oakton students is at the core of each of these values.

- We exercise responsibility through accountability to each other, our community, and the environment.
- We embrace the diversity of the Oakton community and honor it as one of our college's primary strengths.
- We advance equity by acknowledging the effects of systemic social injustices and intentionally designing the Oakton experience to foster success for all students.
- We uphold integrity through a commitment to trust, transparency, and honesty by all members of the Oakton community.
- We cultivate compassion within a caring community that appreciates that personal fulfillment and well-being are central to our mission.
- We foster collaboration within the college and the larger community, and recognize our interdependence and ability to achieve more together.

Adopted by the Board of Trustees March 21, 2017



Development of Mission, Vision, and Values Statements

In October 2016, a team of 23 Oakton employees were invited to reaffirm or revise Oakton's mission, vision, and values statement. The team consisted of members of the Strategic Planning, Accountability, and Resources Committee (SPARC); members of President's Council; and leadership from Oakton's four employee labor unions.

The process is timely for several reasons:

- Oakton's previous statement, ratified nearly 20 years ago, is outdated.
- The Higher Learning Commission accreditation in fall 2017 requires a statement reaffirmation.
- The existing statement was too long.
- Reaffirmation forms the foundation of a new strategic plan.

The team reviewed many sources of information, including Oakton's current mission, vision, and values statement; examples of statements from peer institutions; and responses from 600 employee and student surveys. Based on this information, the team chose three different options to use to elicit feedback from employees and students about each option. The team sought to incorporate the feedback where possible and appropriate in the development of Oakton's new mission, vision, and values statements.

Development of Success Matters

Success Matters is the product of an extensive planning process that began in July 2015 and culminated in the presentation to the Board of Trustees in February 2017. In developing this strategic plan, Oakton adopted a broad-based, inclusive approach to best represent a collective vision for the future of the college. More than 1,000 survey respondents, focus group participants, and meeting attendees helped guide the development of the plan.

The Strategic Planning, Accountability, and Resources Committee (SPARC)—appointed by the president—led the planning process. Biweekly SPARC team meetings were held to make decisions about the planning process and strategy and to draft the plan. The committee included members from across the college.

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 the goals, objectives, activities, and outcomes.

The Society for College and University Planning's industry-leading Trends for Higher Education—which scans a wide range of sources and identifies the most significant issues, movements, and changes in higher education—provided the basis for the college's literature review.

Oakton contracted the Northern Illinois University Center for Governmental Studies to conduct an environmental scan to gain a baseline analysis of demographic, housing, business and industry, potential enrollments, and other trends in the Oakton district.

The college community embraced surveys regarding development of the strategic plan and mission, vision, and values statements. In fact, 538 students and 455 employees responded to planning surveys, and 309 students and 351 employees responded to mission, vision, and values surveys.

Key Characteristics and Trends

External Environment

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

To learn about the external environment, Oakton holds numerous conversations with local, state, and national leaders; convenes meetings with employers; reviews public and professional literature; and analyzes data and information about the area, the state, and the global economy. Based on those studies, the college identifies the following important characteristics:

An Expansive District

Oakton Community College District 535 is located in the northeast corner of Cook County, Illinois. The district encompasses approximately 109 square miles out of a total 945 square miles in Cook County. The district is home to approximately 486,807 residents, leading to a population density of 4,466 persons per square mile.

There are 14 municipalities located within the Oakton district: Golf, Kenilworth, Northfield, Glencoe, Winnetka, Lincolnwood, Morton Grove, Wilmette, Niles, Northbrook, Park Ridge, Glenview, Skokie, and Evanston. Three additional municipalities partially overlap the district: Deerfield, Rosemont, and Des Plaines. Evanston is the largest municipality with a population count of 75,282 residents, while Golf has 490 residents. There are five townships completely within the district: Northfield, New Trier, Maine, Niles, and Evanston. Only a small portion of the townships of Wheeling, Leyden, and Norwood Park overlap the district. The Oakton district has 10 public high schools: Evanston Township High School, Glenbrook North High School, Glenbrook South High School, Maine East High School, Maine South High School, Maine West High School, New Trier Township High School (Winnetka and Northfield), Niles North High School, and Niles West High School. The district's 2016 high school enrollment was 23,491 students in grades nine through 12.

An Aging Population

The age of a community helps to define the services that will be in demand today and assists in gauging what to prepare for tomorrow. Nationally, the trend is showing an aging population due to baby boomers born between 1946 and 1964 reaching retirement age, and the Oakton district is not very different from the national trends. The median age of the population is increasing as older age groups represent a growing share of the population. As birth rates decline and families become smaller, the share of population in younger age groups is decreasing. Baby boomers now comprise a much greater proportion of the population, creating large increases in the proportion of those in the higher age groups. The median age for the Oakton district is 42, while the median age is 37.4 nationally and 34 in Illinois. Approximately 102,000 residents are age 65 or older, which accounts for 17.5 percent of the population. Within the district, Northfield Township has the highest median age at 46 years old, and Evanston Township has the lowest at 35 years old.

Increasing Levels of Educational Attainment

Educational attainment among residents in the Oakton district has been progressing. Those holding a bachelor's degree or greater increased from 52.3 percent in 2009 to 54.1 percent in 2014. Lower levels of education have remained fairly stable indicating that an increasing number of residents are pursuing education beyond an associate degree.



An Increasingly Diverse District

The total population of the Oakton district edged up by 1.7 percent overall from 2009 to 2014. Most of that growth is attributed to Latino residents of the district. The white, non-Hispanic population decreased in number by just over 16,000, or five percent, but Hispanic whites increased by just over 14,000, or 83.9 percent. Overall, the non-Hispanic population declined by 5,000, but the Hispanic community grew overall by almost 13,000 people. The Asian population increased by almost 10,000, second only to white Hispanics. The white community still has a significant majority in the region, representing about 68 percent of the overall population. However, the Oakton district is becoming more diverse, with no expectation that the trend will reverse.

A Rebounding Housing Market

The Oakton district vacancy rate in 2010 was 6.6 percent, and the most current data estimates 8.9 percent of units are now vacant. Yet, there is evidence the housing market is slowly rebounding. The number of home sales is increasing along with the average housing value for homes sold.

The Oakton district has recovered from the 2008 housing crisis. Foreclosures have returned to numbers experienced well before the 2008 recession, indicating that neighborhoods are returning to stabilized property values that are affordable.

Increasing International Diversity

Given that the Chicago metropolitan area has long been a destination for immigrants, the Oakton district has a significant population born outside of the United States. Twenty-nine percent of the district population was born outside of the U.S., compared to 13.8 percent in Illinois. Seventy-one percent of the Oakton district population is native born, including children of immigrants born in the U.S. The largest group of those born outside of the U.S. came from Asia, with 52,128 people. The second largest migration came from Europe (40,417), followed by the Americas with 19,185 people, Africa (2,192 people), and Oceania with 412 people.

A Multilingual District

In the Oakton district, 68 percent of residents speak only English at home or consider themselves to speak English very well. Fifteen percent are bilingual and believe that they speak English well, and an additional 15 percent of residents speak Spanish only or do not speak English well.

Labor Force Participation

In 2014, 39 percent of persons in the Oakton district age 18 to 24 were attending school and were not in the labor force, while 31 percent were attending school and also in the labor force. An additional 24 percent were not attending school and in the labor force, and six percent were neither attending school nor in the labor force. Those who lack a high school diploma or GED experienced both the lowest labor participation rates and the highest unemployment rates. Those that completed high school but had no post-secondary education also experienced unemployment rates that are much higher than average for the working age population. Those that had some college credit or a degree experienced the highest rates of labor force participation and the lowest rates of unemployment both locally and statewide.

Household Characteristics

The vast majority of households in the Oakton district are comprised of one or two persons. The most common household size is two people, which accounts for almost one-third (55,240) of all households. The next most common household size is single person, at just over 27 percent (47,859). Families comprise 120,144 of households (68.3 percent).



Increased Economic Stability

Earnings in Cook County have been improving for all industries except educational services and arts, entertainment, and recreation. From 2010-2014, the largest industries that made great strides in the improvement of earnings included manufacturing, professional and technical services, and finance and insurance. Healthcare practitioners and technicians is an occupational class that is paying higher annual wage levels while at the same time expanding, thereby providing promising job opportunities for new graduates in these areas.

Internal Environment

In 2015-16, Oakton employees were invited to participate in a Constellation Survey in order to analyze the college's internal environment—what matters most at Oakton, what is done well, and what would make a significant difference. The survey revealed the following:

What Matters Most: Common Priorities at Oakton

- Oakton trusts employees to do their work effectively.
- Oakton ensures that students have easy access to the people and services they require to be successful.
- Oakton makes certain that students acquire the knowledge and skills required by their academic program before awarding them credentials.
- Oakton's hiring processes make certain the people it employs possess necessary credentials, skills, and values.
- Support services harmonize with Oakton's focus on education and learning.



What Matters Least: Areas That Require Prioritization

- Oakton regularly evaluates the effectiveness of human resource and personnel processes.
- Oakton regularly collects and analyzes measures of effectiveness in building collaborative relationships across departments/areas.
- Support services are regularly evaluated to identify improvement opportunities.
- Oakton makes improvements based upon the complaints it receives.
- Oakton analyzes the effectiveness of its decision-making processes.
- Oakton has processes to ensure it is innovative and agile.

What is Done Well: Areas of High Performance

- Technology is up-to-date and well-supported.
- Appropriate maintenance ensures that both facilities and equipment can be used effectively.
- Oakton trusts employees to do their work effectively.
- Student support services harmonize with Oakton's focus on education and learning.
- Student services departments/areas provide programs and services that complement Oakton's academic curricula.

What is Done Least Well: Areas That Require Performance Improvements

- The faculty and staff feel they are in partnership with administrators.
- Oakton analyzes the effectiveness of its decision-making processes.
- Oakton regularly evaluates the effectiveness of its human resource and personnel processes.
- Oakton regularly collects and analyzes measures of effectiveness in building collaborative relationships across departments/areas.
- Oakton has effective processes to use the feedback it gets from its students and other stakeholders.

Strategic Plan Assumptions

Strategic plans are grounded in a set of accepted assumptions adopted by the Strategic Planning, Accountability, and Resources Committee (SPARC), which explains how the plan is positioned in relation to other institutional priorities and how it will be implemented.

1. The fundamental purpose of a strategic plan is to identify opportunities for growth and improvement. **We remain committed to a range of activities that, although not strategic, are critical and ongoing**, such as assessment of student learning outcomes, budgeting, and compliance with all safety and legal requirements. These activities will continue to be supported and resourced through other institutional processes.

2. **At the essence of each commitment and objective is a dedication to advancing Oakton's student-focused culture over the next five years.** This focus upon students is reflected in commitments and objectives that serve to directly improve student engagement and success, as well as commitments and objectives focused on equipping employees with the tools necessary to best serve students.

3. **SPARC will oversee the implementation of *Success Matters* with a proclivity toward innovation, risk-taking, experimentation, and learning from success and failure.** We recognize that innovation is not just about creating new ideas, but understanding that uncertainty hinders recognizing and implementing existing ideas. Innovation is both most needed in uncertain times and most hindered in uncertain times. **SPARC will use broad-based engagement to democratize the recognition of ideas that respond to our strategic priorities.**



4. **We reject the casting of liberal arts and career and technical education against each other and assert the importance of both to the strategic growth of the college.** We will continue to infuse liberal arts values and exposure to diverse thoughts and ideas across the curriculum to ensure continued fulfillment of the essential purpose of higher education. We will also continue to support career and technical education and workforce development opportunities that respond to labor market trends and employer needs.

5. The strategic plan presents ideas to guide Oakton's future, but the will to realize this desired future derives from the budgeting processes. **With leadership from the Administrative Affairs division, we will align the college budget and strategic priorities to allocate the resources needed to realize these commitments.**

6. **The strategic plan is a living document that leads an agile college through changing internal and external circumstances.** Through an annual review of goals and initiatives, we will ensure that the strategic plan always responds to the most important priorities for the future of Oakton.

7. Implementing the strategic plan requires a collaborative relationship between SPARC and departments across the college, as departments are empowered to lead our strategic planning efforts with support from SPARC members. **We recognize the commitments in *Success Matters* as the commitments set forth by the college community, and we will work in partnership to collectively accomplish these commitments.**



Strategic Commitments



Equity Matters

We will create an environment that supports the inclusion, engagement, and learning for all students through resource allocation, curriculum development, inclusive policies and procedures, and ongoing support.

We will improve outcomes in key milestones for student success—developmental to college pathway, course success, retention, persistence, and completion—with a particular focus on addressing opportunity gaps to increase the success of all students.

We will engage in a more robust evidence-based examination to scrutinize institutional and societal barriers to equity so we may develop a college equity plan that identifies opportunities and establishes priorities to address the barriers.

We will invest in equity-minded policies, practices, and behaviors that lead to success for **all** Oakton students from recruitment to goal attainment, with particular attention to students of color, first-generation college students, low-income students, students with different abilities, international students, military-connected students, adult learners, LGBTQ students, religious minorities, and undocumented students.

Recognizing the relationship between student wellness and student success, we will employ proven strategies for support of health, mental well-being, food and housing security, and physical safety.

We will continue to promote the affordability of an Oakton education by seeking additional resources to support the cost of education for students and by developing more flexible ways to deliver financial aid.

We will explore models that increase faculty participation in high impact practices that diminish opportunity gaps and encourage the success of all students, with particular attention to adjunct faculty engagement and inclusion.



Teaching and Learning Matter

Building on our commitment to academic excellence, we will be responsive to the changing environment and promote student success through innovative pedagogical practices.

We will implement dynamic, collaborative processes to update and promote program offerings, program modalities, and course content in consideration of changing student needs as well as societal and labor trends.

We will expand our curricular pathways to promote timely and focused progress to completion.

We value the contributions of adjunct faculty to teaching and learning and will provide greater support for orientation, professional development, advancement, and overall involvement in the life of the college.

We will further expand learning outside of the classroom, such as field studies, apprenticeships, internships, study abroad, undergraduate research, and service learning that personalize the educational journey of every student.

We will develop collaborative multi-disciplinary partnerships that allow for in-depth exploration of topics and promote critical thinking.





Community Matters

We will increase our positive impact on the community by deepening Oakton’s relationships with external organizations and fostering our students’ sense of social responsibility and engagement.

We will cultivate student learning about global and domestic issues and sustain an environment where we encourage critical engagement, as well as civil and productive dialogue in the discussion of contemporary societal concerns.

We will integrate sustainability into our teaching and co-curricular activities and encourage students to promote sustainability and become advocates for change.

We will expand our partnerships with district schools by focusing on recruitment and outreach, dual credit, curriculum alignment, early placement, transfer and Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathways, summer bridge programs, and early- and middle-college opportunities.

We will develop stronger connections with community leaders, community-based organizations, business and industry partners, and transfer institutions to enhance the educational experiences of Oakton students.

Planning Matters

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

We will engage in greater institutional planning for the future effectiveness of the college with particular attention to departmental initiatives, strategic enrollment planning, master planning, and safety and security planning.

We will improve communication and expand marketing activities to share the value of Oakton within the region.

We will promote employee engagement and success through accountability, equitable decision-making, transparent communication, and effective shared governance mechanisms.

We will seek ongoing input from the college community and anticipate, plan, and resource for longer-term changes in technology by investing in technology solutions that enhance student and employee success.

We will continue to incorporate sustainable practices in our outreach and operations to minimize our impact on the environment.



Success Matters reflects our collective vision for the college over the next five years, and it is only through a collective effort that this plan will become a reality. All members of the Oakton community have an important role to play in achieving the objectives outlined in the strategic plan.

We have established several mechanisms to ensure that all objectives are being addressed and to track the college's progress in implementing *Success Matters*:

Ongoing Strategic Planning, Accountability, and Resources Committee:

SPARC will remain as an ongoing committee throughout the life of *Success Matters*. The development of the plan was only the first step in SPARC's work. The committee will continue to meet on a bi-weekly basis in order to support efforts throughout the college to further our strategic commitments. Further, SPARC will spearhead several signature initiatives to advance the plan.

Implementation

As part of its ongoing work, SPARC is responsible for developing yearly implementation plans to communicate to the college the range of tactics being employed to achieve our objectives.

Accountability Dashboard

For each of the 20 objectives in *Success Matters*, we have established clear, measurable five-year outcomes. These performance metrics create priorities and provide a means for assessing how far we have come in reaching our stated goals. The outcomes as well as our progress in achieving them will be charted in an accountability dashboard on the strategic planning website.

Annual Departmental Planning

Because all departments contribute to the success of the strategic plan, all departments will be creating annual plans in which they identify how their work contributes to and furthers the goals of *Success Matters*. These plans will form the basis of the implementation plans that SPARC will collate and distribute. Further, as the planning process develops these annual plans will be aligned with the budgeting process, and budget requests will be tied to implementing the strategic plan. For FY 2018, we expect budget requests to be tied to implementing the strategic plan. This will help the college to move toward a more integrated planning model.

Continuous Improvement

The *Success Matters* strategic plan is a living document. All strategic plans are based on assumptions about the external and internal environment. Although we did extensive research on what to anticipate in the next five years, it is inevitable that what unfolds will be different. Thus, we will reevaluate the plan on a continuous basis. The four strategic commitments—Equity Matters, Teaching and Learning Matter, Community Matters, and Planning Matters—will remain the focus of the plan. However, we recognize that some nuances of the plan may shift as we face unexpected obstacles and are presented with new opportunities.

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