

# Assurance Argument

September 25-26, 2017



# 1. Mission

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

## 1.A - Core Component 1.A

The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.

1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.
2. The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
3. The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. (This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion 5.C.1.)

## Argument

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Oakton Community College provides a clear purpose for the college's work and focuses institutional operations through its collaboratively developed mission, stated as follows:

*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.*

This mission provides a clear purpose for the college's work by valuing Oakton's identity as a community college and its accountability to the community, appreciating the diversity of Oakton students and the communities it serves, recognizing the transformative power of the education that Oakton provides, and focusing day-to-day operations on providing access to quality education.

Since Oakton Community College first opened in 1970, its mission has continued to evolve to best address the needs of students and the communities that Oakton serves. In 1998, the Oakton Community College Board of Trustees ratified an integrated mission, vision, and values statement that guided the work of two strategic plans during the review period: "Change Matters, 2008-2012" and "Connecting What Matters, 2013-2017." In 2015, Oakton began the process to develop "Success Matters," the college's 2018-2022 strategic plan. Oakton President Joianne Smith announced that review of the mission, vision, and values statement would be included within the strategic planning process, as the mission serves as the foundation for the college's strategic commitments.

In October 2016, a team of twenty-three employees and students were invited to participate in the process to reaffirm or revise Oakton's mission, vision, and values statement. Invitees included faculty, staff, and students who serve on the Strategic Planning, Accountability, and Resources Committee (SPARC), members of the President's Council, and leadership from Oakton's four employee labor unions. The team reviewed many different sources of information, including the mission, vision, and values statement that was approved in 1998, examples of statements from peer institutions, and survey responses from nearly five hundred employees and students. Based upon this information, the team chose to revise the mission, vision, and values statement. Three different options were developed for the mission, vision, and values statements, and feedback was sought from employees and the Student Government Association about each option. The team sought to incorporate this feedback where possible and appropriate in the development of Oakton's new mission, vision, and values statements, which were approved by the Oakton Community College Board of Trustees on March 21, 2017.

The new mission, vision, and values statements maintain Oakton's core purpose as the community's college but distills the language into more concise statements, explicitly states an appreciation for diversity and a commitment to equity in student outcomes, and highlights a focus on students as the primary value for the college's day-to-day operations. Oakton's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with the stated mission as they open access to a quality Oakton education to a diversity of students and provide learning opportunities for students that are empowering and transformative.

As approved by the Illinois Community College Board, Oakton offers eighty degrees and certificates in transfer programs and career and technical education programs. These degrees and certificates were developed to meet the interests of prospective students and labor market needs, and to provide students with an array of learning opportunities. Academic departments have individual web pages that explain programs and demonstrate both the diversity and accessibility of Oakton curricula.

To increase accessibility to quality education as stated in the mission, Oakton offers day, evening and weekend courses. Offerings are also available in various modalities (face-to-face, hybrid, and online) and at two different campus locations. The college also increases access to an Oakton education by providing affordable educational experiences through comparatively low tuition. A one-stop enrollment center also centralizes admissions, registration, and financial aid services for students and increases access to an Oakton education through a streamlined enrollment process.

Oakton programs are also consistent with the mission by being high quality, as evidenced by external benchmarking data that demonstrate comparatively high levels of success in developmental and college-level courses, low course withdrawal rates, and high transfer rates among all students, as well as high licensure rates for applicable health careers programs. The program review process for academic programs also requires evidence of quality, including comparative visits to peer institutions.

Oakton's mission to provide education throughout a lifetime is also reflected in its commitment to adult and continuing education and workforce development. The Alliance for Lifelong Learning (ALL), a collaboration between Oakton and district high schools, enrolls more than thirty-six thousand students each year. ALL coordinates the resources of each high school district to make additional instructional services available for every adult resident of the district. Offered programs include continuing education classes, General Education Development (GED), evening high school, English as a Second Language (ESL), and the emeritus program for adults over fifty years old. Dual-credit courses, which provide a partnership between district high schools and Oakton, are also offered to provide early access to college-level learning opportunities and increase college readiness.

In addition to academic programs, special areas of study contribute to the transformative qualities of an Oakton education. The college currently offers the following academic concentrations: Great Books, Global Studies, Jewish Studies, Environmental Studies, Peace and Social Justice, and Women and Gender Studies. Oakton's Honors Program also offers unique courses and seminars to meet additional interests of high achieving students. Learning opportunities are also offered in Nanotechnology, Service Learning, and STEM programming. These special areas of study fulfill the mission by offering transformative coursework and experiences like study abroad or STEM research and design courses.

Over thirty extra- and co-curricular programs also fulfill the college mission by providing empowering and transformative learning experiences outside of the classroom. For example, Oakton's Student Life office offers its hallmark Emerging Leader Program, which provides special activities, workshops, and training opportunities that develop participants' leadership and project management skills. Students can access additional learning experiences through participation in Student Government Association, the Student Judicial Board, the student newspaper, or dynamic and distinctive cultural experiences provided by the Black Student Union, Hillel, or the Mongolian Club.

The high-quality education provided by Oakton is enhanced by student support services that supplement instructional experiences and support academic success. The college's Learning Center provides workshops that enhance classroom learning, as well as access to professional tutors who help improve academic achievement by clarifying learning problems and working on study skills. The Oakton Community College Library supports student success by encouraging critical thinking, promoting information literacy, and providing teaching, resources, and services that meet the information needs of the community. Student Affairs departments such as the Access and Disability Resource Center; Advising, Transitions, and Student Success; Career Services; and Counseling Services provide programs and services that support the academic mission and assist and empower students to achieve their goals.

Finally, Oakton's enrollment profile is consistent with its mission to serve the diverse communities within Oakton's district. The district sits within the metropolitan Chicago area, serving a district in northern Cook County of over 400,000 residents. Student demographics are a reflection of the college district. Thirty-two percent of residents in the Oakton district are people of color. Oakton's 46,000 credit and non-credit students represent all ages and 55 nations; 45 percent of Oakton students are students of color. Reflecting its mission as the community's college, Oakton places great value on

embracing diversity and advancing equity. Oakton sets and pursues annual affirmative action goals that reflect the diversity of the Oakton district and the college's enrollment profile.

Oakton's mission statement maintains a clear sense of purpose and unwavering focus on students and their success, despite significant enrollment declines since the 2008 economic recession and a lack of state funding over the past three years due to the State of Illinois budget impasse. The overall budget process is guided under the direction of the vice president for Administrative Affairs and the day-to-day coordination of the college's controller. The allocation of resources is a collaborative effort among each area of the college, and priorities support the mission and align with the institution's strategic goals. Alongside the Facilities Planning Committee and the Master Planning Committee, Oakton's new Strategic Planning, Accountability, and Resources Committee (SPARC) also serves as an advisory council that keeps Oakton's mission in focus during long-range planning. Details of the planning and budgeting process are included in Core Component 5.C.1.

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C Strategic Plan Connecting What Matters 2013-17	C1 Special Areas of Study Web
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## 1.B - Core Component 1.B

The mission is articulated publicly.

1. The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.
2. The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

### Argument

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Oakton's mission is articulated publicly and visible to Oakton students, faculty, staff, visitors, and community members in several public documents.

Oakton's mission statement is articulated publicly to both internal and external constituents and reinforced through statements of vision, values, goals, and plans. The mission statement is displayed on the college's website and in several locations on both campuses. It also appears online and in print within the college catalog and the student handbook. The mission statement is printed in college documents and publications, including the Annual Budget Report, the board of trustees detailed agenda books, and the five-year strategic plan. The mission statement is also integrated within the college's employee onboarding processes, including the full-time faculty seminar, full-time and adjunct faculty orientation, and new employee orientation sessions. The statement is also included in commencement booklets to inform public audiences of the college's purpose, such as those present at commencement and pinning ceremonies.

The mission statement was revised in 2017 during development of "Success Matters," the 2018-2022 strategic plan. The college community also reviewed and revised Oakton's vision and values statements. The vision statement expounds upon the mission statement, extending the mission of providing access to a quality education to the vision of Oakton as a college known for academic rigor, high standards, and exemplary teaching that relies on innovation and collaboration. The empowering and transformative purpose of an Oakton education is envisioned as teaching students to think critically, solve problems, and act as ethical global citizens who shape the world. The mission's commitment to the diverse communities within Oakton's district is extended within the vision to a commitment to diversity, cultural competence, and achieving equity in student outcomes. The values were also revised to explicitly outline and define their meaning to the college. Together, these statements serve as a guide for the college and have been used to develop annual budgets and plans, such as the facilities master plan and the 2018-2022 strategic plan.

Oakton's strategic planning process facilitates clear alignment between the mission document and institutional goals and, put together, explains the college's emphasis on various aspects of the mission. This alignment is evidenced by the accomplishments of the recently completed strategic plan, "Connecting What Matters 2013-2017," and the college's 1998 mission statement.

Oakton fulfills its mission as "the community's college" through alignment with the Student Success strategic goal, as reflected by the following accomplishments:

- implementation of mandatory new-student orientation and Oakton JOURney, the first-year experience for new students
- creation of multiple pathways for students to access information and attend Oakton, such as active social media accounts, and creation of a one-stop Enrollment Center that creates a central location for the enrollment process
- development of initiatives that foster a sense of belonging and engagement in the life of the college, such as the Center for Promoting STEM, participation in NASA's Robotic Mining Competition, Pasta with the President conversation, and International Education Week activities
- cultivation of increased connections with district schools through nanotechnology professional development for high school teachers, participation in the Manufacturing Expo, expanded dual credit opportunities, and strategy team meetings with high school superintendents; and



- development of connections with other colleges and universities through increased articulation, 2+2 and dual admission agreements, as well as an annual transfer college fair and state university college fair.

Additionally, Oakton fulfills its mission as “a community of learners” through the college’s Academic Excellence strategic goal, as evidenced by the following accomplishments:

- expansion of learning outcomes assessments to improve teaching and learning through Oakton’s Program for the Assessment and Learning;
- creation of web-based information, resources, and support through adoption of Desire2Learn and creation of web presence for all Oakton course sections;
- delivery of innovative content and pedagogy, such as study abroad opportunity in Ireland to study business leadership and a Fulbright-Hays Grant to study indigenous people in Bolivia and Peru;
- cultivation of activities that allow students to engage with issues that confront local and global society such as Habitat for Humanity’s Shantytown, Up2Us training on sexual violence, and On the Table community conversations;
- utilization of career program advisory committees and linkages with business and industry to respond to changing workforce needs, such as development of the Commercial Driver’s License Training and Certification Program; and
- expansion of opportunities for students to have workplace experiences, such as STEM summer internships, and Groundhog Day job shadowing event sponsored by the Alumni Program.

Finally, the college fulfills its mission as “a changing community” through the Connected Communities strategic goal, as supported by the following accomplishments:

- programs and training to strengthen the anti-bias perspective and cultural competence of employees, such as co-sponsorship of the Coming Together celebration of diversity, Black History Month exhibition of African-American movie posters in the college’s Koehline Museum of Art, Creating Justice symposium, and hosting of a meeting by the Chicago Regional Organizing for Antiracism caucus;
- enhanced partnerships with business, civic, and community organizations such as Empty Bowls fundraiser, volunteer opportunities in conjunction with Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday, hosting of the Business Briefing Breakfast, and partnership with Hands of Peace interfaith organization; and
- employee participation in college-sponsored events and activities as monitored by the Center for Professional Development, such as a keynote address during Orientation Week by Kay McClenney founding director and Senior Associate of the Center for Community College Student Engagement at The University of Texas at Austin.

Oakton’s 2018–2022 strategic plan, “Success Matters,” clearly aligns with the college’s newest mission statement, ratified in March 2017. The first strategic commitment, Equity Matters, highlights the commitment to valuing and responding to the diversity of the communities that the college serves. The second strategic commitment, Teaching and Learning Matter, reflects the commitment to quality education and a focus on student success. The third strategic commitment, Community Matters, expresses Oakton’s mission to be the community’s college. Finally, the fourth commitment explicitly requires that the college develops planning processes that engage internal and external constituents in the communities that it serves.

Oakton’s vision statement reflects the nature of the college’s academic programs and services as primarily focusing on students and valuing responsibility, diversity, equity, integrity, compassion, and collaboration. Oakton’s mission documents are substantive and meaningful in scope. With a new mission statement, the college will work to ensure that all employees of the college remain committed to the mission as the principle that guides the college’s work. Oakton’s mission documents identify the college’s intended constituents as members of a diverse community who seek educational opportunities throughout a lifetime. The college seeks to provide these constituents with a high quality education that empowers them and transforms their lives. The mission document and strategic goals align in pursuit of a vision as a student-centered college that is dedicated to teaching and learning, seeks to shape students into ethical global citizens who shape the world, and seeks to achieve equity in student outcomes.

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## 1.C - Core Component 1.C

The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.

1. The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.
2. The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

### Argument

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Oakton Community College's mission explicitly articulates the college's commitment to embrace the diversity of the Oakton community and honor it as one of our college's primary strengths. The college intentionally deepens this mission to advance equity by acknowledging systemic social injustices and intentionally designing the Oakton experience to foster success for all students.

Oakton values its role as an educational institution in a multicultural society and a multicultural district. Since 2007, the percentage of students of color has increased from 31 percent to 45 percent. Oakton values diversity, inclusion, and equity because they promote academic excellence, enrich the campus environment, and prepare community members to participate in a democratic and increasingly complex, pluralistic society.

Although a commitment to diversity is included within the mission statement from 1998 to 2017, the 2017 mission statement adopted a more explicit focus on diversity and a critical analysis that extends that commitment to diversity to a commitment to equity. Critical to the understanding of the institution's mission is awareness of the community the college serves. In 2016, Oakton contracted with Northern Illinois University's Center for Governmental Studies to develop an environmental scan that identifies demographic trends and future opportunities in Oakton's district. The scan indicates that the Oakton district is becoming more diverse, and it is, therefore, imperative that the mission and programming continue to reflect this trend.

Oakton addresses its role in a multicultural society first by referring to Oakton in its mission statement opening as "the community's college;" in other words, the college's purpose is to be reflective of and belonging to the diverse communities that it serves. Second, the statement publicly says that the college fulfills its mission by "empower[ing] and transform[ing] our students in the diverse communities we serve." The college's vision statement embeds diversity within the student learning experience. Oakton desires to teach students to be "ethical global citizens who shape the world." Additionally, the commitment to diversity is also connected to the college's commitment to student success: "We are committed to diversity, cultural competence, and achieving equity in student outcomes." Two of Oakton's publicly stated values—"We embrace the diversity of the Oakton community and honor diversity as one of our college's primary strengths" and "We advance equity by acknowledging the effects of systemic social injustices and intentionally designing the Oakton experience to foster the success of all students"—articulate the importance of diversity and equity to the educational environment and to Oakton's identity as a community institution.

In addition to the mission statement, "Success Matters," the 2018-2022 strategic plan, directly addresses Oakton's role in a diverse and multicultural society. The first strategic commitment, Equity Matters, commits the college to "create an environment that supports the inclusion, engagement, and learning of all student groups through resource allocation, curriculum development, inclusive policies and procedures, and ongoing support." The objectives for this goal include developing a "more robust evidence-based examination to scrutinize institutional and societal barriers to equity and develop a college equity plan that identifies opportunities and establishes priorities to address these barriers" and investing 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."

This strategic commitment follows Oakton's progressively increasing commitment to diversity and inclusion. Oakton committed to being an anti-bias college in the 2008-2012 strategic plan, "Change Matters," and that commitment was continued in the 2013-2017 strategic plan, "Connecting What Matters." The college created the Anti-Bias Task Force,



which was tasked with implementing the anti-bias commitment of “Change Matters.” One of the accomplishments was the creation of the Office of Access, Equity, and Diversity (OAED) to partner “with faculty, staff, and students to fulfill the access and equity goals and mission of the college.” The OAED works closely with the Diversity Council, an ongoing college committee that addresses issues of diversity and equity on campus and works as a liaison between the Office and the broader campus community. The college’s Anti-Racism Team has also continued a commitment to offer anti-racism training to all Oakton employees; participation in the training is required for membership on the Anti-Racism Team and the Diversity Council.

Having diverse voices and perspectives at various levels of the institution is essential both for reasons of equity and for providing important insight and different perspectives on Oakton’s mission and goals. While Oakton has a more diverse faculty and administrative body than many peer institutions, people of color were still underrepresented as administrators, full-time faculty, and part-time faculty. For this reason, Oakton set goals to increase the representation of such groups. In 2014–2015, Oakton met its affirmative action goal in the hiring of administrators and exceeded its goal for full-time faculty. Oakton has also employed a Human Resources training specialist whose primary responsibility is to ensure a fair and equitable hiring process that honors the college’s affirmative action goals within all searches across the college. Additionally, the Dean’s Guidelines have been revised to incorporate information about the role of the training specialist and other measures to increase the likelihood of a deep, highly-qualified, and diverse pool of applicants for full-time faculty positions.

In addition, the college recognizes its role as an educational institution in facilitating knowledge, and understanding and communicating across diverse perspectives and cultural positions. The importance of diversity and equity is reflected in the general education learning outcomes, two of which explicitly reference cultural diversity, engagement, and appreciation. Successful completion of a Global Studies course is a requirement for earning an associate degree. A number of academic concentrations require that students engage with issues of diversity and systemic discrimination (e.g. Global Studies, Women and Gender Studies, Peace and Justice Studies, and Jewish Studies). A range of curricular offerings across the college also focus on diversity, and Oakton has consistently hosted a number of extracurricular events and talks that focus on these issues, such as the Creating Justice Symposium. Held annually in the spring and co-sponsored by a number of departments and the Oakton Educational Foundation, this event consistently focuses on issues of diversity and how the humanities, in particular, offer ways of comprehending and responding to issues of systemic discrimination.

Oakton’s student support services also explicitly recognize the diversity of the student body along a number of identities. Oakton’s TRIO program serves students from a variety of racial/ethnic backgrounds and abilities. Participants are required to meet at least one of the following criteria: qualify as low-income, have family taxable income for the preceding year that did not exceed 150 percent of the poverty level, or have a documented disability and receive services from the Access and Disability Resource Center at Oakton. Through events and services that promote participation in the college experience, ¡ANDALE!, the Association to Nurture and Develop the Advancement of Latinos in Education, supports the personal, emotional, social, academic, and career development of its Latino/a/x students.

¡ANDALE! students are led by college faculty and staff and build their leadership skills by exploring existing college resources, discussing and analyzing Latino/a/x identities in current affairs, and engaging with the Oakton community.

The Anti-Racism Team is a racially diverse group of Oakton employees who are committed to shaping awareness of systemic racism within the institution and analyzing specific barriers to change, as well as fostering a college-wide commitment to dismantle institutional racism and establish an anti-racist purpose. The Anti-Racism Team’s goals including institutionalizing anti-racism among employees and within the mission, cultivating and sustaining a healthy anti-racism team, affirming the importance of anti-racism in improving student achievement, and building capacity to lead an anti-racist institution.

Lastly, largely through the support of the Anti-Racism Team and the Diversity Council, Oakton continues to strive to improve the experience for all constituent groups in policy and practice. In 2016, the Diversity Council reviewed and awarded \$5,000 to support projects and events and instituted the annual Living Diversity Award. Additionally, the LGBTQ working group, developed through collaboration of members from the Diversity Council and the Women and Gender Studies Committee, works to increase the visibility of support for LGBTQ members of the community.

## Sources

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## 1.D - Core Component 1.D

The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

1. Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

### Argument

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Oakton Community College has a strong culture of commitment to the public good. This commitment is reflected in the first sentence of the mission document: "Oakton is the community's college." This declaration was originally included in the 1998 mission statement, and there was clear support for maintaining this declaration in the 2017 mission statement. As the community's college, Oakton meets its public obligation by serving its external constituencies and communities of interest in ways that better the Oakton district.

During this review period, each of the Oakton strategic plans have set objectives that provide a clear focus on developing programs, services, and curricula that meet the needs of the community. In the 2018-2022 strategic plan, "Success Matters," the third strategic commitment, Community Matters, calls for Oakton to "increase our positive impact on the community by deepening Oakton's relationships with external organizations and fostering students' sense of social responsibility and engagement." In the 2013-2017 strategic plan, "Connecting What Matters," the Connected Communities strategic goal also called upon the college to "value all members of the college community" by "continu[ing] to transform its practices to combat all forms of exclusion and bias...be responsive to the needs and interests of community members and area business and organizations...and foster a culture of employee engagement."

Oakton provides adult and continuing education, as well as training required by local business and industry. The Alliance for Lifelong Learning program is an excellent example of Oakton's actions to fulfill a public obligation. Through the Alliance, Oakton collaborates with the high school districts to provide educational opportunities for all adult residents age 18 and older. Classes are held at both campuses and six district high schools. Opportunities such as GED programs, evening high school, and English as a Second Language classes provide adults with a variety of educational programs. The VITA Program (Volunteers in Teaching Adults) teaches English conversation skills, life skills, reading for the illiterate, and basic citizenship skills to community members, and it is staffed largely by community volunteers. Continuing Education provides academic instruction in health fields offering Continuing Education Units (CEUs) to participants to meet ongoing training requirements. Additionally, in response to workforce need, new curricula have been developed, such as the Commercial Driver's License (CDL) program and partnerships with area manufacturing firms. For individuals interested in personal enrichment, Community Education programming provides online and in-class opportunities for personal and professional development.

Oakton has also worked closely with high school students in the district to provide programming that supports the transition to college and increases career exploration opportunities. Since 2008, Oakton has been a member of the North Suburban Education Region for Vocational Education (NSERVE). NSERVE has a mission to improve career and technical education courses by sharing resources and creating linkages among education, business, and the community. This consortium is composed of Oakton administrators, high school assistant superintendents, and department chairs from all district public high schools. In 2015, Oakton invited 600 high school students to participate in "Discover STEM in Manufacturing," which created opportunities for high school students to connect and apply content knowledge in the context of career exploration.

Oakton Community College is a not-for-profit member of the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) system, and oversight is provided by the board of trustees, not investors or a parent organization.

Oakton remains committed to this purpose as credit and non-credit academic programs have remained robust and fully supported amidst continually reduced state funding. At the same time, Oakton's low tuition rates in comparison to other

institutions reflect that the delivery of its outstanding academic programs is not motivated by financial return.

An example of Oakton's focus on students and its educational responsibilities is the college's response to the State of Illinois budget impasse. In 2016, the State of Illinois failed to fund the Monetary Award Program (MAP), which provides grants to students with a demonstrated financial need. Beginning in the 2016-2017 academic year, Oakton's Educational Foundation provided \$225,000 in grants for students dependent on MAP funding. This enabled 141 MAP-eligible students to enroll at Oakton. In the 2017-2018 academic year, the Oakton Educational Foundation provided an additional \$325,000 to MAP-eligible students. This college investment has resulted in higher student success outcomes for this population. Oakton is the only community college in Illinois that has maintained funding for MAP-eligible students.

Oakton allocates over half (54 percent) of the overall college budget to instructional expenses, which substantiates the primacy of education responsibilities at Oakton. An additional 14 percent of the college budget is allocated for academic support, including library resources, computer labs, smart rooms, etc.

Oakton fulfills its mission by engaging with its various external constituencies and communities of interest and responding to their needs.

Oakton has its own Habitat for Humanity chapter that works on Habitat's traditional builds over spring break and weekend mini-builds in the Cook County and Lake County areas. In a unique partnership, the Habitat for Humanity chapter worked for five years with math and trade skills faculty at the district's Maine East High School to develop curriculum in the high school's Geometry in Construction course. Students in this course build modular housing components and assemble homes throughout the state using those components.

The college also co-hosts and supports middle schools, high schools, and professional organizations to provide a wide range of academic programs, such as Futures, which introduces eighth grade girls to careers in science, and Science Olympiad, which provides academic competitions and learning for middle school children and parents. Tech Savvy offers technical career exploration for high school and college women. The college also offers Math Counts, DECA, and related high school academic events.

The college seeks to engage with all members of the community in encouraging students to enroll and succeed in college. To that end, the college engages in many activities to create awareness of Oakton as a community institution, as well as to guide students to view higher education as a viable option. A significant number of college-sponsored or co-sponsored events, such as Black Teen Summit, Siguele, and Diversability, are all coordinated with district high schools and invite students of those underrepresented groups to pursue higher education. Oakton departments provide guidance on enrolling in college for attendees at these events, regardless of their college of choice.

Oakton has applied for and been awarded numerous prestigious grants that helped initiate and subsidize programming for Oakton employees, students, local teachers, and community members. Oakton has sought unique collaborative opportunities and, as a result, was awarded Fulbright Hays Grants in 2008 and 2014. In 2014, Oakton was the only U.S. community college to receive a Fulbright Hays Group Projects Abroad Grant. This grant provided Oakton faculty members, along with six local high school teachers, the opportunity to travel to, study, and engage in experiential opportunities with indigenous people in Bolivia and Peru. The outcome of this opportunity has been the development of curricula focused in a variety of disciplines that focus on the environment, politics, and culture.

Oakton supports its students as they engage in meaningful service learning and social justice activities. The college hired a Service Learning Coordinator who is responsible for working with the college community to embed service learning concepts into the curriculum across disciplines and in campus life. For example, all students enrolled in the Nursing program are required to complete ten hours of community service; ten additional courses include similar components. The Service Learning Coordinator works with other college offices, including the Office of Access, Equity, and Diversity and Student Life, to develop complementary programs. The Service Fair connects students, as volunteers, to area agencies. The Day of Service, held in early September as a memorial activity to honor 9/11, allows bonding with the community by engaging students, faculty, and staff in community service activities. The Ceramics Club has sponsored Empty Bowls at Oakton for thirteen years, which fundraises for area food pantries by selling handmade soup bowls. The club raised \$242,486 between 2004 and 2015.

Oakton has identified sustainability as a priority in its strategic plans and has engaged the community within this strategic commitment. Oakton has signed the American Campuses Act on Climate Pledge and the Illinois Campus Sustainability Compact, which encourage colleges and universities to incorporate sustainability into their campus operations, academics, student activities, and outreach initiatives. In response to joining this consortium, the college hired a Sustainability Specialist to oversee these efforts, and the college formed a number of committees to incorporate sustainable principles into operations. Sustainable initiatives include the development of community gardens, installation of solar panels on the Des Plaines campus, and the development of an Environmental Studies concentration. As a result of this institutional commitment, Oakton received a Native Landscaping and Conservation Award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Chicago Wilderness.

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## 1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

### Summary

Oakton Community College's mission is collaboratively developed, publicly stated, collectively embraced, and guides the college's operations. Oakton's mission was developed through a college-wide process inclusive of students, faculty, staff, administrators, board of trustees members, and community members. Over the last ten years, Oakton's efforts have demonstrated a commitment to its educational purpose, to students, and to student access and success. The mission statement also aligns with the needs of the community—to offer access to affordable, high-quality education throughout a lifetime. Oakton is well-positioned to continue to fulfill its purpose with a new mission statement and a robust focus on student success and equity.

Oakton will continue to advance its work within this criterion by increasing awareness of the new mission, vision, and values statements and finding ways to meaningfully connect day-to-day operations to this mission; continuing to craft an understanding of equity within student outcomes and building an institution-wide commitment to achieving equity; developing programming that reflects the increasing diversity of Oakton's district; and continuing to create focused strategic planning and budgeting processes that allow the college to fulfill its comprehensive mission amidst declining state resources.

### Sources

There are no sources.

## 2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

### 2.A - Core Component 2.A

The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows policies and processes for fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.

#### Argument

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Operating with integrity and maintaining ethical and responsible conduct in its operations is fundamental to Oakton Community College's mission, vision, and values. The college's values statement includes commitments to:

- exercise responsibility through accountability to each other, our community, and the environment; and
- uphold integrity through a commitment to trust, transparency, and honesty by all members of the Oakton community.

Oakton Community College establishes and follows policies and processes for fair and ethical behavior. The college maintains a high standard of institutional integrity across all divisions of the campus including its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff. These standards are documented in the institution's policy and procedure documents which are available to all parties mentioned above. The role of the governing board of trustees is to ensure the financial stability and overall integrity of the institution and make decisions in the best interests of the institution.

As a public two-year college, Oakton follows the Illinois Community College Board's (ICCB) administrative rules, which establish broad guidelines for ethical conduct in finance, academic, and personnel functions. Every five years, ICCB audits all community colleges to ensure the college is in compliance and meeting state standards. This process, similar to Higher Learning Commission reaffirmation visits, requires community colleges to provide evidence of effectiveness and integrity in the following areas: instruction, student services/academic support, finance/facilities, and accountability. In 2015, Oakton completed this evaluation and was recognized as meeting all standards and being in compliance with state and federal statutes.

Aligning with the ICCB Administrative Rules, the college's board of trustees has established policies governing the operation and use of the college and its facilities. These policies are reviewed regularly for adherence to the ICCB administrative rules and Oakton's mission, vision, and values statements. Any changes to board policies require a board vote in an open board meeting. The college's President's Council has developed procedures to implement those policies. New and revised procedures are brought before the council by the respective vice president and approved by the council. Board policies and procedures fall under a common codification numbering system and are kept current under the guidance of the board, the president and the administration. All employees have access to both board policies and procedures on the college's internal website.

The college's board of trustees consists of seven voting members elected from District 535 and one student trustee who casts an advisory vote. The Illinois Public Community College Act (IPCCA) specifically empowers and obligates the college's board of trustees to exercise certain enumerated duties and specific powers. These are part of board policy and include the appointment of the college's legal counsel and licensed accounting firm to engage in the audits required by the IPCCA. Trustees act as a unit and the board is obligated to "represent all of the communities served by the district and make decisions for the common good of the constituents and the college." Upon election, all trustees are required to attend orientation sessions where they learn about their specific duties, responsibilities, and the college. During these orientation sessions, the board reviews significant policies including the ethics policy. This policy specifically requires that trustees act with integrity and transparency (pursuant to the Open Meetings Act) and avoid conflicts of interest. Finally, board policy also encourages trustees to attend regional, state and national functions to enhance their knowledge and understanding of community college issues, to represent the college, and to advocate for community college interests.

The college has enumerated ethics policies for all of its employee classifications. There is a general ethics policy for all personnel as well as specific policies for faculty, classified staff and administrators.

On the public website, the college publishes institutional publications which contain the annual budget, strategic plan, President's Report to the Community, and other documents of interest. The college demonstrates a standard of operating with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel and auxiliary functions in several ways.

Oakton provides access to public records in accordance with the Illinois Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). The college has provided a structure to support the process of responding to FOIA inquiries. The vice president for Information Technology and Data Analytics and the vice president for Administrative Affairs are jointly responsible for responding to requests and serve as the college's FOIA officers. The college receives on average twenty to twenty-five requests per year and to date has remained fully compliant.

### **Finance and Administration**

Under the direction of the vice president for Administrative Affairs, the Business Office is responsible for budget planning, yearly reports, audits, and the day to-day administration and accounting of the institution's finances. Oakton's board policy establishes the basic framework of transparency and fiscal sustainability under which the Office of Business and Financial Services operates. The board ultimately reviews and approves the annual budgets, audits, and planning documents.

The office maintains consistent and transparent financial processes which includes publishing annual budgets and audit reports for the college, the Oakton Educational Foundation, and grant finances. College accounts are audited annually by an independent firm, and the reports are posted with the college annual budget on the website. Additionally, other annual reports such as the comprehensive annual financial report and the Educational Foundation annual report are published on the website and can be easily accessed by the public. The college's comprehensive annual financial report ensures that it follows standard accounting principles and that its financial statements are accurate and presented fairly.

Additionally, the college demonstrates transparency in its bidding processes. The Oakton website publicly displays results from recent bids and proposals as well as new requests for bids and proposals. The bidding and request for proposal (RFP) process is always submitted to the board of trustees for review and approval.

### **Academic Services**

The vice president of Academic Affairs oversees the college's academic matters. Oakton Community College has multiple policies and procedures in place to ensure quality and integrity in academic functions. Examples of these policies include student academic integrity, faculty participation in curriculum development, and procedures for making teaching assignments that illustrate fairness and transparency. Standards of professional conduct and responsibility for faculty members that ensure integrity while performing their jobs have been established, along with provisions that outline academic freedom for faculty while promoting ethical instructional flexibility.

Additionally, the college identified minimum titles and qualifications for Oakton Community College faculty that delineate uniform credentials and a fair hiring process. This document was reviewed in 2015 to verify that Oakton's Titles and Qualifications were in alignment with the Higher Learning Commission's newly published guidelines. An audit of faculty credentials was completed in 2015, and it was determined that twelve faculty did not meet the new credentials. In 2016, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was developed with the Adjunct Faculty Association which provided a timeline and professional development resources for those individuals who wanted to obtain the proper credentials. In addition, an end teaching date was established for those faculty not interested in additional education.

In order to support ethical treatment of students, all faculty must complete online training in order to meet their obligations under Title IX and the Clery Act. In addition, Oakton regularly offers training to faculty through the Center for Professional Development on issues of diversity and inclusion and best pedagogical practices.

Students at Oakton are provided opportunities to raise problems with grades or teaching practices through the department chairs or through the dean. A grade appeal process is developed and available to students in the Student Handbook and college catalog.

### **Personnel**

The Chief Human Resources Officer oversees personnel issues at the college. Oakton Community College has many college-wide policies that demonstrate fair, ethical and consistent policies applicable to the whole college community.

Examples of these policies include: Drug Free Workplace; Nondiscrimination, Title IX Misconduct, Substance Abuse and Responsible Use of Information Technology.

Additionally, the college maintains policies that outline fair, uniform, and impartial procedures for hiring employees. The Staff Hiring Procedures Manual provides clear processes with regard to hiring new staff personnel, including job posting procedures, the interview and selection process, and outlining performance expectations and responsibilities. The college also recently revised the Dean's Guidelines for full-time faculty hiring protocols. These guidelines establish a timeline and steps for hiring full-time faculty members. These guidelines also include a mandatory cultural competency training for search committee members. Additionally, a Human Resources Training Specialist position was created to work with search committees and ensure that hiring decisions reflect Oakton's diversity goals. The document also outlines the role of the Strategic Hiring Committee in allocating full-time positions to departments that officially make a request. Requests for full-time positions are evaluated by this shared governance committee, and the committee takes into account various criteria including faculty-student ratios, student success outcomes, retirements, long-term strategic priorities and financial opportunities and constraints. This ensures that positions are allocated in a transparent manner and in keeping with the long-term academic priorities of the college.

The Administration and board of trustees recognize the existence of four collective-bargaining contract associations at Oakton Community College. These four associations, Adjunct Faculty, Classified Staff, Fraternal Order of Police, and Full-Time Faculty are represented by delegates within their employee group. Each association is governed by its mutually agreed-upon contract, housed on the college website and accessible by all employees.

The contracts outline: uniform, clear and impartial procedures for hiring employees; provisions that prohibit any unlawful strikes or work stoppages; grievance procedures that allow for a fair and just resolution of workplace issues; and procedures for the adjudication of employee disciplinary matters, including discharge.

#### **Auxiliary Services**

The college has several auxiliary service areas which serve the students, employees, and community. Each service area has established policies, rules, regulations, and processes for the operation of the department. Auxiliary service areas include Athletics, Early Childhood Center, and Food Services.

Oakton Community College participates in Intercollegiate Sports. As a member of the NJCAA and Illinois Skyway Collegiate Conference, Oakton students participate in twelve intercollegiate sports, including baseball, basketball, soccer, tennis, and golf. The Athletic Department routinely checks the eligibility status of all student athletes. Eligibility requirements are established by the National Junior College Athletic Association.

For many years, Oakton operated two high-quality early childhood centers at the Des Plaines and Skokie campuses, with the purpose of supporting the college's Early Childhood Education academic program. A review of the program and center operations, in terms of the scope of the college mission, academic needs, and financial investment, found the college is able to appropriately support the academic needs of its students with one high-quality center. In July 2017, operations of the Early Childhood Centers were consolidated at the Skokie campus. The center is licensed by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, has obtained a Gold Circle of Quality Rating by ExceleRate Illinois, and is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The center is open to all children and their families. Experienced, credentialed teachers provide high-quality care and education for children ages three-five years. They work in close partnership with families and supervise student teachers in the Oakton Community College Early Childhood Education academic program as well.

The food service operation consists of retail, catering, and vending services for both Oakton campuses. This operation is one of the only outsourced services for the college. In order to have transparency and solicit input from all college groups, a nineteen-person food service committee was formed to establish guidelines and requirements for the food service providers. The college used the request-for-proposal process to invite food service providers to submit proposals for providing food service to the college. The food service committee then reviewed and discussed each proposal and conducted onsite interviews. Once all committee work was complete, a unanimous decision was made and recommended to the board of trustees for approval. An example of this can be seen in the minutes of December 2012 board meeting.

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## 2.B - Core Component 2.B

The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.

### Argument

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Oakton Community College strives to present itself clearly and completely to its students, community, and stakeholders regarding academic programs and requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships. The college accomplishes this through a variety of face-to-face, print, and electronic resources.

#### College Catalog

The catalog is the chief document to communicate academic policies, costs, program requirements and course descriptions. Careful annual review and editing at the program, departmental, and institutional level ensure the current and accurate information in this important document.

The Academic Affairs division oversees this process which begins in November when current catalog sections are distributed to appropriate departments for review. Minutes from the Curriculum Committee, faculty meetings and the student recruitment and outreach department meetings are reviewed for curriculum, cost and policy changes.

#### Student Right to Know Web Page

In compliance with Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, and the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act, Oakton is required to provide access to college information. The list of college offices, materials, policies, data, office contact information and complaint or feedback details within the Student Right to Know web page can be found on the Oakton website.

#### Website

The Oakton Community College website is the primary public medium for external audiences to gain access and information about Oakton and is also widely used by internal audiences. The website is managed jointly by a web team that has College Relations and Web Services personnel on it. The web team has primary responsibility and authority to keep the website up to date; the director of College Relations oversees content as it relates to branding and marketing integration on the website. To ensure accuracy and currency, policies, facts, figures, and reports are updated on an as-needed basis and pages are reviewed annually. Departments are involved in drafting the text of departmental web pages to ensure that content is accurate and thorough. College Relations works closely with appropriate college personnel, which include department chairs, and staff office directors to ensure all information is accurate.

#### Social Media

College Relations manages the college's official social media accounts, which include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. These channels are used to communicate with both internal and external audiences and are focused primarily on student engagement and storytelling that supports the college's narrative. Office staff post relevant information, from weather-related closings and announcements of events to coverage of campus accomplishments. They continually monitor both sites and ensure timely and accurate responses to questions or complaints posted on the sites.

#### Other Communication Methods to Students

Recognizing multiple communication venues are needed to reach students, the Enrollment Center has begun an assertive program of informational outreach to students, including staffing tables in the cafeteria and initiating Facebook chats where students can ask questions and clarify policies in a less formal, more accessible environment.

#### President's Report to the Community and Alumni

College Relations publishes the annual *President's Report to the Community*, which provides information and college highlights to the public at large. The *Oakton Educational Foundation Annual Report* provides donors and alumni with an update on the status of the foundation's donor activity, financial health, investments, scholarships, and impact of foundation efforts to support the college and its students.

## **Mandatory New-Student Orientation**

The mandatory new student orientation initiative (NSO) fulfills the strategic objective from the 2008-2012 strategic plan, "Change Matters," which directed the college to "implement required orientation for new students, including an online option by fall 2009." Fall 2015 was the first semester implementing mandatory new student orientation, with a first-year implementation of 80 percent completion by targeted populations. The targeted populations were all traditional-age students (seventeen to twenty) and full-time adult students (twenty-one and over). For the fall term, 1,580 traditional-age students enrolled, and 95.5 percent (1,509 students) completed NSO. Full-time, adult student enrollment was 104, with 98 students (94.2 percent) completing NSO. NSO is another opportunity to communicate with students on the various resources and support offices available to help facilitate their success on campus.

## **Enrollment Reports**

Communication of students enrolled is summarized in the enrollment reports which are located on the college's website. This report disaggregates enrollment by a variety of categories including: race/ethnicity, age, and residency within the district. The public posting of the enrollment report ensures transparency with regard to aligning the institution's mission and programming with the student profile.

## **Student Handbook**

The Student Handbook, which resides on the website, is updated yearly through the Office of Student Affairs and Student Life. It provides students with clear guidance on the academic and disciplinary policies related to their rights and responsibilities as Oakton Community College students. Policies are checked for accuracy with minutes from the policy committees. Office information is updated by the individual office.

## **Institutional Characteristics**

The college's accreditation status is listed on its website and in the catalog. Individualized programs of study maintain their accreditation standards and can be found in the catalog and on the departmental web pages. Furthermore, the Alliance for Lifelong Learning's Continuing Education for Health Professionals program has been approved as a sponsor of seventeen different health professions. Regulatory bodies include the State of Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation and the Wisconsin Nurses Association. The Alliance for Lifelong Learning is also an approved provider for teacher and public accountant continuing education units.

Tuition and fees are listed on the Oakton website and in the catalog.

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## 2.C - Core Component 2.C

The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.

1. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
2. The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
3. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution.
4. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

### Argument

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Oakton Community College is officially governed by the Board of Trustees. Seven trustees are elected through public elections and one student trustee is elected by the student body. The trustees must live within the college district for at least one year preceding election. Each board member serves a six-year term. The board holds meetings eleven times per year (monthly, excluding July). During its April meeting, newly elected trustees are seated, and officers of the board and committee members are appointed. Board policies identify the scope and duties of the board of trustees at Oakton, including significant areas of oversight related to the development of policy, education, finance and business, personnel and students.

On the third Tuesday of each month, unless otherwise noticed and scheduled, the board meets in open session to conduct the business of the college. Prior to that meeting, the board meets for closed session. The college publicly publishes agendas and minutes of the board meetings on the college website.

Agenda items included in the board deliberations include the approval of faculty tenure and approval of faculty, staff and individual employment contracts including the president of the college. The board of trustees is responsible for setting goals and evaluating the president on an annual basis. Each year priority is given by the board of trustees to identify and outline goals for the president to work toward and achieve each year, and performance of the president is measured against these goals. Each month, the board reviews all recommended hires and contracts in order to make an informed decision to approve the contracts. Additionally, the board of trustees reviews adjunct faculty, classified staff and faculty contract agreements, campus master plans, expenses for improvement, tuition rates and the overall college budget.

The board of trustees has functions as a Committee of the Whole, usually meeting to review the proposed budget prior to the June meeting. However, when making decisions on behalf of the college such as tuition increases, the board of trustees will hold a public Committee of the Whole meeting to gain an informed understanding before a decision is made. For example, on March 16, 2016, the board of trustees demonstrated their responsibility related to decision-making on behalf of the college by holding a Committee of the Whole meeting in which the board of trustees previewed a proposed tuition fee increase for the college. The meeting allowed the board to ask questions, review and understand the impact of the decision. After careful considerations, the board of trustees voted to increase Oakton tuition rates.

The board of trustees has established several committees organized by key board responsibilities. The committees will not make decisions, but make recommendations to the board for appropriate action at its regular board meetings. When warranted, written reports are prepared and presented by the committee and presented by its chairperson at the board meetings. The board of trustees relies on input from these committees to make decisions in key areas.

An example of these committees include the Executive, Finance, and Personnel committees. The Executive Committee includes three elected officers of the board. The chair of the board consults with the members of the Executive Committee as necessary and appropriate. As a group, the Executive Committee may provide counsel and advice to the president, keeping the rest of the board informed. The Finance Committee is responsible primarily for meeting with the auditors and reviewing the annual audit. The members of the committee may also be involved in previewing and reviewing financial-related matters that come before the board.

The business considered by the board of trustees is responsive to the needs of the students, faculty, staff and community members. The college is intentional to submit items to be considered by the board of trustees one month in advance of the decision as a preview of actions to be taken, including purchases and ratification of institutional plans. This preview process provides the board sufficient time to review the details of actions, to make decisions within the best interests of the college, and to demonstrate integrity in the voting process. This is reflected within the minutes of the board meetings.

Additional reports including data dashboards, student success reports and persistence data are provided to the board on a regular basis. Data, including student outcomes and analysis of the college's economic impact, are shared to inform the board and assist in determining priorities for action and improvements for the college.

Board members are not compensated for serving on the board and must comply with policy that indicates their ethical responsibility to govern the college. Board policy number 1002 identifies that the board has the duty and power to effectively work as a unit to govern the institution. The Illinois Public Community College Act specifically empowers and obligates the college's board of trustees to exercise certain duties and specific powers.

College board policy number 1022 related to ethics states that the board of trustees must act as a unit and that each individual trustee has no authority as an individual while serving on the board. Board of trustees members are required to engage in ethics training as well as comply with the state of Illinois "statement of economic interest."

The college is fortunate to be governed by a board of trustees that demonstrates fair and ethical practices at each board meeting by giving thoughtful consideration to all items presented before them. Each member of the board displays independence in thought and discernment during deliberations. Board members have exercised their right to abstain or vote "nay" on various agenda items such as:

1. voting during a board meeting to abstain on the approval of an Educational Foundation director in February of 2014;
2. voting during a board meeting to abstain on a purchase from a company in which they owned stock in March of 2014 and September of 2016; and
3. voting to abstain on the resolution Setting Forth Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL) Reduction Designation in December of 2015.

These are just a few examples that demonstrate the commitment, integrity, and responsibility of Oakton's board members.

The college has established clear policies and procedures that outline the board's responsibility to focus on educational areas without inhibiting the president or taking over faculty responsibilities for curriculum development.

The president and administrators are responsible for supervision and day-to-day management of the operations and business of the college while working together on significant issues of governance related to students, faculty and staff. This practice has been demonstrated by the creation of various charters for activities contributing to the implementation of the college's academic matters.

Important aspects of Oakton's academic program are determined through processes of shared governance that involve faculty and administration. These committees require proportional representation from members of faculty and administration in developing policies and programs. The Faculty Association and the Faculty Senate provide input to these policies through membership on or in dialogue with shared governance committees, or through faculty-led committees such as the Council of Chairs and Coordinators. Shared governance practices are found in the development of the Educational Standards Review Board, the Student Success Team, the Curriculum Committee, and the Strategic Planning, Accountability, and Resources Committee.

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C2 Shared Governance MOU  
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C5 COCAC Meeting Minutes Sample



## 2.D - Core Component 2.D

The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

### Argument

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Freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning are highly valued at Oakton. Policies and procedures exist to protect these values, and the college demonstrates its commitment to them through numerous avenues.

#### Professional Development

Oakton supports a broad range of professional development activities outlined in the Faculty Professional Development agreement, a document negotiated between full-time faculty representatives and administration. This includes supporting large (sabbatical) research projects, as well as smaller (faculty fellows) projects. Approval for individual faculty research leave projects, such as Faculty Fellows and Sabbaticals, is undertaken by the Sabbatical Committee and the Faculty Fellows Committee. These shared governance committees, outlined in the faculty contract, are composed of faculty members and administrators. Procedures for awarding leave have been revised in order to ensure transparency and to reduce the possibility of bias in decision-making. The proposals are evaluated based on merit and evidence of benefit for the individual, the college, and students. Approved faculty projects provide evidence of support for a broad range of projects, from various disciplines and focusing on a variety of issues and topics.

Proposals for faculty-led seminars are approved by the Faculty Professional Development Team, led by the faculty liaison. The committee includes members of the administration, full-time faculty, and adjunct faculty. Programming is carried out based on professional development priorities set by the committee in conversation with faculty and administration groups, and responding to the strategic plan.

Faculty are also supported in the continued pursuit of truth in their disciplines through funding for attending conferences, workshops, and other professional development opportunities. Each full-time faculty member is allotted the same amount of professional development funds which can be accessed for supporting participation in relevant conferences, workshops and courses.

#### Grant-Supported Programs

A commitment to intellectual pursuit is evident in the range of grant-supported projects that have been awarded to Oakton faculty and staff. These grants have allowed faculty to develop knowledge in new areas and incorporate this knowledge into their classes. Some examples include Global Studies grants from Fulbright for travel to India (2008) and South America (2015), as well as a Department of Education grant (UISFL) for curriculum development on South Asia (2009-2011). Grants outcomes include curriculum development, new classes and new programs.

Oakton faculty and staff also benefit from funding through grants awarded by the Oakton Educational Foundation. These grants support a broad range of programming and work that is awarded by a subcommittee of the Educational Foundation directors. Funds are awarded based on evidence of the proposal's strategic intention tied to the college mission and vision.

#### Public Programming at Oakton

Oakton demonstrates its free expression by supporting public programming through presentations, performances, and conferences. These examples of programs have focused on several sides of the same issue and provide a forum for participants to express their views. In addition, Oakton has hosted several conferences and exhibits organized by and featuring work by Oakton faculty. Examples are the STEM conference, Women's and Gender Studies Conference, Pathways to South Asia Conference, and International Education Week activities.

#### Academic Freedom at Oakton

According to the collective bargaining agreements, the academic freedom of both full-time and adjunct faculty is protected. Faculty in general education courses enjoy a great deal of freedom in selecting topics and viewpoints to be covered in keeping with the requirements of the course. A generic syllabus provides the basic outlines and objectives of each course, and faculty are free to develop these using a range of materials and viewpoints.

## **Academic Concentrations and Special Courses**

Faculty and students pursue truth in teaching and learning through their participation in special concentrations. These include Women's and Gender Studies, Global Studies, Peace and Social Justice Studies and Environmental Studies. These interdisciplinary concentrations allow faculty to work collaboratively in pursuing research and teaching in these special areas of interest. The college has established guidelines which identify the requirements and process for the establishment of new concentrations.

## **Alliance for Lifelong Learning and Noncredit Classes**

Oakton's Alliance for Lifelong Learning is a leader in continuing education and demonstrates the college's commitment to serving its community and the ongoing pursuit of truth in learning for a broad group of Oakton students. Programs offered by the alliance include adult education, professional development, personal enrichment, and youth education.

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## 2.E - Core Component 2.E

The institution's policies and procedures call for responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge by its faculty, students and staff.

1. The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.
2. Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.
3. The institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

### Argument

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The acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge by Oakton faculty, students, and staff occurs ethically, responsibly, and according to established policies and procedures.

#### **Institutional Review Board**

Oakton has an Institutional Review Board that reviews research proposals by faculty, staff, students, and external researchers to ensure that research conducted about the college is sound and does not violate college or regulatory policies. Oakton uses a Research Proposal form that conforms to all federal and institutional guidelines. The committee reviews research proposals. As needed, certain proposals are escalated to the president or appropriate vice president for approval. The proposed research must be compatible with Oakton's mission and must be education-related.

#### **Oakton Library**

The Oakton Library offers workshops, classroom instruction, and consultations both in-person and virtually to assist the Oakton community with finding, locating, and ethically using research sources. These sessions are an integral part of the library's mission and support the framework developed by the Association of College and Research Libraries. Approximately 170 sessions are done each year in coordination with instructors of specific classes. On average, 75 drop-in workshops and 150 individual research consultations are performed annually. The number of classes using an embedded librarian for research support is growing, with over 60 classes using this service in 2015-2016. In addition, the library has created special workshops and online guides to assist students with understanding and avoiding plagiarism, developing and using citations, and finding additional help when needed. The workshops and online guide have the name, "Cite it Right!" to make the meaning clear. This initiative is designed to assist with the ethical use and acknowledgement of information sources.

Demonstrating a commitment to support scholarly work with resources, Oakton spends over \$300,000 annually on books, publications, and subscriptions (both print and online) and facilitates the loan of materials from other libraries and institutions. Approximately 2,900 interlibrary loan material requests from Oakton personnel are filled each year. Lending institutions include CARLI libraries (the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois), and other lending institutions both within and outside of Illinois. Oakton's library provides access to current research in journal articles, encyclopedias and other online resources through various platforms on various subjects. The library subscribes to over 70 online article databases, encyclopedias, and e-books from vendors such as EBSCO, FactsOnFile, CQ Press, Oxford Press, Alexander Street Press, and others.

#### **Academic Integrity**

Oakton has a student academic integrity policy and code of academic conduct. The policy and code are contained in the Student Handbook, and academic integrity expectations are stated on all Oakton syllabi. Faculty and staff have access to all related policies and forms through the internal myOakton portal. Oakton employs a Coordinator for Access, Equity, and Student Rights that assists with reporting and resolving violations. Whenever possible, the academic integrity violation is used as a teaching opportunity instead of a punitive process, depending on the situation. Students who do not have prior academic violations and who accept responsibility for the violation can resolve it through a faculty resolution. The faculty resolution can, as needed, include failure on a test/assignment or a sanction, along with documentation. If the student is given a sanction, a form is signed by all parties involved along with the division dean and the Office of Student Affairs, and retained by Student Affairs for three years. Academic violations that cannot be resolved through a faculty resolution allow for further sanctions and/or failure. Students who feel that the violation is in error may choose to participate in an administrative meeting or a hearing panel.

## Learning Center

In order to exercise compassionate compliance as opposed to simply using punitive measures, the college provides a number of learning opportunities for students related to academic integrity. Oakton's Learning Center provides education regarding plagiarism and academic integrity in the following ways:

- training of writing tutors to have developmental conversations with students in individual appointments regarding plagiarism and academic honesty;
- availability of individual study skills meetings with students;  
facilitation of in-class visits by Learning Center staff who discuss the Learning Center resources available to support academic integrity.
- availability of writing tutors who help students specifically address issues of research, writing and proper citation; and
- support for academic misconduct sanctions for plagiarism by providing a learning specialist or writing tutor to have developmental conversations about accurately citing academic work.

## Policy for Responsible Use of Information Technology

Oakton requires all users to know the policy for Responsible Use of Information Technology, as stated on the Oakton website and in the Student Handbook. All members of the college community who use Oakton's information technology facilities and resources must act responsibly in their use of the resources. Every user is responsible for the integrity of the resources.

## Copyright Officer and Intellectual Property

Oakton has a copyright officer to provide guidance and advice to the Oakton community about rights and responsibilities inherent in the use of copyrighted material. Lastly, both full-time and adjunct faculty contracts define intellectual property ownership rights and responsibilities to clarify the roles of the faculty and college on protecting the intellectual property of each part.

All of the above mechanisms provide support for faculty, staff, and students to adhere to high standards of academic integrity and intellectual pursuits.

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## 2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

### Summary

Members of the Oakton community are committed to acting with integrity and responsibility and demonstrating ethical conduct. These commitments are reflected in the college's value statement, which defines how the college will uphold integrity, accountability, responsibility, trust, transparency, and honesty within its day-to-day operations. The college's board of trustees honors and maintains a clear role of institutional oversight and entrusts and delegates day-to-day operations to the president. The president works closely with administrators to lead the college, within an environment that values shared governance through broad-based engagement and input by faculty and staff. The college's operations are closely guided by compliance with established policies concerning ethical standards and behavior.

Oakton will continue to advance its work within this criterion by maintaining a commitment to shared governance and actively seeking broad engagement and thoughtful input that informs good decision-making; harnessing social media and ever-changing methods of communication and engagement that increase community knowledge about college affairs; and pursuing a strategic objective within "Success Matters" that connects student success to student responsibility and equips students to pursue their students with integrity and responsibility.

### Sources

There are no sources.



## 3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

### 3.A - Core Component 3.A

The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.

1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.
2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs.
3. The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).

### Argument

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The degree programs at Oakton Community College reflect the teaching and learning mission of an institution of higher education that is committed to student success.

Oakton Community College offers undergraduate education exclusively at the associate degree and certificate levels. Oakton awards thirty-one associate degrees in transfer and career and technical education areas. All of Oakton's associate degrees require a minimum of 60 credit hours, and the college's certificate programs require credit completion commensurate with knowledge required by the industry. Oakton's degree or certificate requirements are outlined in the college catalog and on the Oakton web page.

As a public two-year institution, Oakton must follow the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) administrative rules, which establish guidelines for course and program development in transfer and career and technical fields. As part of these guidelines, ICCB is required to approve all curricula offered at public, two-year institutions, and applications for new degree or certificate programs must include the need for the program, curriculum, faculty credentials, an assessment plan, and facilities available to support the program. Courses that are not part of the general education core also need approval by ICCB and must be accepted for transfer by at least three baccalaureate institutions. Prior to submission to ICCB, Oakton sends an articulation request to 36 institutions.

Career and technical education programs have a similar approval process as transfer curricula. However, the needs section is expanded and requires evidence of labor market needs and employment opportunities for graduates possessing the degree or certificate. In addition, all career and technical education programs must have an advisory committee composed of experts in the field who meet annually to review curricula and align credentials with labor market need. Membership of the advisory committees is reviewed annually and approved by the Oakton Board of Trustees.

Supporting a statewide framework, Illinois has established the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI), a statewide transfer agreement consortium that is composed of subject matter panels of faculty and administrators from two-year and four-year institutions who review course materials to ensure consistency in general education courses. Upon approval, all participating institutions agree to accept a package of thirty-seven to forty-one general education credits. The IAI reviews these course agreements every five years to ensure that the content of these courses is relevant and timely. Oakton has 190 courses approved by formal review with the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI), which will transfer for general education and major-related credit.

Oakton's internal process for curriculum approval aligns with the ICCB administrative rules and Illinois Articulation Agreement (IAI) requirements for course approval. Oakton's Curriculum Committee reviews all new courses, changes to existing courses, changes to programs, new programs, and academic concentrations. The Curriculum Committee is a committee of the Faculty Senate, composed of faculty members and Academic Affairs administrator liaisons. Co-chairs

of the Curriculum Committee are also members of Oakton's Program for the Assessment of Learning (OPAL), which facilitates the development of learning objectives and creates opportunities for consultation and professional development to department chairs while preparing submissions to the Curriculum Committee. Department chairs complete Oakton's course and/or curriculum forms, which provide the relevant information for ICCB and IAI committee approval. Completed forms with accompanying syllabi are then submitted sequentially to the Curriculum Committee, Council of Deans (formerly Academic Council), the vice president of Academic Affairs, and ICCB and/or IAI for review and approval. New programs and credentials are then sent to the Oakton Board of Trustees for approval.

Oakton Community College faculty, staff, and administrators are responsible for maintaining the quality and currency of programs and course offerings. Faculty have authority over course content and determine curriculum and relevant subject matter for courses, recommend appropriate pedagogy, and choose textbooks and other materials to maintain currency and standards of performance best suited to teaching the subject.

As mandated by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), the program review process reviews four major instructional program areas on a five-year cycle: career and technical education, academic disciplines, cross-disciplinary instruction, and student and academic support services. Oakton adheres to the principles for the process:

- systematically examines the need, cost, and quality of individual instructional programs
- involves faculty, academic support professionals, and appropriate administrators
- employs relevant information such as assessment results appropriate to the unit, as well as comparative data on enrollments, completions, and costs
- ensures that the process is well-documented and uses results to inform campus planning initiatives, quality improvement efforts, and budget allocation decisions
- reports results and actions from reviews to local boards and advisory committees
- implements strategies to address deficiencies discovered during the review process

Starting with fiscal year 2017, ICCB created a more data-intensive program review process that requires disaggregated course-level data, demographic data, and state and local labor market data to identify trends and equity gaps. Indicators included within the program review process include need, cost effectiveness, quality, data analysis, and results and further action.

Beyond these standard procedures, other measures exist to ensure the currency and quality of Oakton's programs and course offerings. All career and technical education programs have an advisory committee that provides feedback on the curriculum from an industry perspective. Many adjunct faculty are currently employed in their teaching field and share current, practical industry experience with students and fellow faculty. Students also provide useful feedback about program quality in course evaluations, which are reviewed by program faculty as an instrument to monitor quality. Furthermore, alumni surveys are sent to degree and certificate recipients, and these past students provide the college with information on their career and educational statuses, and how well Oakton prepared them for their current pursuits.

Another measure of quality and rigor is verified through additional program-specific accreditation. The high rates of graduates who successfully pass these exams is evidence of aligned learning outcomes and professional standards.

Oakton has several articulation agreements with four-year colleges and universities throughout Illinois. The 2+2 agreements allow students to take two years of prescribed coursework at Oakton, transfer these credits to a four-year college or university, and then complete the last two years of a specified bachelor's degree program at the transfer institution. The dual admission agreements allow students to be simultaneously accepted into Oakton and their intended four-year institution. Students must take their first two years of coursework at Oakton, and then they are guaranteed admission to their intended four-year institutions provided certain academic requirements are met.

Oakton also offers 98 certificates in career and technical education programs designed to meet current workforce needs. Two recent additions to the certificate offerings, Mechatronics Technology and Creative Software Master, illustrate Oakton's responsiveness to national and local workforce needs. The college subscribes to labor market modeling data offered by Economic Modeling Specialists Incorporated (EMSI) and Burning Glass, and the Office of Research produces a labor market report to inform career and technical education program development.

Program learning objectives for career and technical education programs, course learning objectives for all courses, and course syllabi are located on Oakton's website and/or in the catalog. Departments review their requirements each year prior to the publication of the college catalog for currency and relevancy.

Oakton offers face-to-face courses on campus and through dual credit at the public high schools in the Oakton district. The college also offers hybrid and fully online courses. Faculty qualifications to teach are the same regardless of mode of delivery or location. To assist new full-time and part-time faculty, Oakton adheres to a generic course syllabus for each individual course. Regardless of the method of delivery or the location of the class, the learning objectives of the course, as documented in the generic syllabus, must be met.

Oakton has seen strong enrollment growth in its distance learning courses. In order to maintain high academic standards, Oakton has developed and implemented procedures that create a robust quality control program for online courses, including a guide for faculty, the Dean's Guideline on Assigning Distance Learning Class to Full- and Part-Time Faculty, and the Oakton online rubric. The rubric establishes standards for learner support and resources, class site organization and design, instructional design and delivery, assessment and evaluation of student learning, effective use of technology, and student feedback.

The college also provides strong support for faculty utilizing Desire2Learn (D2L). This learning management system is used for enhanced online and hybrid delivery of course materials. The college provides multiple annual training opportunities for faculty and generates an active D2L shell for every credit course section. D2L provides a secure class environment that supports the posting of class materials such as handouts, discussion notes, lecture slides, links and videos. D2L also provides interactive tools that support communication, including bulletin boards, chat spaces, and email. The system also supports assessment activities, such as quizzes, discussions, and drop-box assignment submissions, as well as access to a grade book that displays individual records for each enrolled student. Students are automatically enrolled in the D2L course based on their enrollment in that course within Oakton's Banner student database system. To support student success, the college maintains a course module with features that describe how to use D2L, how to succeed in online courses, and how to access Oakton support services. This module is available for adoption by every course section offered by the college.

Oakton also offers dual-credit courses, and any course offered as dual credit must be approved by the program/department chair and the dean. High schools submit syllabi, assessments, and student artifacts for the chair and dean to review. College and high school faculty meet to discuss and clarify course expectations and rigor. For example, high school and Oakton English faculty created a crosswalk of learning objectives and assessments, which clarify departmental standards. The instructor must have the same faculty qualifications for that program or course, and they must submit an application, resume, two letters of recommendation, and interview with the program/department chair or the dean before the course is approved. Instructors of dual credit courses must comply with all regular Oakton instructor requirements, including submission of midterm rosters certifying student attendance in the course and submission of final grades in accordance with Oakton policies and procedures. Once the course and the instructor are approved, the instructor must submit a syllabus to the program/department chair each term period that the course is offered for credit. The syllabus must meet the learning objectives of the course as stated in the college generic course syllabus.

Oakton and the high schools convene an annual meeting between Oakton program/department chairs and faculty to discuss course content, pedagogy, and calibration of grading standards for dual credit and Oakton student assignments. The intent of these meetings is to provide support for comparable quality, articulation, and alignment between the high school and college courses.

The college also offers courses through contractual arrangements. Courses that are offered by the college under contractual agreements adhere to college and departmental guidelines. When an external organization is hired by the college to deliver such courses, the chair of the appropriate program/department and the dean ensure that the syllabi of the courses that are included in the contract are aligned with the courses bearing credit from the college. Once the course is approved, the instructor-specific syllabus is submitted to the program/department chair each term period that the course is offered for credit. The syllabus must meet the learning objectives of the course as stated in the college general course syllabi. These programs are a part of the program review process within the same cycle as the associated program at Oakton.

In addition, any course offered under contractual agreement must be taught by faculty who have the designated qualifications for that program or course. Faculty for these courses who are not Oakton employees must submit an application and resume for consideration and approval by the program/department chair and the dean before the course is approved for offering. Oakton's Human Resources Department maintains files on those faculty who are teaching courses for which Oakton provides credit, as those faculty are required to apply to Oakton as adjunct faculty member.

During the process to develop the assurance argument, the college determined that it needed to seek HLC approval for several contractual agreements that are currently used to deliver Oakton courses, including: a contract with the Northeastern Illinois Public Safety Training Academy to deliver courses on behalf of the college that satisfy the Fire Officer I and Fire Officer II programs of the Illinois State Fire Marshall's Office, contractual agreements with Presence St. Francis Hospital and Advocate Lutheran General Hospital to deliver courses on behalf of the college that satisfy the Emergency Medical Technician-Paramedic program of the Illinois Department of Public Health, and a contract with Chicago Botanic Garden to deliver courses on behalf of the college that satisfy Oakton's Horticultural Therapy Certificate. These substantive change applications are currently under review by the Higher Learning Commission.

In 2017, Oakton hired a new position, the dean of Curriculum and Instruction, to support the college's mission to offer high-quality education. The key duties of this position include working with appropriate personnel, committees, and external agencies to develop and implement college curricula; manage the program review and assessment processes for academic programs; and provide oversight of and direction for professional development, evaluation, and continuing eligibility of adjunct faculty.

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## 3.B - Core Component 3.B

The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.
2. The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.
4. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.
5. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution's mission.

### Argument

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All educational programs at Oakton Community College can demonstrate that intellectual inquiry is fundamental to their implementation. The college can validate that its degree and certificate programs aim for students to acquire, apply, and integrate broad learning skills. Completion of educational programs at Oakton reflects a high-quality education, which is central to the Oakton mission.

Oakton's general education programs and goals provide students the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills in key areas for success in their academic, career, and personal lives. The college's general education learning outcomes, adopted in April 2009, are promoted throughout the curricula in all degree areas. Four broad areas of competency are articulated as part of the general education learning outcomes.

- **Critical Thinking:** Identify, define, analyze, interpret and evaluate ideas, concepts, information, problems, solutions, and consequences. This includes the ability to compute and comprehend quantitative information and to engage in the scientific process.
- **Communication:** Communicate ideas, concepts, and information through written, oral, and non-verbal means. Collaborate with people of diverse backgrounds and abilities.
- **Literacy:** Demonstrate the ability to read critically within content areas. Use technology to locate, evaluate, and communicate data, information, ideas, and concepts. Access, critique, and select from a variety of information resources.
- **Responsibility:** Demonstrate an understanding of personal responsibility in one's academic and civic life. Demonstrate an understanding of cultural and aesthetic diversity as they relate to the individual, the community, and the global society.

Oakton's general education program serves the college's mission well by ensuring students successfully complete comprehensive coursework through abundant educational offerings that provide students with a variety of ways to engage in intellectual inquiry and obtain the necessary exposure to broad learning and skills.

Students in baccalaureate or transfer programs (AA, AS, AFA, and ASE) must complete thirty-seven to forty-one credits of general education courses as developed through Oakton's participation in the Illinois Articulation Initiative. The general education core ensures that all Oakton graduates and transfer students have similar competencies.

General education outcomes are aligned with specific degree and certificate programs and academic concentrations. Using curriculum mapping, they are validated by faculty in each discipline at least once every five years during the program review process. The outcomes are assessed across the institution by the college's assessment committee, Oakton's Program for the Assessment of Learning (OPAL). Each of the general education outcomes is assessed according to the OPAL calendar.



Outcomes are assessed by a multi-disciplinary OPAL team through student artifacts and using a rubric designed by subject experts. Student capabilities are also assessed through a standardized instrument, such as the GMETRIX exam. Outcomes are posted on the assessment website along with information about changes that faculty implement to increase student learning.

As part of Oakton's general education assessment processes, departments and programs map specific course learning objectives to the college's general education outcomes in one of three categories: introducing, developing, or reinforcing skills associated with the general education outcomes. This mapping informs the college of the variety of courses and programs that promote skills associated with, for example, collecting, analyzing, and communicating information. While certain departments may obviously engage in particular general education learning outcomes because of the nature of the discipline, the mapping process identifies the breadth of disciplines that promote critical thinking, communication, and literacy.

Oakton's infrastructure of co-curricular learning also provides opportunities to help students recognize the changing environments where their education will be applied and integrated and, in 2013, OPAL added a fourth subcommittee to address student learning in co-curricular activities.

Oakton recognizes the importance of educating its students and community about the human and cultural diversity of the world in which we live and operate. This is specifically noted in the written and nonverbal Communication general education outcome, which develops skills so that students are able to "collaborate with people of diverse background and abilities." The Responsibility general education outcome also requires students to take responsibility for their own personal, academic, and professional lives and "demonstrate an understanding of cultural and aesthetic diversity as they relate to the individual, the community, and the global society." Oakton's argument for Core Component 1.C. elaborates on the college's understanding of diversity, how human and cultural diversity are explicit in the college's mission documents, and how the college works to promote student awareness of and appreciation for diversity.

Furthermore, Oakton's educational programs are designed to recognize human and cultural diversity with requirements for graduation covering global studies. Oakton offers dozens of courses to meet these requirements, such as BIO 106: Introduction to Environmental Science; GBS 235: Global Marketing; HIS 211: History of Modern Africa; HUM 161: Global Cinema; and SSC 205: Latin American Civilization and Culture.

This emphasis on recognizing and appreciating cultural diversity also translates into Oakton's curricular offerings. The Global Studies and Peace and Social Justice academic concentrations take human and cultural diversity as core components of their mission and objectives, and similar references to diversity can also be found in environmental studies, women and gender studies, Jewish studies, and the honors program.

Established in 2009, part of the mission of Oakton's Anti-Racism Team is to review curricula for issues of bias, as well as developing and teaching anti-bias and anti-racist curricula. As a result, a number of departments and programs have developed courses that reflect the cultural diversity of our students and community. Additionally, the Diversity Council and Anti-Racism Team have promoted a number of faculty workshops and professional development opportunities to help faculty develop and implement curricular offerings that support the college's commitment to diversity.

Global studies at Oakton also strives to help establish and grow global competencies, which allow individuals to understand the interconnectedness of peoples and systems, to have a general knowledge of history and world events, to accept and cope with the existence of different cultural values and attitudes, and to celebrate the richness and benefits of this diversity. As a member of Community Colleges for International Development (CCID) and the Institute of International Education (IIE), the college offers an array of study abroad programs for students and cultural exchanges for faculty, staff, and administrators.

Oakton faculty are evaluated according to three criteria: teaching, institutional service, and professional development. Thus, they are not required to contribute to scholarship in their respective fields. However, the college recognizes the professional development and contributions to the discipline that result from the production of scholarly work. This work is acknowledged in a category for promotion in rank and merit lane.



Faculty and students at Oakton pursue significant scholarship, research, and creative work aligned with the college's two-year mission. The college's library keeps a bibliography of faculty books and publications. The list of publications is impressive and ranges from articles in law journals to novels to scientific essays. Titles include:

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Continuing the work from a National Science Foundation grant, Oakton supports STEM research opportunities for students. The college established the Center for Promoting STEM (CP-STEM) and constructed an undergraduate special projects lab in the new Science and Health Career Center. Students can enroll in courses that involve researching a range of topics including mining robotics, renewable energy, electrical engineering and programming, mathematical foundations of computer science, environmental science, and biofilms. Oakton is proud to support a robotics team that competes in the prestigious NASA Robotic Mining Competition. In May 2016, the team competed against forty-three teams from four-year colleges and universities across the country, winning second overall in the competition. As a result of this student research program, Oakton was named a top-ten finalist for the National Science Foundation/American Association of Community Colleges Innovation Challenge Award.

More support of creative endeavors can be found in the college's extensive permanent art collection, housed inside and outside of both campuses as well as in the Koehline Museum of Art. Programs and exhibits in the Museum are designed for students, college employees, and the community with a mission to advocate for support of local art, focus on modern and contemporary art, seek opportunities to explore the educational potential of its exhibits, provide online resources to develop and increase awareness of the temporary and permanent collection, provide expertise for display of the college's permanent collection, and serve as a lab for Museum Studies. Each year, the Museum hosts art shows to highlight the works of both faculty and students. The college also produces a creative journal, *Mosaic*, that highlights the college's creativity and diversity through photographs, poetry, watercolors, essays, and journals. Lastly, the Theater Department has performances throughout the year, encouraging students and community members to explore the arts and the human condition through plays. In 2016, for example, *Hedda Gabler* by Henrik Ibsen, *Seascape* by Edward Albee, and *Third* by Wendy Wasserstein were performed at Oakton.

The above examples indicate how the college demonstrates its commitment to the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning skills that are integral to its education programs.

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### 3.C - Core Component 3.C

The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

1. The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance; establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff; involvement in assessment of student learning.
2. All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual, and consortial programs.
3. Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.
4. The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.
5. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.
6. Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising, and co-curricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development.

#### Argument

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The faculty and staff employed by Oakton are effective at providing high-quality programs and student services. With 156 full-time faculty, 249 part-time faculty teaching six or more lecture-hour equivalents per semester, and 130 part-time faculty teaching fewer than six lecture-hour equivalents per semester, Oakton currently has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty to carry out the various roles that faculty play on campus. The ratio of students to faculty is 16:1. Oakton's full-time faculty teach about 39 percent of the enrollment across all programs.

The full-time and adjunct faculty contracts outline the core responsibilities and expectations for Oakton faculty with respect to teaching load, professional development, participation in departmental work, and college-wide committee service.

Oakton has a history of high faculty participation throughout the college. Program coordinators and department chairs are faculty who receive release time to perform administrative functions such as curricular review, assessment, scheduling, and hiring. In addition, faculty are represented on 32 college-wide committees which provide recommendations on a variety of campus initiatives and operations.

Oakton faculty are responsible for the development, maintenance, and review of the curricula associated with their various departments and programs. Oakton faculty across the institution are involved with Oakton's Program for the Assessment of Learning (OPAL). Every academic department is responsible for collecting, reporting, and assessing the student learning outcomes. Assessment outcomes and reports are then discussed with the program faculty, and collected data are used to continuously improve the learning outcomes of programs and courses. The OPAL team offers various workshops to assist faculty in preparing their assessment plans.

In response to the Affordable Care Act, Oakton established a new category of adjunct faculty: the affiliated adjunct. Affiliated adjunct positions are guaranteed a minimum number of courses (or Lecture Hour Equivalents—the basis of faculty salary) over the course of the academic year and in accordance with the adjunct contract. Affiliated adjuncts have additional responsibilities related to meeting participation and attendance. Additionally, adjunct and part-time faculty are encouraged and sometimes required to participate in various college activities. Alternate time assignments or payment may also be granted to faculty members for the purpose of performing some of these duties.

All faculty must meet the minimum titles and qualifications to teach. Most departments require a master's degree with at least eighteen graduate credit hours in a related discipline. Some career and technical education programs have established national certifications or work experience as necessary qualifications. Additionally, Oakton faculty are integral to the hiring of new faculty. A search committee composed of faculty, staff, and administrators are involved in hiring full-time faculty. Committees working with representatives from the Human Resources Department review credentials and official transcripts of candidates.

Instructors teaching dual credit courses must also meet the minimum titles and qualifications. Candidates submit a list of credentials, transcripts and two letters of recommendation to the chair and dean. Upon review of credentials and an interview with the chair, instructors are hired and a personnel file is created at Oakton.

All faculty are regularly evaluated to validate their teaching and are provided both written and oral feedback. Non-tenured, full-time faculty members are evaluated annually during the first three years by their dean and Peer Review teams, consisting of tenured colleagues both inside and outside of their disciplines. Upon final review for tenure, faculty produce a portfolio of evidence and artifacts that address professional effectiveness, institutional service, and professional development. Every five years, tenured faculty members submit a portfolio, are observed by the division dean, and are evaluated using the same metrics. Based upon the faculty assessment, the dean and faculty member develop a set of five-year objectives for the faculty member.

Oakton Community College has an evaluation process in place to help recognize and foster the teaching excellence of part-time faculty. These faculty members are observed by their chair or coordinator in the first, fifth, tenth, or a multiple of tenth semesters. In addition, every tenth semester, part-time faculty complete a continued eligibility form which requires evidence of professional development related to their teaching.

The college recognizes that evaluation provides feedback for professional growth and should not be viewed as punitive in nature. The classroom observation and student evaluations are significant components of faculty evaluation. Establishing consistent standards and clear classroom activities is critical to the development of effective teaching. Prior to 2013, classroom observation forms were composed of a series of broad categories for the observer to address. Without clear standards and defined class activities, there was a lack of consistency across the college. As a result, a task force composed of faculty and administrators developed a standard rubric used in classroom observations. The observation rubric addresses thirteen areas with defined standards and includes cultural competence, which aligns the college's mission, vision, and values with specific classroom activities.

Oakton values professional development and recognizes the vitality of such activities to maintain highly effective teaching and learning. Each full-time faculty member has an individual pool of \$5,500 every two years that can be used for approved professional development activities, including: travel, instructional materials, memberships in professional organizations, books, and tuition. Adjunct faculty also have access to professional development funds. In order to align professional development with institutional goals, Oakton created the Center for Professional Development (CPD) which provides professional development opportunities on a wide range of topics. The faculty professional development liaison works with the professional development committee to create relevant seminars, workshops, and Faculty Orientation Week activities that occur prior to each fall and spring term. Depending on the activity, all faculty members (full-time and part-time) could be compensated to create and/or successfully complete a professional development activity. Full-time faculty members are required to attend at least five hours of activities during both the fall and spring Professional Development Week.

In addition to the workshops, seminars, and faculty orientations, Oakton developed a twelve-week credential series for faculty. These offerings are the direct result of the development of the teaching observation rubric, which holds faculty accountable to topics such as presentation skills, technology in the classroom, classroom management, cultural competence, student rights and responsibilities, and student engagement.

Full-time teaching faculty members, including Student Development faculty, maintain ten regular office hours per week, primarily so that they may be available to students as outlined in the full-time faculty contract. Normally, at least five office hours are maintained in the office and posted for meeting with students. However, faculty members teaching online courses may schedule some of these office hours to be spent online for students enrolled in these courses. Adjunct faculty members are required to schedule one office hour per week for every three credits taught at Oakton. D2L course pages, emails, and faculty home pages are other means of communicating with students.

The college's Human Resources Department ensures all staff members meet the credentials and qualifications required for student services positions. The Human Resource specialist, a member of HR, is dedicated to staff searches and monitors the search process. In addition, search committees are required for staff positions that require a bachelor's degree or higher to ensure that a diverse employee group reviews applicants, follows processes, and recommends candidates for final consideration.

New employees are provided orientation through the Human Resources Department and their individual department. The orientation offered by human resources includes general information about the college including key policies, a tour of the college, presentations by key departments and committees, and other employee opportunities. Departmental orientations include current procedures, forms, methods, techniques, materials, and equipment normally used in an employees' work.

The Center for Professional Development also offers a variety of workshops each year that support staff development related to technology, leadership, career skills, and personal development. Workshops are held throughout the year and, each spring, Staff Day features professional development programs and events that acknowledge staff contributions to the educational mission of the institution.

The college also supports staff members' professional development by providing a variety of educational benefits. Staff members are eligible for tuition waivers for Oakton courses. There is no limit on waivers for full-time employees, and part-time employees are eligible for tuition waivers as specified in the employee contract. An Educational Reimbursement Fund is available to full-time staff members for credit courses at HLC-accredited colleges or universities. Courses must provide job-related information or skills or contribute to one's professional development. Employees who obtain an advanced degree may also be eligible for a salary increase. Employees may also request money from the Educational Reimbursement Fund for work-related seminars, workshops, and conferences.

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### 3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

1. The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.
2. The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.
3. The institution provides academic advising suited to its programs and the needs of its students.
4. The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites, museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).
5. The institution provides to students guidance in the effective use of research and information resources.

#### Argument

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Through a number of core programs, Oakton Community College provides the infrastructure and resources to support effective teaching and targeted learning support services for a student body with diverse needs.

The Student Affairs division offers a range of important services for new and returning students. The core services offered are: academic advising, assessment and testing services, career services, financial aid, veteran services, and disability support services located at both the Des Plaines and Skokie locations. Even though these services are organized in the Division of Student Affairs, prior to 2013 their physical locations were de-centralized throughout campus, which created an infrastructure in which students would visit multiple campus offices in a single visit. In the 2010 Master Plan, Student Affairs staff and administrators reviewed student feedback and services provided and, as a result, created a one-stop enrollment center on both campuses. The Enrollment Center houses representatives for the services most frequented by students, including admission, registration, academic advising, and financial assistance. This center provides comprehensive information to help students with college processes, planning, and decision-making to aid in their success. In addition, both Des Plaines and Skokie locations house academic resources such as a library, testing center, and a learning center.

The Learning Center houses learning specialists and tutors who work with students to help them understand their learning strengths and challenges, provide personalized academic support, and offer referrals to other campus resources that enable each student to excel at Oakton. The Learning Center has a wide range of study aids available on site for students that include textbooks, study guides and lab materials. Learning specialists meet with students to assist in developing academic behaviors that enable their success. Students can receive one-on-one academic coaching or small group workshops depending on their needs. The Learning Center also offers a student success course, COL108: "The College Experience." This three-credit-hour course has undergone extensive development to best introduce Oakton students to topics such as time management, note taking, and study skills and help them develop the necessary competencies of a successful college student. In addition, the Learning Center provides tutors in science labs which enable students to study laboratory concepts outside of their regularly scheduled lab time. The Testing Center, located within the Learning Center, administers placement tests in English and mathematics. Students may take make-up tests, tests for online courses, CLEP tutoring services, and nursing entrance exams.

The Language Lab serves the language learning and teaching needs of Oakton's Modern Languages Department, students of English as a Second Language, and the general Oakton community. Labs are housed on both the Skokie and Des Plaines campuses and provide a rich array of services, including free modern language tutoring. Resources include modern language magazines and reference materials, ESL audio, print and multimedia materials. In addition, the lab maintains a substantial inventory of specialized modern language software, as well as GED, TOEFL, and ESL pronunciation software.

Oakton is committed to helping student veterans obtain educational benefits through a variety of programs offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Illinois Student Assistance Commission. Based on the recruitment of and support offered to veterans, Oakton was named a "military friendly school" by *G.I. Jobs* magazine. The honor places the college in the top 15 percent of U.S. colleges, universities, and trade schools in recruiting and supporting military and veteran students.



To bolster the college's focus on student success, Oakton joined Achieving the Dream in 2013. Achieving the Dream is a national community college reform network dedicated to helping community colleges improve the academic performance and graduation rates of their students, especially students of color and low-income students. Achieving the Dream teaches colleges, in part, to utilize a longitudinal cohort analysis to determine areas to target with interventions that increase student outcomes. The data analysis conducted during Oakton's first year in Achieving the Dream identified the college's placement policy and procedures as a significant institutional priority for increasing student success. For example, without mandating placement in reading, writing, and math, data indicated that the college lacked placement information for 30 percent of the student population. Data also indicated a significant decrease in success outcomes for students with developmental placements who enrolled in college credit courses without receiving additional support. As a result, a placement subcommittee of the college's Student Success Team was formed and charged with revising policies to ensure that the academic readiness of all students matched the academic skills required of their coursework. The goal was to decrease the number of new students without placement information and increase the number of methods and measures used to place students.

In 2015, a new placement policy was implemented that requires placement information for all incoming students. Starting in fall 2015, all traditional-aged students were required to complete math, reading and writing placement prior to a mandatory on-campus orientation. All new degree-seeking students were required to complete the placement process starting in fall 2016. These initiatives significantly decreased the student population with no placement information. Beginning in spring 2018, all students enrolling in a career and technical education certificate or degree program will be required to complete placement before class registration. Each career and technical education program will be allowed to determine the placement required, based on the college-ready skills that are needed for success in each program.

English placement can be based on a combination of placement tests, prior experience, and ACT/SAT scores. The English Department developed a writing placement exam that aligns with the Common Core Grade 12 competencies. The placement exam and rubric have been shared with the English faculty at district high schools in order to clearly define expectations and align curricula. Reading placement is determined by scores utilizing ACCUPLACER, a computer-adaptive assessment designed to evaluate students' skills in reading, writing, and mathematics. The Math Department has worked with high school math faculty to develop articulation guides which are used to place students. Each high school has a guide that identifies the high school course, grade necessary, and the corresponding placement into Oakton's math course. This articulation guide, in tandem with ACT scores, allows students to be placed properly based on their high school transcript. In addition, the college uses the ALEKS software to place students into their appropriate math course.

In the 2017-2018 academic year, the college will pilot the use of hierarchical multiple measures, including high school grade point average, to place Oakton students in reading, writing, and math. Studies show that prior academic performance, as measured by high school grade point average, is the single best predictor of success in college English and math courses. Based upon a data analysis, the pilot program will use a grade point average cutoff of 2.75 to place students in college-level reading, writing, and math. Evaluation of the pilot program will seek evidence of increased placement accuracy, increased success rates in college level courses, decreased withdrawal rates in college level courses, and improvements in equity gaps.

There are both college-wide and department-specific programs that help prepare students for course work prior to the first day of classes. The Learning Center at Oakton has been proactive in developing workshops to assist students prior to the start of the semester. Starting in fall 2016, the Learning Center sponsored "Return and Learn" sessions that review college-level writing and reading skills. The Nursing program offers the Gateway Program, which features a course that provides students who have lower placement scores a chance to practice skills necessary for success with the nursing curriculum.

At the mandatory traditional-aged student orientation, students are introduced to jOURney, a first-year experience program that familiarizes students with OUR college, OUR community, and OUR experiences. Students receive a planner to support time management and attendance at campus events such as speakers, college transfer fairs, Welcome Week events, and educational support workshops. Peer advising is also available to new students through the Office of Advising, Transitions, and Student Success. New student orientation prepares students for their educational planning and introduce them to the resources available to Oakton students. Online orientation is also utilized for students who first enroll in the summer term.

Learning support for students during the semester can be found at a variety of levels at Oakton from the instructor of a course, an academic department, and college-wide services.

Although academic advising is not required for all students, students can obtain academic advising at Oakton through a number of channels. Prior to registration, Advising, Transitions, and Student Success holds fifteen-minute walk-in sessions that are available at both campuses. Students are also encouraged to make appointments to visit individual advisors, where the advisors can spend 30 to 60 minutes reviewing their career goals and educational plans. Advisors reach out to students through classroom visits, career exploration nights, and marketing both on campus and through social media, email and D2L. As a part of the new-student orientation, advisors meet with traditional-age students and follow up with these students throughout the academic year. Some specialized academic departments, such as health career programs, have advisors that are specifically assigned to their discipline and work with faculty in those departments to reach students. Other departments have a faculty member who works directly with students to advise regarding course enrollment or to ensure a seamless transition to a four-year college.

Over the past two years, the advising staff at Oakton have worked with faculty to increase communication between faculty who teach students and staff who advise students to ensure that the proper messages are communicated to the students. Some departments have created a FAQ sheets for advisors to use when they are guiding students through their coursework decisions.

The college's libraries at the Des Plaines and Skokie campuses are staffed by the assistant dean of Library, four full-time faculty librarians, twelve adjunct/part-time librarians, two full-time staff librarians, and five full-time and five part-time support staff. The library provides research and reference services that support students, faculty, staff, and community with their research and coursework. The library also provides student group study rooms at both campuses and a reading room with current journals, magazines, and newspapers. The library faculty develop and teach instruction sessions such as information literacy and proper citation. Each faculty librarian is assigned to an academic division, which maintains a strong link between academic needs and support provided by library programming. The Reference Desk at each campus is staffed by full-time or part-time library faculty during the library's hours of operation who provide individual reference help through research consultations, walk-ins, and the AskLibrary software (chat, text, email, call, FAQ). In order to provide support to the online student, librarians are embedded into Desire2Learn courses which allow students to be in direct contact with a reference librarian while engaged in their learning management system.

The 2013–2017 strategic plan, “Connecting What Matters,” set a strategic objective to develop an online presence for all course sections. This objective was achieved in 2014. Many faculty in face-to-face course sections extensively use Desire2Learn to post course and college resources, grade books, and assessments. The Information Technology (IT) Department has created modules that faculty members can import into their D2L shell that highlight online learning and college-wide resources. Oakton has both staff and faculty liaisons at both campuses that provide support for D2L and assist faculty in the utilization of the D2L resources to complement their teaching. These faculty and staff lead professional development workshops throughout the semester to train faculty on the different features of D2L. The IT Department has also created an Oakton mobile app which enables students to access information and make mobile payments. Amongst other functions, students are able to access their grades, class schedule, and pay bills online through the mobile app.

Oakton has invested heavily in the development of work spaces and laboratories. The Margaret Burke Lee Science and Health Careers Center, a 93,000-square-foot building, opened in 2015 and houses the college's anatomy, biology, chemistry, earth science, medical laboratory technology, nursing, physical therapist assistant, and physics programs. Spaces within the Lee Center provide an infrastructure that facilitates problem-based learning and group work. The Nursing Department features a simulated hospital floor to train students in a context that recreates the hospital work environment. These rooms are equipped with robotic mannequins that can simulate pathological conditions that require students to diagnose and begin to develop a care plan. A lab manager oversees the operation of the nursing lab and is open additional hours for students.

The science labs are equipped with oval-shaped lab benches that facilitate student interaction with peers during experimentation. The instructional spaces have integrated student gathering spaces that allow for student instruction outside of the classroom. The innovated student research space contains equipment such as high pressure liquid chromatography, thermocyclers, and fluorescent microscopes that provide students with access to equipment for high-level research and experimentation.

Oakton Community College's health career/clinical programs use various clinical practice sites throughout the Chicago area. Clinical practice sites include hospitals, clinics, long-term care facilities, home health care and hospice facilities, cancer registries, physician billing and consulting companies, corporate compliance, professional medical associations, revenue cycle departments, release of information companies, billing and coding operations, fire departments, and emergency management services. Clinical affiliated agreements are secured with each site identifying the practice area that will best meet the needs of the students while in the clinical rotation. Faculty and students have full access to facility resources and personnel while engaged in a clinical rotation.

The department chairperson (program director) or a designee visits each clinical practice site at least once a year to determine if they continue to meet the needs of Oakton students. However, clinical faculty visit the sites weekly, biweekly, or on a semester basis when students are at the sites. In addition, students complete a clinical site evaluation reviewing their experience while at the affiliated clinical site. These data are shared with the clinical practice sites and adjustments are made in clinical affiliated agreements as needed. Some programs, like Health Information Technology, also request that clinical site directors complete an evaluation of the program. These data are used by the program chairperson and faculty to make adjustments when needed. All affiliated clinical practice sites must meet the criteria of the accrediting body or the state (Illinois Department of Public Health). Clinical sites must be filed with the accrediting bodies or IDPH. During accrediting site visits, accrediting bodies have moved away from visiting clinical sites due to time constraints. However, the peer reviewers do meet many of the clinical site supervisors during advisory committee meetings associated with the site visit.

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### 3.E - Core Component 3.E

The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.

1. Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.
2. The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students' educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.

#### Argument

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Oakton's mission statement describes a college that offers an enriched educational environment through opportunities inside and outside of the classroom that "empower and transform our students." Similarly, the vision statement casts a preferred future in which the educational experience is "student-centered," "known for academic rigor and high standards," "relies on innovation and collaboration with community partners," "committed to diversity, cultural competence, and achieving equity in student outcomes," and where "students learn to think critically, solve problems, and to be ethical global citizens who shape the world." The vision describes an enriched educational environment where academic and co-curricular opportunities collectively shape the learning experience.

Oakton's co-curricular programs provide significant contributions to students' educational experiences at the college. Oakton has intentionally expanded from extracurricular activities to a robust program of co-curricular programs, and assessment of student learning in co-curricular programs is included within the activities of Oakton's Program for the Assessment of Student Learning (OPAL). Experiences such as Service Learning and the Emerging Leaders program contribute to leadership development and community and global engagement that are embedded within Oakton's mission, vision, and values statements.

In November 2016, seven students and six faculty members traveled to a camp on the Cannonball River in the Oceti-Sakowin Reservation, one of three camps where the Sioux Nation was engaged with the state of North Dakota, the Army Corps of Engineers, and Energy Transfer Partners Company in a protest over the routing of an oil pipeline that cut through the reservation at an ecologically and culturally sensitive point. The goal of the trip was to help students analyze the problem, put theory into practice to solve it, become active citizens engaged with the world, and work to serve others in a co-curricular activity. The idea for the expedition to North Dakota came from students in a Core Honors Seminar that studies social problems. Students chose the pipeline protests and formed into groups to study the problem from various perspectives, including society's need for energy, pipeline engineering, ecology and the history of pipeline failures, Native American history, and the history of nonviolent protests in the United States. Upon return to campus, students presented their findings during Oakton's celebration of International Education Week.

In June 2016, Students for Social Justice, an Oakton student group, pursued a campaign to ban single-use plastic water bottles at the college. The effort began during a Core Honors Seminar, during which students researched the ecological impact of plastics, the human rights issues surrounding water usage on a global scale, the implications of corporate profits for a public resource, and recycling and landfills. After the seminar ended, Students for Social Justice continued the campaign to "ban the bottle." The group estimated that, at Oakton's Des Plaines campus alone, students and staff discarded between one-thousand to two-thousand pounds of plastic water bottles per year. The group recommended banning single-use plastic water bottles at the college and received a grant from the Oakton Educational Foundation to supply convenient alternatives to bottled water, distribute multi-use stainless steel water bottles, and begin to raise additional funds to install more water bottle refill stations at the college. The group also presented a petition with 1,150 signatures and letters of support to the President's Council, along with their findings and case for banning plastic water bottles at Oakton. Due to their efforts and with the support of the President's Council, beginning in November 2016, Oakton officially ended sales of bottled water in the college's cafeterias, vending machines, and at catered events.

The claims that Oakton makes about contributions to its students' educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission are presented in greater detail in Criterion 1. These are only a few examples of how the college fulfills its claims to an enriched educational environment by providing transformative learning experiences within the college's co-curricular

programs. These examples illustrate how Oakton students are able to passionately enhance their classroom learning through self-directed service learning and service action. These types of transformative experiences, rooted within Oakton's mission, illustrate how an Oakton education ties the classroom to the real world and offers a laboratory to innovate and impact the world.

Oakton values being an active partner in the college's district and roots this activity within a mission as the "community's college." Oakton administrators serve on numerous boards and community groups. For example, the Cradle to Career initiative within the City of Evanston leverages collective impact through partnerships among service organizations to ensure that all young adults in Evanston achieve productive, satisfying lives. Oakton is a member of this consortium, focused on aligning comprehensive P-20 programming with a special focus on opportunity gaps for students of color.

Service learning is becoming increasingly integrated within Oakton classes. Students in some classes may participate in service learning that is an extension of the classroom. Minimally, students spend six to eight hours in social environments that promote course requirements. The Service Learning program at Oakton is working to expand the number of sites that can be used as a resource for Oakton students. Moreover, the current plan is to extend a Service Learning designation to courses offering this experience.

As referenced in Core Component 3.A, Oakton's career and technical education programs contribute to an educational experience that supports economic development through advisory committees that provide direction for instruction, and workforce development based on the evolving needs of local industry and the communities served. The college's 22 career program advisory committees represent over 200 community and college members partnering together to align curricula to meet industry needs and create opportunities for students.

Additionally, Oakton's mission as the "community's college" justifies an emphasis on the college's contribution to the economic development of the district. In 2015, the Illinois Community College Board conducted an economic impact study for all public, two-year colleges in Illinois. In part, the study determined that Oakton Community College students who attended school in 2002 paid an estimated \$268 million in state taxes and federal taxes between 2003 and 2012. Additionally, as a major employer and business entity, Oakton generates \$46 million in local sales and wages annually and over 800 jobs. Oakton Community College fulfills its contributions to an enriched educational experience by contributing to the educational, cultural, recreational, civic, and economic vitality of its district.

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C3 Students for Social Justice



### 3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

#### Summary

As specified in the mission statement, Oakton Community College provides students with a high quality education through its transfer programs, career and technical education programs, student service, and co-curricular opportunities. Quality processes are in place to ensure that courses and programs are current and require appropriate levels of student performance, learning goals are articulated and differentiated, and program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations. At the core of Oakton's educational programs is a commitment to intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills. Faculty and staff are committed to student learning by providing the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning, including targeted student support services, learning support, academic advising, and guidance on the effective use of research information resources.

Oakton will continue to advance its work within this criterion by accessing new data tools and conducting new data analyses to support a more rigorous program review process; seeking technology tools that provide real-time data to support programmatic improvements and decision-making; continuing to set goals and actively pursue improved student success outcomes through interventions that will "move the needle"; and providing support and resources that expand Service Learning opportunities for students and allow students to experience a transformative and empowering Oakton education.

#### Sources

There are no sources.



## 4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

### 4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).

### Argument

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Oakton requires all instructional, academic support, and student service programs to complete program reviews on a five-year cycle. The program review process meets the requirements of the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB). These reviews ensure programs continue meeting Oakton's high quality educational standards and serve the college's overall strategic goals and mission.

The Program Review manual details Oakton's process for completing these reviews, and the college annually prepares a summary report for the ICCB. The manual, published yearly, lists the programs and departments under review during that academic year, provides a timeline for completion, and identifies the persons responsible. The principles of program review require that departments and programs involve a broad range of faculty and staff, as well as incorporate input from students and participants in the program. Further, institutional research provides data support for all programs and departments, including student surveys, focus groups, and data reports. The program and department chairs work closely with their respective vice presidents and arrange at least one visit to a peer college to learn about and discuss best practices. The program review manual provides a checklist to help departments fulfill their tasks and requires the following areas to be explicitly addressed: the need for and objectives of the program; the quality of the program as well as the processes in place to assess and improve quality; assessment of student learning, and plans to increase student completion of courses and/or certificates. As part of this procedure, programs and departments develop a report and five-year plan that responds to the data and analysis.

A critical component of program review is the action plan based on evaluation. As a result of program review, Oakton's Engineering Department redesigned a "maker space" for the course, ENG120: Engineering Graphics, in order to align curricula and student learning outcomes with University of Illinois at Chicago, a top transfer institution. Program review is also aligned with institutional processes. During the Humanities and Philosophy Department program review, data identified two courses, World Mythologies and World Religions, as core gateway classes by which students entered the humanities. These courses did not have a dedicated full-time faculty member coordinating content or assessment. Understanding the significance of entry-level gateway course success for completion, the department submitted an

application to the hiring committee requesting a full-time faculty member who would oversee the curricula. Based on the data and analysis, the department was granted an additional faculty member who will start in fall 2017.

Oakton's policies regarding credit for prior learning recently underwent detailed review by the Prior Learning Assessment Team (PLA Team) formed in response to "Connecting What Matters," Oakton's 2013-2017 strategic plan. The PLA Team affirmed that the final decision for the awarding of credit rests with faculty except in those areas where acceptance is mandated by state law. Credit is awarded for evidence of learning and not merely on the basis of past activities or experience. Students cannot apply credits for prior learning for more than one-half of the credits required to complete the degree or certificate being sought. Prior Learning Assessment is housed in Academic Affairs under the purview of the assistant vice president of Academic Affairs, but requires close coordination with Student Affairs. The review and acceptance of these policies were determined with input by the then-named Academic Council, the Faculty Senate, and the Council of Chairs and Coordinators. All avenues and policies related to awarding credit for prior learning can be found in the college catalog and include: accepting Advanced Placement (AP) exams, College Level Examination Program (CLEP) credit, and department competency exams. In 2015, the state of Illinois passed HB 3428, which requires all Illinois institutions to accept college credit for all AP exams with a score of three or above. In response to this legislation, Oakton chairs and deans reviewed AP exam learning objectives and assigned credit accordingly. In addition to exams, the college may accept credit for prior learning by other experiences affirmed by the faculty and deans. These include:

- successful completion of a higher level course in a sequence which demonstrates that the student has acquired the knowledge, skill and behavior commensurate with successful completion of a lower-level course; and
- learning from non-credit courses, continuing education, professional training, licensing or similar learning alternatives which demonstrate the student has acquired the knowledge, skill and behavior commensurate with successful completion of an Oakton course or courses.

Oakton accepts transfer credit from other accredited or approved institutions. If courses do not fall under an articulation agreement, the Enrollment Center evaluates transcripts on a case-by-case basis, awarding credit, but not grades. Transferred courses do not count automatically as prerequisites for Oakton courses. Some departments, such as Mathematics, English, Health Careers, and Modern Languages, evaluate transcripts for placement within their own courses. Oakton also accepts transfer of international courses; however, these receive evaluation by an independent agency, the Educational Credential Evaluators.

As discussed in core components 3.A and 3.B, the college maintains and exercises authority for the quality of its teaching and learning in multiple ways.

**Course Prerequisites, Rigor of Courses, and Expectations for Student Learning:** Oakton's Curriculum Committee, a Faculty Senate committee, oversees and approves the prerequisites for all courses. Prerequisites are clearly identified in the course descriptions in the catalog as well as in the generic syllabi. Further, the Curriculum Committee evaluates changes to existing courses and/or programs, new courses, and programs making specific provision for their currency and appropriate levels of competencies.

The expectations for student learning, as detailed in the course and program learning objectives, meet Oakton's high standards for teaching and learning. The college's assessment committee, OPAL, in cooperation with the Curriculum Committee, oversees institutional efforts in the development and assessment of student learning outcomes. This committee, whose work is administered by the assistant vice president for Academic Affairs, is composed of an additional Academic Affairs administrator, the executive director of Research and Planning, three faculty members and one staff member (See Criteria 3 and 4 for an additional discussion).

**Access to Learning Resources:** Oakton has robust resources and institutional structures providing access to learning resources as outlined in Criteria 3 and 4. The departments that provide these services are located in both the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions. The alignment of processes that connect student need and student support is critical. The newly hired vice president of Academic Affairs and vice president of Student Affairs acknowledge this relationship, and as a result formed the Council of Deans. The Council of Deans is composed of the Academic Affairs deans, the director of Workforce Development, and the dean of Student Success, who oversees a number of support departments in Student Affairs. Oakton's Learning Center provides tutoring as well as college success courses. The

quality of and access to the Learning Center is under the purview of the dean of Student Success and the vice president for Student Affairs. Science labs, which are also utilized as tutoring spaces, are managed by laboratory managers who are evaluated by Science Department chairs. Also under the dean of Student Success, Advising, Transitions, and Student Success and Career Services provide support and guidance to students in their academic pathway. The library, which provides resources and instruction on information literacy, is in Academic Affairs and managed by the assistant dean of Library. The Language Lab, part of the Division of Liberal Arts, serves the language learning and teaching needs of Oakton's Modern Languages Department, students of English as a Second Language, and the general Oakton community.

**Faculty Qualifications:** Oakton has program-specific minimum faculty qualifications for all faculty. These qualifications are outlined in the titles and qualifications document located in the Council of Deans guidelines. Qualifications are established in consultation with the department chair/coordinator and the respective dean and affirmed by the vice president for Academic Affairs. All faculty must these minimum qualifications regardless of position of full-time, adjunct, or dual credit. Human resources utilizes the titles and qualifications document to communicate degree and experience standards on the common template for all job postings. Faculty and deans involved with full-time faculty searches will review and confirm appropriate credentials. Chairs and coordinators who oversee adjunct and dual-credit faculty appointments review application materials to affirm appropriate credentials of prospective candidates.

As outlined in Core Component 3.A.3, faculty and the deans are heavily involved in the establishment and ongoing review of dual credit courses. The assistant vice president for Academic Affairs oversees dual credit and establishes guiding principles to ensure course equivalencies in dual credit courses. The principles were established by adopting recommendations from the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) and requirements from the Higher Learning Commission. This document outlines requirements and processes for faculty credentials and hiring, faculty professional development, grading, and assessment. Each faculty member is given a dual-credit faculty handbook that outlines the principles and identifies important procedures and resources available to the faculty.

The following Oakton programs are accredited by specialized accrediting agencies:

### **Health**

The Basic Nurse Assistant Training course is approved by the Illinois Department of Public Health. The health information technology degree program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management (CAHIIM), in cooperation with the American Health Information Management Association's (AHIMA) Council on Accreditation. The medical laboratory technology degree program is accredited by the National Accrediting Agency for the Clinical Laboratory Sciences (NAACLS). The nursing degree program is accredited by the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC) and is approved by the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation Board of Nursing. The physical therapist assistant degree program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE).

### **Education and Services**

The Substance Abuse Counseling Program is accredited by the Illinois Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Professional Certification Association (IAODAPCA). This program meets the IAODAPCA requirements to sit for the examination for Provisional Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Counselor (Option A) certification eligibility. The Early Childhood Education Center at the Ray Hartstein Campus is accredited by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs.

Despite the challenges associated with tracking students once they leave the college, Oakton engages in efforts to evaluate the success of its graduates, and to assure students and community members that its degree and certificate programs will prepare students to meet their advanced study or employment goals. Oakton's Office of Research and Planning collects data to facilitate these objectives.

Regarding graduates pursuing advanced study, Oakton looks to indicators of transfer rates and academic performance at transfer institutions. Oakton participates in the National Community College Benchmarking Project (NCCBP), which recently showed that Oakton's three-year and six-year transfer rates were substantially higher than community colleges nationwide. Oakton's alumni survey also asks graduates about their current educational status and how prepared they felt for future study. Additionally, some individual departments track the success of their graduates. For instance, the women and gender studies program maintains regular communication with its graduates and monitors their success after Oakton.

For graduates seeking employment, the Office of Research and Planning looks at a number of indicators that track the success of Oakton's career and technical education program students. The alumni survey asks a number of questions about employment, salary, relationship of employment to area of study, and the extent to which the student felt their education prepared them for a job in their field. Licensure pass rates are also provided online.

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C4 Women's and Gender Studies Program Review—Highlighted

## 4.B - Core Component 4.B

The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

### Argument

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Oakton's goals for student learning at the course, program, concentration, and institutional level are established by faculty with support from academic administrators.

Oakton's general education learning outcomes (GEOs) were formally adopted in April 2009. The GEOs, more fully discussed in Criterion 3, are posted in the catalog, the Student Handbook, the college's website, and are displayed around the college's campuses and introduced to all faculty during new faculty orientation. These GEOs identify the competencies that all students at Oakton are expected to acquire and guide all curricular and co-curricular programs.

Oakton's assessment work is an integral part of the student success initiatives on campus and embedded in procedures throughout the college. The college's 2013-2017 strategic plan, "Connecting What Matters," articulates the role assessment plays in improving teaching and learning. In the 2018-2022 strategic plan, "Success Matters," the college has committed to dynamic, collaborative processes to update course content in consideration of student needs and societal trends.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) departments identify program-level objectives in addition to course-level objectives. CTE program-level objectives are developed in consultation with advisory committees and are an ICCB requirement for program approval. The CTE course-level objectives introduce and reinforce learning outcomes that will develop skills at the program level. The course-level objectives are found on all course syllabi, and the program-level objectives are located on the departmental web pages. Courses in the baccalaureate/transfer track align course-learning objectives with the course goals related to content and intellectual development. These objectives are also written in the framework of the Illinois Articulation Agreement (IAI) and course alignment with baccalaureate institutions to ensure transfer. The IAI framework is discussed more fully in Criterion 3. Oakton also offers interdisciplinary general education curricula that are packaged into special areas of study. These special areas of study enable students to select a set of general education courses that develop a deeper understanding in particular fields. Faculty and coordinators have created learning objectives that are listed on each special area of study's web page.

Working with OPAL, the Student Affairs division has developed co-curricular outcomes related to student learning after experiencing their respective programs. These co-curricular outcomes are communicated to students participating in various activities, such as new-student orientation, the ADRC Freshman Seminar Program, and during individual and group advising. The assessment of these outcomes is discussed more fully in Criterion 3.

In response to the Higher Learning Commission's site visit of 2007, Oakton joined HLC's Assessment Academy. At that time, faculty struggled with assessment work, did not want to serve on a college-wide assessment team, and often submitted assessment plans that were routine and did not include analysis of results or ways to improve the teaching/learning process. The college's experience at the academy (officially graduated in 2012) provided the knowledge and resources necessary to develop clear institutional structures promoting a culture of assessment that strengthens student learning systematically throughout the college.

As a result of the academy, Oakton's Program for the Assessment of Learning (OPAL) was created. The OPAL committee is composed of a steering committee that oversees institutional assessment activities and four subcommittees,



General Education, Career and Technical Education, Transfer, and the newly formed Co-Curricular Committee. The steering committee is chaired by the assistant vice president for Academic Affairs and a faculty member. Other members of the steering committee include the faculty chairs of the four subcommittees, the executive director of Research and Planning, and the vice president for Academic Affairs (ex officio). In addition, as discussed in 3B, in order to align curricular development and assessment activities, the co-chairs of the college's Curriculum Committee also serve on the OPAL committee. The twenty-four-member OPAL committee structure representing full-time faculty, part-time faculty, staff, and administrators has vastly improved communication and college engagement in assessment.

As outlined in Criterion 3, due to the lack of defined cohorts based on enrollment patterns, assessing general education outcomes can be challenging at a community college. The OPAL General Education Committee has taken a multi-pronged approach of administering authentic tasks in specific courses, implementing departmental longitudinal assessment plans, and collecting in-class assessments to analyze and improve teaching and learning at the institutional level. Each year, Oakton assesses a component of all four general education outcomes, which include communication, responsibility, literacy, and critical thinking. Because general education remains the responsibility of Oakton faculty and staff, it is critical that instruction of the general education outcomes occurs throughout the curriculum. As mentioned above, faculty in different disciplines may focus on content and less on the general education outcome for a particular assessment that aligns with general education. To help support instruction throughout, rubrics that define expectations and tutorials as resource materials have been developed for faculty and students.

Another example that illustrates the utility of these materials can be found in the technical literacy assessment. While students may be comfortable using technology, they may not be proficient in using productivity software. Since most courses require word processing, the OPAL General Education Team sent a survey to chairs and coordinators inquiring on essential skills in word processing, and an assessment in GMetrix was created. GMetrix is software that develops a standardized test in which students need to perform a variety of actions in Microsoft Word. The assessment developed by faculty in the Computer Applications for Business Department was administered in English classes, and assessed the execution of functions such as inserting tables, applying bullets, saving files in different formats, searching, and using spell check. The average pass rate on the first assessment prior to the development of resources was 30 percent. Upon review of these results, the General Education Team worked with faculty and created five-minute video tutorials on these and other functions in Word. In subsequent assessment cycles assessing different students in the same discipline, the tutorial was given to students prior to the assessment. This resulted in an average 30 percent increase in the pass rate in all categories. Given these results, the OPAL General Education Team has worked with specific departments to develop rubrics for the following general education outcomes: non-verbal communication, written communication, criteria for critical thinking, cultural aesthetic understanding, and group communication.

Another challenge of assessing general education is the recruitment of faculty volunteers to use class time to administer a general education task. Each year, every department submits an assessment plan at the course and/or departmental level. In order to capture course and/or departmental assessment activities that align with the general education outcomes, the OPAL assessment plan form was modified in order to obtain this information. This allows the General Education Team access to more data as it relates to the assessment of general education outcomes and validates general education assessment across the curricula. The Biology Department, for example, aligned their assessment plan with a general education outcome, critical thinking. Faculty worked collaboratively to create a rubric to assess critical thinking in the sciences. Once the faculty identified a common content topic across five biology courses, faculty created assessment questions that addressed both the content topic and critical thinking skills. Assessment questions would be embedded in relevant course exams. The five courses chosen for assessment included general education and program biology courses, and represented the typical progression through the biology curriculum to prepare for a degree program. A student completing coursework for their respective program would progress through at least three of these courses. As a result, the degree of difficulty in critical thinking increased with sequential courses, and students were tracked on their critical thinking scores as they progressed through the courses. This technique gathered data on 1,200 students over the course of four semesters. As a result of this assessment, the biology faculty identified a lack of consistent standards amongst faculty. The department now has improved teaching by requiring all faculty to administer essay questions on exams at the appropriate level.

The CTE programs also provide an opportunity to develop general education outcomes. In 2017, nineteen CTE departments assessed general education outcomes.



Oakton has evolved from completing assessment for mere compliance to using it to validate and improve student learning. The work of OPAL and assessment is now embedded in processes and professional development at the college. In the early assessment work, many department chairs and faculty were not confident writing plans or did not understand the utility of the work. In order to provide the necessary support, OPAL team members serve as resources to faculty and staff in the development and review of assessment plans, maintaining regular consultation hours to meet with department chairs or other responsible faculty and providing methods and rubrics. All assessment plans have associated directions and rubrics that aid in plan development. This faculty-to-faculty interaction has been critical to the acceptance of the work. Assessment is now a requirement for all new faculty, a part of faculty interviews, and integrated into faculty performance reviews and program review. The maturity of the work is evident not only in the analysis and action, but by the engagement in all departments. In 2012, 50 percent of CTE departments submitted an assessment plan, while in 2016, 90 percent completed an assessment plan. In 2016, 100 percent of the departments associated with the transfer curricula submitted an assessment plan.

This assessment system and associated forms developed by the OPAL team created the process of continuous improvement. All plans are due October 31 and have two parts. Part I of the Course and Program Assessment forms requires departments to close the loop on the previous year's plan by reporting the results with the subsequent analysis, followed by the action plan. Part II requires departments to identify the assessment plan for the next year. Depending on the results, departments may choose to reassess or choose a new learning objective.

Program-level assessments tend to use both direct and indirect assessment measures. Typical direct measures include: capstone experiences, clinical evaluation, licensure/certification exam results, research projects, presentations, performances, papers/projects, portfolios, local tests, and pre-tests/post-tests. Indirect measures include: student opinion surveys, alumni surveys, and student reflections on their values, attitudes and beliefs.

The Physical Therapist Assistant program aligned course content throughout multiple courses to emphasize co-morbidities, a topic represented in a significant subsection of the National Physical Therapy Exam, the national licensing exam. The department assessed this objective in all program courses. Subsequently, Oakton students had a 95 percent pass rate and a subsection score higher than the national average on the NPTE exam. This example highlights the program alignment with ongoing assessment at the course level with program-level outcomes.

Course-level assessment follows a similar process. The alignment with the Office of Research and Planning and assessment has aided departments in the selection of courses to assess. The new department enrollment report provides departments with course success rates, and many departments use this information to select a course. Math 060, Pre-algebra, is a modular math course taught in the emporium style. This course has a low success rate, and the Math Department identified module three as a stopping point for many students. As a result, the math faculty redesigned module three and allowed students more time to master the concepts. This resulted in a higher percentage of students passing the module three post-test.

Co-curricular assessment also follows an annual cycle similar to transfer and CTE. Established in 2013, the co-curricular team's initial work built a foundation for assessment in its areas and determined the capacity for this work. The initial work of the team included: assisting program directors and staff with the development of co-curricular program outcomes, offering professional development opportunities, and researching methods tracking students using these programs. In 2015, the co-curricular team proposed that its programs report results and new assessment plans also by October 31. The team used the CTE Program Assessment Template as a model in developing the Student Affairs Program Assessment Template. The team also finalized the forms and started utilizing them in 2016-2017 as part of a clearly prescribed professional development program. In 2014-2015 and 2015-2016, assessment processes, tools, and results were documented on posters displayed during Staff Week each spring. As co-curricular assessment forms a natural extension of its staff's and administrators' work, it will progress from merely conducting assessment and collecting data to using them in improving student learning experiences.

Oakton's commitment to student learning and success through assessment has led to the development of best assessment practices. When OPAL formed, one administrative goal included ensuring each member was well-versed in assessment and prepared as an advocate for student learning. OPAL encourages each team member to attend annually at least one local, state, or national assessment conference. Team members have presented at local and national conferences, including HLC's Annual Conference, IUPUI's Assessment Institute, NASPA/Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education,

and Valencia Community College's Conference on Learning Assessment. Oakton belongs to The Assessment Group (TAG) of Illinois Community Colleges, whose members try to meet once a semester, sharing best assessment practices, discussing, and planning for the Illinois Community College Assessment Fair.

The work of the OPAL team has been critical in the advancement of assessment and continuous improvement in teaching and learning. As evidence of this evolution, each spring, the OPAL steering committee issues a call for recruits; during the past three requests, the number of team applicants has exceeded available positions. OPAL's extensive, collaborative, and transparent work and its strong administrative leadership have developed an appreciation for assessment at Oakton, such that many faculty members now recognize and value OPAL's work and engagement in it.

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## 4.C - Core Component 4.C

The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations, and educational offerings.
2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs.
3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

### Argument

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Oakton's ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates demonstrates its commitment to educational improvement in its degree and certificate programs.

In 2010, the Student Success Team was formed at Oakton to develop a student success plan and build a culture focused upon student success. This commitment to student success was largely prompted by the national focus on student engagement, persistence, and retention. Prior to joining Achieving the Dream (ATD), the Student Success Team sought to follow a number of ATD approaches, including the formation of a cross-institutional team, the usage of data to make informed decisions about how to enhance student success, and replicating effective student success interventions from other colleges. In the student success plan, the Student Success Team also adopted a number of data indicators comparable to those outlined by Achieving the Dream including:

- successful course completion
- successful progress through course sequences
- term-to-term persistence
- completion of a credential
- successful transfer to a four-year college or university

Though the early Student Success Team laid the foundation for an institutional student success focus, it struggled to cultivate broad-based engagement around student success, to bring student success interventions to scale, and to impact the success of a significant number of Oakton students. As a result, the college's senior leadership team sought a new model that would align with the Student Success strategic goals of course success and completion outlined in the 2013-2017 strategic plan, "Connecting What Matters." The determination was made that participation in ATD would provide external expertise and prompt the college to make courageous, transformative decisions. Additionally, the senior leadership team surmised that participation in a national movement might catalyze change at Oakton if faculty and staff were aware of student success interventions across the nation.

Alignment with Achieving the Dream is evident in Oakton's new strategic plan as highlighted in the first commitment of improving key milestones in student success, such as course success, retention, persistence and completion, with a special focus on any opportunity gaps. Many of the institutional commitments are in direct alignment with the Achieving the Dream's seven capacities to create a student-centered culture. These capacities include:

- teaching and learning;
- engagement and communication;
- strategy and planning;
- policies and practices;
- leadership and vision;
- data and technology; and
- equity.

The Student Success Team adopted the Achieving the Dream approach, which provides the tools, support, and knowledge base to develop and execute a comprehensive student success strategy built on a culture of evidence. 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. To accomplish this, there are four phases within the approach, including: (1) commit to the initiative, (2) use data to prioritize actions, (3) engage stakeholders, and (4) implement, evaluate, and improve. These four phases are repeated to establish a culture of learning and continuous quality improvement.

In 2013, the Student Success Team reviewed longitudinal cohort data on the five student success metrics, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, sex, and socioeconomic status. Based upon the data, three institutional priorities were identified. These priorities included: placement, developmental education success rates, and persistence, all areas critical for student completion. The Student Success Team reviews updated longitudinal cohort data each year, and the Office of Research and Planning sponsors a college-wide data summit.

As discussed in Core Component 3.D, data indicated that the college did not have placement information on 30 percent of its student population. As a result, a placement committee formed and established goals to decrease the number of new students without placement information and increase the number of methods and measures that can be used to place students. In 2015, a new mandatory placement policy was phased in, resulting in a decrease in the student population with no placement information.

The charge of the developmental subcommittee was to provide recommendations to ensure that the academic readiness of all students matches the academic skills required of their coursework. 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 pace based on mastery of content, with significant one-on-one learning from classroom instructors and tutors. As a result of this redesign, Oakton's developmental math success rates were in the 74th percentile nationally. In English, English 094 is a developmental reading course with an objective to prepare students for the literary demands of college. Previously, this course was not mandatory. However, data revealed students who placed into and enrolled in EGL 094 had persistence rates that were twice the rates of the general college population. As a result, Oakton instituted a mandatory co-enrollment for students placing into English 094.

As stated previously, Oakton has a high transfer rate. In addition, in 2015, Oakton's course retention rate was 95 percent, which was in the 94th percentile nationally. However, the college's fall-to-fall persistence rate of 45 percent is lower than Oakton's peers and ranks in the 35th percentile nationally. Oakton's new president, 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 an institutional goal to increase persistence from 45 percent to 54 percent, which would align Oakton's persistence rate with that of its peer institutions.

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 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.

Another project supporting connection with the students is the Faculty Initiative for Student Persistence. This initiative provides a framework of specific classroom activities that foster connections between faculty members 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 Oakton course sections. The 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 that participated in the initiative had a 17 percent higher fall-to-spring persistence rate. The impact on students of color was especially noteworthy.

### Fall to Spring Persistence Rates

	Participated in Project	Did Not Participate in Project
Asian	80%	66%
Black	68%	55%
Latino	79%	64%
White	79%	62%
Other	81%	61%
Total	79%	62%

While all activities are beneficial, the one-on-one meeting has been described as creating a transformational classroom experience. Faculty have indicated this initiative increased their engagement with students as individuals, having a positive impact on the classroom environment, while students indicate the power in having a connection with their faculty member.

As faculty were asked to engage more directly in student success initiatives impacting their students and classroom learning environments, more professional development opportunities for faculty on persistence, retention, and/or completion were offered and integrated into existing seminars. In fall 2016, student success formed an explicit component of the full-time New Faculty Seminar and the Teaching Credential seminar offered annually. These opportunities concentrate on classroom persistence and retention as they relate to engagement and learning. Student Success Team members and other faculty success experts share updates and data, providing training during joint division meetings and Professional Development Orientation weeks prior to the start of fall and spring semesters. Recent workshop sessions during orientation week included: “The Next Steps in Implementing the Faculty Persistence Project: Changing the Culture at OCC,” “Exploring Modes of Student Success,” and “Promoting Student Success While Maintaining Responsible Academics: Where are the boundaries?”

Oakton’s focus on student success and engagement with students has been driven by President Smith’s targeted focus on student outcomes through the All for One/One for All initiatives. After data revealed that Oakton lost 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.

As evident in the above examples, the Office of Research is critical and has been instrumental in moving the college forward. Oakton collects and analyzes a wide variety of data on student retention, persistence, and completion. All data are disaggregated by race/ethnicity, sex, and socioeconomic status, which ensures that our initiative development is in line with our mission, vision, values, and strategic plans. The Office of Research gathers, analyzes, and disseminates this and other information to enhance learning, teaching, and institutional effectiveness. Data using the student success



metrics are used for program review, program evaluation, and institutional reports. All of these reports align metrics related to retention, persistence, and completion. Engagement with community partners is also critical to leverage collective impact. Oakton has signed data-sharing agreements with three of its largest high school districts, and the Office of Research has adjusted the data reports sent to all of the high schools, reflecting the institutional focus on student success with an equity focus.

Oakton's use of data-driven decision-making has progressed significantly. Participation in ATD proved instrumental in helping move the institution forward. The college collects, analyzes, disseminates, and uses long-term, cohort-driven data on persistence and completion in ways adhering to best practices. The Student Success Team successfully has implemented policy initiatives designed to increase student success, a major part of Oakton's educational ethos.

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## 4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

### Summary

Oakton demonstrates its commitment to student learning by evaluating continuously the effectiveness of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services. Oakton maintains a robust transcription process in which all credits granted are evaluated for quality, ensuring that they meet Oakton's high standards of rigor as well as necessary outside standards. The college also continues to follow a program review process that includes both a summary of where each program stands currently as well as plans that look toward the future. Through resource allocation, Academic Affairs oversight, and faculty and staff governance, Oakton maintains a commitment to student outcomes assessment. The college also continues to improve student learning and teaching through high-quality assessment processes and expansive faculty and staff participation. Finally, Oakton continues to sustain the momentum of efforts to improve student learning and success, as in the commitment to data-driven decision-making.

Going forward, Oakton will reflect upon and improve its existing educational programs, learning environments, and support services. The college will continue to improve the program review process, and also will expand communication about and assessment of both general education outcomes, co-curricular programs, and student success initiatives. Oakton will manage student success initiatives in order to bring them to fruition in an effective and timely fashion, as well as adopt a software program to manage assessment plans and data.

### Sources

There are no sources.

## 5 - Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

### 5.A - Core Component 5.A

The institution's resource base supports its current educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

1. The institution has the fiscal and human resources and physical and technological infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The institution's resource allocation process ensures that its educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas or disbursement of revenue to a superordinate entity.
3. The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities.
4. The institution's staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.
5. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring expense.

### Argument

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Careful stewardship by the board of trustees and the Oakton community has provided the college with a strong resource base that allows for continued commitment to its mission and values. Oakton maintains adequate fiscal and human resources and appropriate physical and technological infrastructure to support its operations.

#### Fiscal Resources

Oakton's fiscal resources are under the supervision of the vice president for Administrative Affairs and the controller. Oakton's revenue comes from three primary sources: local property taxes (62 percent), student tuition and fees (34 percent), and state government (3 percent). Oakton's operating budget for FY2018 is \$73.5 million on projected total revenues of \$77.8 million.

Over the last ten years, Oakton's local taxes as a percentage of funding have increased from 43 percent of total funding (\$34.3 million) in FY2007 to 53 percent of total funding (\$50.7 million) in FY2016. State revenue declined noticeably during the same time period, from 12 percent of total funding in FY2007 to 7.5 percent of total funding in FY2015, and then to 2.5 percent of total funding in FY2016. Oakton received partial funding from the state in FY2016 because of the Illinois state budget impasse during that fiscal year. Oakton expects to receive state revenue for FY2017 similar to the amount received in FY2015. Tuition and fee revenue has remained fairly consistent at about 23 percent of total funding from FY2007 to FY2016. Though tuition/fees as a percentage of total funding has remained similar in FY2016 compared to FY2007, tuition rates have increased from FY2007 to FY2017. In-district tuition rose from \$75 per credit hour in FY2007 to \$136.25 in FY2017. The current tuition rate is in line with the market. Overall, the college is more reliant on taxpayers and students to fund its operations today than it was ten years ago.

Local taxes have remained relatively stable for the past ten years, in part due to a property tax extension limitation law (PTELL) in effect in Cook County since 1994, which limits the amount of increase a taxing district can impose to the rate of inflation. With one of the highest EAV rates in the state, Oakton is able to maintain one of the lowest property tax rates among all community colleges in the state of Illinois, and has not sought a tax increase referendum in the past ten years. Only City Colleges of Chicago has a lower rate than Oakton. Recent efforts on the part of the State of Illinois to freeze property taxes potentially could have an effect on this income source, and the Oakton board is monitoring the legislative movement in this area.

Like most community colleges in Illinois, Oakton has seen a steady decline in enrollment during the past several years,

from the high rates seen during the recession. The Illinois Community Colleges Opening Enrollments Report for fall 2016 shows that Oakton's enrollment has fallen from 11,402 in fall 2012, to 9,443 in fall 2016, a drop of 4.3 percent in the last year, and a 17.2 percent drop from 2012.

In fall 2016, Oakton's tuition and fee rate was slightly lower than the statewide average. Achieving affordable tuition is a value of Oakton's leadership bodies and is aligned with our mission to provide access to a quality education. In response to the decline in enrollment and state funding during the past five years, and the absence of a state budget in FY2016, Oakton's Board of Trustees reluctantly authorized a \$12-per-credit-hour increase for academic year 2016-17, and a \$13-per-credit-hour increase for 2017-18. This brings Oakton's per-credit-hour tuition and fees in FY2018 to \$141.25 for residents of District 535, which places Oakton close to the peer average of \$137 per credit hour.

Recent challenges within the State of Illinois have strained the college's financial planning, particularly in the past year when the State did not pass a budget. Yet Oakton retains its AAA rating from Moody's, one of only four of the state's 27 community colleges rated by Moody's to achieve that level. For the past several years, anticipating reduced state funding, the college budgeted for less (25-50 percent lower) than expected state revenue. This prudent fiscal management has enabled the college to preserve programmatic integrity, maintain staffing levels, and continue to improve its facilities.

Oakton has implemented economy measures and contingency planning to address the declining state budget. Employee vacancies are analyzed to determine whether the position can be restructured and duties assigned elsewhere; only essential positions are replaced. Professional travel has been examined and is approved on a case-by-case basis. All departments have reduced their budgets for FY2018, and other economies are anticipated.

Oakton has been fortunate to have the financial support of the Oakton Educational Foundation, whose resources provide direct scholarships to students and fund numerous requests from faculty and staff for investments in special projects and activities. In FY17, Illinois withdrew state funding for the Monetary Award Program (MAP), the scholarship funds for students with demonstrated financial need. Oakton's foundation authorized the payments of all student MAP awards for the fall semester, totaling \$225,000. The foundation extended this support for MAP grants again in FY18. The foundation's support of MAP grants is an example of how college leadership has monitored external issues, such as the State of Illinois budget crisis, and leveraged resources in ways that are responsive to our fiscal operations and student-centered mission.

### **Human Resources**

Oakton is organized with a president, four vice presidents, and twenty-nine administrators responsible for operations of Oakton's two physical campuses, online programming, and offerings at twenty-eight satellite sites throughout the district. Current staffing includes over 720 full- and part-time employees and is adequate to ensure that programs can be maintained to best serve Oakton students. Human Resources oversees hiring and evaluation of employees.

The Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) works closely with the executive leadership team to monitor the human resource needs of the college, reviewing justifications for new and reallocated positions and unit reorganizations. When substantive changes occur at the college, human resources are appropriately allocated. For example, in the last several years the transition to mandatory new-student orientation created a demand for additional full-time staff in the Student Affairs Office, and the opening of the Lee Center created the need for additional maintenance and public safety personnel. Such needs were addressed through reallocation of existing positions and funding for additional staff.

Oakton has a long-held commitment to diversity, and the Human Resources Office recruits broadly, using websites and publications that focus on diversity recruitment. The CHRO is the college's affirmative action officer and annually prepares an affirmative action program that meets all federal guidelines. She coordinates affirmative action training within the college and monitors the progress made in the recruitment and selection of new employees. The CHRO also serves as a liaison to groups in the Oakton community who have an interest in the employment opportunity afforded to members of protected classes.

As Oakton evaluates our staffing model, concerns have been expressed about the college's heavy reliance on part-time faculty for instruction, and on student employees for a variety of staff work. In 2010 the college created a Strategic Hiring Committee to review the replacement of full-time faculty positions to ensure that new hires were directed to the departments where they were most needed. This committee reviews enrollment data and part-time to full-time ratios

to support shifts in positions. The college also created a new classification of adjunct faculty, called an affiliated adjunct. These positions can work more hours than a standard part-time faculty member, and are expected to participate in more department and committee work at the college.

### **Physical Resources**

In 2010, Oakton developed a five-year Master Plan that is substantially complete. The five major components of the plan included the construction of a new science and health careers building, the remodeling and updating of Des Plaines classrooms, the construction of an enrollment center at the Des Plaines campus, the creation of a multifunctional student center to support student life, and numerous infrastructure projects at both campuses. The cornerstone project, the Margaret Burke Lee Science and Health Careers Center, a \$40-million, LEED Gold-certified facility with state-of-the-art science and health care laboratories, opened for the spring 2015 semester. The 93,000-square-foot building celebrates the natural and artistic highlights of the Des Plaines campus and showcases the latest sustainable technologies. It houses the college's anatomy, biology, chemistry, earth science, medical laboratory technology, nursing, physical therapy assistant, physiology and physics programs. The building's new simulation hospital includes a nurses' station, medication room, four fully equipped patient rooms with adult, pediatric and infant mannequins, faculty observation rooms and debriefing rooms to provide the most realistic hospital setting for students to learn.

In addition to the Lee Center, during the past ten years, major enhancements to college facilities and equipment included:

- one-stop Enrollment Centers at both Des Plaines and Skokie campuses;
- 30 updated classrooms with improved lighting, ergonomic furniture and current technology;
- nanotechnology laboratory space off campus with more than \$1 million in state-of-the-art equipment, including two scanning electron microscopes, a fluorescence microscope, a dip-pen nanolithographic tool, and two spectrometers; and
- building automation system overhauls at both campuses to provide more efficiencies in heating, air conditioning and ventilation.

A new student center opened in the spring 2017 semester, providing offices, meeting rooms and comfortable gathering spaces for students at the Des Plaines campus.

Oakton has also developed a new five-year master plan that will be viable through 2022. The master-planning process involves broad engagement of members of the college community and is guided by principles that echo our mission, including that master plan decisions should be centered on student success and support student learning and instruction. The college's recently adopted three-year Capital Improvement Plan includes roof replacements at both campuses, water supply supplementary service, remodeling of classroom and laboratory space for a new medical assisting program, classroom remodeling for spaces vacated when the Lee Center opened, renovation of "Student Street," and replacement of entrance signage at both campuses. Funding sources have been identified in the CIP, but with the creation of the new master plan, priorities in the CIP may be altered and new funding streams determined.

### **Technological Resources**

Oakton has a robust technology infrastructure that provides substantial support for the delivery of academic programs and administrative services. Headed by the vice president for Technology and Data Analytics, and with administrative leadership from the director of Systems and Network Services and the director of Software and User Services, Oakton's centralized IT Department guides a team of 45 staff members managing the key components of networking, servers, desktop computing, system security, telephony, classroom technology, the college website, help desk services, the learning management system, and administrative software to support the business systems of the college.

The IT Department is guided in its work by the Academic Computing Committee. The committee is composed of nine elected faculty members, two from each academic division and a library representative, information technology staff, interested parties and ex-officio administrative members. This committee meets six times during the year, reviews and prioritizes academic technology expenditures and advises the college on a variety of technology issues. The committee helps evaluate emerging technology use on campus, recommends and prioritizes instructional technology expenditures, and helps frame academic IT principles, policies, and standards that have college-wide impact.

Oakton's dependence on technology has grown substantially over the years, and the technology budget has kept pace with increased allocations. Select courses have special technology fees assessed, but the majority of the department budget is funded as part of the overall college budget process.



Since the 2007 HLC visit, Oakton completed the conversion to the suite of Ellucian Banner modules, adding Banner HR and Payroll in 2008 to supplement the core Banner Student and Banner Finance systems. The Ellucian Luminis platform provides the myOakton portal for students and employees, which is the gateway to the Banner self-service features. With Microsoft's Active Directory providing a unified login and password for almost all Oakton computer systems, the myOakton portal links students to their online classes and many other software systems.

The core Banner ERP system is supplemented by myriad additional "best of breed" products, including PowerFAIDS for Financial Aid processing, Blackbaud for foundation fundraising records, OnBase for document management, uAchieve for degree audit processing, Ad Astra Information Systems for classroom and event scheduling, e2Campus for emergency notification, AcademicWorks for scholarship matching, GradesFirst for early alert student identification, Maxient for student conduct management, Titanium Schedule for student counseling services, Intelliresponse for the college knowledge bank, and Cherwell for help desk ticketing software.

In 2011 Oakton migrated to Desire2Learn (D2L) to support online instruction. This platform, selected unanimously by a faculty committee, vastly improved the college's ability to support the demand for online learning sections. Online and hybrid courses have seen dramatic growth over the last five years. In support of the academic excellence goal in the 2013-2017 strategic plan, Oakton adopted a procedure that creates a D2L online shell for every course section, so that faculty in all sections can provide their syllabus, office hours and other supporting course materials on the web. Oakton subsequently added D2L Capture, the vendor's lecture capture offering, which integrates seamlessly into the learning environment. Oakton also recently added BigBlueButton to its technology offerings that support teaching and learning. BigBlueButton creates a virtual classroom that allows for live, synchronous, and interactive online learning.

In 2009, Oakton went live with a new website supported by a content management system. This platform made it possible for multiple offices to contribute web content, and also allowed the college to easily transition to a responsive design model, so that web content is now readable on mobile devices. To further support mobile access, Oakton implemented the Ellucian Go app, which allows students quick access to their schedules, grades, and other Banner services.

Oakton's hardware inventory is substantial, growing from 15 servers and a mainframe computer in 1997, to 215 servers in our data center in 2016. The college now supports 2,268 desktop computers, 145 laptop computers, 151 printers. All of the above equipment is tied together by the college's network, which includes over 5,761 ports. The 2010 Master Plan allocated funds to fully develop a campus wireless network, which offers 256 access points on both campuses. The college maintains a five-year replacement cycle for desktop computers in offices and academic labs. Other technology products, such as monitors, printers, classroom screens and projectors, network switches, etc., have variable useful lives and are updated when out of support, when failing, or on an extended replacement cycle.

In recent years Oakton has invested heavily in system security. One staff position was reallocated to establish a senior level Security Analyst position. Oakton has installed the Banner Data Defense software to completely encrypt vulnerable student and employee information, and much has been invested in upgrading firewalls, acquiring intrusion detection software, and other security products.

Under the Illinois Community College Act, Oakton is considered a unit of local government and has significant autonomy in determining allocation of resources. Oversight is provided by a locally elected board of trustees. The Illinois Community College Board negotiates with the state over budget allocations distributed to individual colleges based on formulae for apportionment. Oakton is responsible for setting its budget in accordance with the Illinois Community College Act and Generally Accepted Accounting Principles.

Except for intentional capital investment, Oakton has maintained a balanced budget. The board also has set several key ratios to assess the college's financial health: Operating Funds will maintain unrestricted net assets of at least 50 percent of the annual budgeted Operating Fund expenditures; and the college will maintain \$35 million for working cash. College investments are made in accordance with the Illinois Public Funds Investment Act, and, by board policy, are low-risk, diversified, government-secured of S&P AAA rated.

Each month, except for July, the treasurer reports to the board of trustees the current financial position of Oakton Community College and the status of income and expenses in relation to the budget for the fiscal year. Independent audit is conducted annually by a certified public accountant (ICCA).

Oakton's mission, vision, and values, revised and ratified during the process to develop the 2018-2022 strategic plan, informs institutional planning in all areas—strategic planning, budgeting, academic and student services, and community outreach. The first priority of the vision is “dedication to teaching and learning,” and that tenant drives decision-making. In addition, following Illinois Community College Act guidelines, the board also adopted educational programs and services that include baccalaureate and general education, occupational education, general or developmental studies, continuing education for residents, employers, and employees of the community, public service activities and student services. The mission, vision, and values statements recognize that we are primarily an educational institution that serves our community and that we respond to change. This enables the college to be flexible to meet the fluid needs of our constituents and adjust to changing fiscal constraints.

Oakton employees, whether faculty, staff or administrators, have the appropriate qualifications to perform their jobs. Oakton follows the guidelines established by the Higher Learning Commission for the hiring of qualified faculty. These qualifications and processes are outlined extensively in Core Component 3.C above. The college is also guided by the contract with the Oakton Community College Faculty Association (OCCFA) and adheres to the Dean's Guidelines for Full-time Faculty Hiring and the stated Titles and Qualifications document. The Adjunct Faculty Association (AFA) contract abides by the same titles and qualifications requirements.

Faculty, administrators, and professional staff positions requiring a bachelor's degree or higher are hired through a formal selection process. All individuals who participate in hiring committees must complete the training “Cultural Competence in the hiring and selection process.”

Oakton invests heavily in professional development activities so that all employee groups remain current and skilled in their respective areas. Article 6.5 of the OCCFA contract provides details of the faculty professional development resources available. The AFA contract requires adjunct faculty to periodically demonstrate professional development/content currency relevant to their teaching assignments. The AFA contract also identifies opportunities for conference attendance and tuition reimbursement, and members participate in college sponsored training. The Center for Professional Development (CPD) provides ongoing workshops and training across a multitude of topics for all Oakton employees. Human Resources maintains a separate budget to fund staff members' attendance at appropriate professional trainings, and all departments have budget lines to support employee training, workshops and conferences.

Specialized training that encompasses all employee groups, from FERPA and Title IX regulations, to campus safety and emergency procedures, is offered regularly throughout the academic year.

All employee groups have an evaluation process. The five-year review cycle for faculty ensures that credentials are maintained, allows for the creation of five-year plans and goals, and contributes to the support of faculty promotions. Oakton is investing in ePortfolio software to enhance these efforts. Part-time faculty also have an evaluation process, which is supervised by the assistant vice president of Academic Affairs and performed on a periodic cycle. Staff and administrators are evaluated by their supervisors annually. Any employee demonstrating marginal performance has an opportunity for appropriate remediation measures or possible termination, guided by the employment contracts of the respective groups.

The college follows a mature process for institutional budgeting. Each winter the budget office distributes a timetable for the budget process, with appropriate guidelines based on revenue expectations. The timetable establishes due dates for requests for staffing, remodeling, capital equipment, special funding/initiatives, and general operating budgets. Each department's submission must first be reviewed and approved by the applicable vice president. Requests for special funding/initiatives must address how this investment supports the college's strategic goals.

Budget data is then assembled and shared with President's Council, which makes the revisions and adjustments necessary to achieve a balanced budget. College reserves are occasionally used to support major projects, construction and other capital investments. Since tuition is a key component of Oakton's revenue, the board of trustees reviews long range budget projections when setting college tuition rates. A public hearing on the budget is held each spring, and the final budget is presented to the board for approval in June.

Oakton establishes and maintains internal financial controls designed to protect the assets of the college and prevent loss from theft or misuse. These internal controls provide that adequate accounting data are compiled to allow for the preparation of financial statements in conformity with accounting principles set forth by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board.

External monitoring is provided by an independent auditor. Each year, Oakton has an independent financial audit that evaluates the college's financial statements, contributing federal programs and the college foundation. The findings are presented to the Board of Trustees Finance Committee, which includes three board members. Subsequently the auditor presents the findings to the full board at the October board meeting, where the board reviews and approves the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) with auditor's opinion. The budget, CAFR and audit reports are published on the Oakton website.

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## 5.B - Core Component 5.B

The institution's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. The governing board is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight of the institution's financial and academic policies and practices and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—in the institution's governance.
3. Administration, faculty, staff, and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

### Argument

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Oakton Community College's Board of Trustees are keenly familiar with the institution and provide regular and consistent oversight of the college's financial, academic, and general operations. The Board of Trustees is engaged in best practices and professional development for college governance and has the information necessary to enhance governance issues. Additionally, the board of trustees has policies in place that promote effective leadership and collaborative processes. As described in board policy 1002, the board "shall set standards and provide direction for the college through the systematic adoption of sound written policies." These board-approved policies can be found in the Board Policy manual.

The board consists of seven voting members (six-year term) elected at large by the qualified voters of District 535, and one student member (one-year term) elected by the student body. The student board member casts an advisory vote, and has all the privileges of membership, including the right to make and second motions and to attend executive sessions. The board of trustees holds public meetings eleven times each year (monthly, excluding July). Board books, including agendas, minutes, and detailed information on action items, are electronically distributed to the college community and available on the public website each month. Elected leaders from Oakton's faculty and staff unions are represented at each monthly public meeting. In these public sessions the trustees approve such items as monthly reports from the treasurer, all purchases in excess of \$25,000, the college budget and any budget adjustments, the capital improvement plan, tuition rates, the hiring of administrators and faculty, establishment of staff positions, union contracts and settlement agreements. The college's current state of the art Margaret Burke Lee Science and Health Careers Center, enhanced enrollment centers, classroom upgrades and other infrastructure improvements are products of the board's approval, in December 2010, of a \$68.5 million major construction project. During 2014-2015 the board fulfilled its responsibility for the search and hiring of the college's president, Joianne Smith, Ph.D., upon the retirement of the previous president, Margaret Lee, Ph.D.

In addition to financial issues, the board approves such items as the college mission statement, strategic plan, new units of instruction to be submitted to the Illinois Community College Board, awards of tenure, faculty promotion in rank, and all board policies covering students and employees.

Board meetings also include presentations from faculty, staff and administrators on key items of interest to help educate board members. In 2016 these reports included the strategic planning process, the HLC reaccreditation process, the design of the new Student Center, the diversity and affirmative action plan, the capital improvement plan, and the FY 18 budget.

In addition to information shared during scheduled board meetings, each week the president sends the trustees a packet of materials highlighting important events and issues at the college. The packets include articles on key academic topics, progress reports on college initiatives, and background materials for future actions.

Board members regularly attend meetings at the state and national level, sponsored by such organizations as the Illinois Community College Trustees Association, the Association of Community College Trustees, and the American Association of Community Colleges. In addition all new board members receive an orientation to the college from the college president and his or her designee.



The board chair establishes board committees and assigns board members as representatives to these committees. While these shift slightly with each new chair, they generally include a finance committee, personnel committee, Educational Foundation liaison, ICCTA/AACT liaison, and three representatives to the Alliance for Lifelong Learning Governing Board.

The board of trustees generally holds a retreat at least once each year. These retreats are facilitated by leaders in community college policy, help strengthen communication and understanding among board members, and assist the board in setting goals for the board and the college president.

Oakton Community College's governance structure is based on shared governance through the use of councils and committees that provide the opportunity for engagement of all internal constituencies. Oakton is deeply invested in bringing all voices to the table in furthering the work of the college.

### **Board**

Board members are represented on key college task forces, such as the Master Planning Committee, and have their own focus group and planning session in the strategic planning process. The full breadth of the board of trustees' engagement is explained in detail in Core Component 5.B.

### **Administrators**

The key leadership body at Oakton is the President's Council. Led by the president, the council meets weekly and currently includes the vice president for Academic Affairs, vice president for Student Affairs, vice president for Administrative Affairs, vice president for Technology and Data Analytics, chief Human Resources officer, executive director of Development, director of Research and Planning, associate vice president of Continuing Education, Training and Workforce Development, and the chief Diversity officer. This advisory group to the president reviews and debates key issues, policies and practices at the college, and represents the full range of college offices. To ensure the President's Council is abreast of current happenings within the college, the heads of the college's unions and other college leadership representatives are invited to several of the meetings during the semester.

Another important administrative body directing the work of the college is the Council of Deans, formerly the Academic Council. Reporting to the vice president for Academic Affairs and the vice president for Student Affairs, the Council of Deans includes the dean of Natural Science and Health Careers; dean of Liberal Arts; dean of Mathematics, Engineering, and Computer Science; dean of RHC-Skokie/dean of Business and Career Technologies; dean of Curriculum and Instruction; dean of Online Learning; assistant dean of Library; associate vice president for Student Affairs/dean of Access, Equity, and Diversity; dean of Counseling, Health, and Wellness Services; and the dean of Student Success. The new Council of Deans strengthens college governance by bringing academic and student affairs deans to work collaboratively and cross-functionally to achieve institutional goals.

The deans directly supervise the college faculty and deal with the wide scope of academic issues, from sabbaticals to faculty evaluation processes, from classroom assessment to new program development. During the academic year, the deans lead monthly division meetings with faculty that include updates on college-wide initiatives, teaching best practices and additional opportunities for faculty to provide input on institutional issues.

The Council of Deans maintains the Dean's Guidelines, in which academic practices and procedures are documented. For certain procedures, the deans solicit input from faculty. During 2015-2016, a Dean's Guidelines Committee, inclusive of faculty and administrators, was convened to address revisions to the Dean's Guideline on the Full-Time Faculty Hiring Process. The committee provided "listening tours" as forums to address questions and concerns of full-time faculty prior to the finalization of revisions to the procedure for the hiring of full-time faculty.

All college administrators participate in monthly administrator meetings. These meetings, generally held the Thursday following each board meeting, are another opportunity to provide input into college issues and initiatives.

### **Faculty**

Full-time faculty at Oakton have multiple channels for fulfilling their important role in college governance. The faculty are represented by the OCCFA-IEA/NEA (Oakton Community College Faculty Association, an affiliate of the Illinois Education Association). Representatives of OCCFA worked and collaborated with Oakton's administrative team to develop a comprehensive contract through the interest-based bargaining process. The contract was approved by the



board of trustees at the May 2016 meeting and is effective from August 15, 2016 through August 17, 2020. The interest-based bargaining process also helped to generate a memorandum of understanding between the college and the faculty association concerning shared governance. Full-time faculty also operate through the Faculty Senate, which includes senators elected by faculty from each college division.

The Faculty Association and the Faculty Senate help provide representatives to countless college-wide committees that help direct the work of the college. These include Strategic Planning, Master Plan, Academic and Student Conduct, Academic Computing, Curriculum Committee, Diversity Council, Anti-Racism Team, Professional Development Committee, OPAL (Assessment Team), Strategic Hiring, the Academic Policies and Procedures Committee, and the Student Success Team. The Faculty Senate oversees the election of faculty to serve on committees that address issue specific to faculty such as Promotions, Sabbatical and Lane Change Committees. Faculty also participate on various administrator-appointed ad hoc committees as well as a wide range of search and screen committees for hiring faculty and administrators.

The Council of Chairs and Coordinators (COCAC) is a committee of the Faculty Senate that includes all department chairs/coordinators selected and appointed by the deans to oversee certain departmental processes and supervise the work specifically of adjunct faculty. Although the deans are responsible for the supervision of full-time faculty, departmental chairs/coordinators convene periodic meetings with full-time faculty as well as adjunct faculty to address issues affecting academic programs.

Part-time faculty are also heavily involved in college governance. They are represented by the Adjunct Faculty Association (AFA-IEA/NEA). Part-time faculty participate in college-wide committees such as Strategic Planning, Master Plan. Part-time faculty are invited to attend department and division meetings to stay abreast of changes and provide input to the college. In 2013, Oakton established the position of affiliated adjunct faculty, who have a heavier teaching load, and are required to attend department and division meetings.

### **Staff**

Staff at Oakton are represented by the OCCCSA (Oakton Community College Classified Staff Association, Local 1600 of the AFT). Staff also participate in college-wide committees such as Strategic Planning, Master Plan, Diversity Council, Professional Development, Student Success, and the Academic Policies and Procedures Committee, and also play a key role in hiring committees.

### **Students**

Each year students elect officers and representatives to the Student Government Association (SGA). This student governing body provides representatives to myriad college-wide activities and committees. For example, a student and an alumna were both active members of the 2014-15 Presidential Search Committee. Students take part in the Strategic Planning Committee, the Master Plan Committee, the Green Committee, the Academic Policies and Procedures Committee, Web Advisory Committee, Diversity Council and Academic Conduct Committee. In addition, the president holds regular meetings with various student leadership groups so they have an opportunity for direct input at the highest level, which can have substantial impact. For example, as a result of a student-led initiative during 2016, Oakton leadership agreed to support a ban on single-use water bottles on campus. This ban went into effect in November 2016.

The student trustee is an elected representative of the student body, works closely with the elected board members, and directly influences college actions on behalf of the students.

Since her tenure as the fourth president of Oakton, President Smith has also encouraged less formal communication across organizational lines through her initiative of “Coffee and Conversation with the President,” an informal gathering where all employees of the college have an opportunity to directly communicate and share with the president their feelings on internal as well as external events and issues. To ensure that all employees have the opportunity to participate in the conversations, the coffees are held on both the Des Plaines and Skokie campuses. In addition, the president forwards a leadership update email to all employees with updates on college initiatives and progress in accomplishing college objectives. President Smith also has a similar conversation event targeted to students known as “Pasta with the President.”

Oakton has a compelling framework for insuring college-wide involvement in setting academic requirements, policy and processes.

Chartered by the president in 2014, the Educational Standards Review Board is a standing committee tasked with studying, reviewing and making recommendations on academic policies and procedures. The committee reviews existing policies and procedures and proposes new ones in response to the changing needs of the Oakton community. Continuing the work of the Educational Policies and Procedures Task Force, whose work began in 2004, the Committee examines issues related to courses and curricula (including course scheduling, registration, add, drop and repeat policies), grading and academic progress, scheduling, testing and prerequisites.

The membership of the committee includes three full-time faculty, one academic dean, one administrator from Student Affairs, one staff member from Student Affairs, one part-time faculty member, one staff or administrator from Continuing Education and Workforce Development, and one student or alumna. The vice president for Academic Affairs also serves in an ex-officio capacity.

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## 5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.
5. Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.

### Argument

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Oakton's budget and resource allocation is guided by the strategic plan and aligned with the mission, vision and values statement of the college. The principles of these documents are reflected in how Oakton budgets its money, how it designs and utilizes its spaces, how it hires and supports its employees, and the time and effort allocated to various college initiatives and activities. Key alignments exist within the college's planning processes: spending requests are connected to the strategic plan, program review and evaluations are connected to planning and budget processes, infrastructure and programmatic priorities are aligned with the Master Plan, resources for students are aligned with the mission, and strategic planning is connected to awareness of internal and external issues.

Criterion 5.A speaks at length about Oakton's resource base—fiscal, human, physical and technological. Fiscal resources form the foundation of all our assets, as it takes money to hire and retain quality personnel, develop and support physical plant, and acquire and harness technology.

Annual budget planning begins with a timetable and guidelines distributed to administrators in the fall semester, who then compile requests for staffing, remodeling, capital equipment, special funding initiatives and general operational budgets. Area vice presidents then review each department's plan for appropriateness and connection to the college's strategic plan. Information is then shared with the President's Council who works with the vice president for Administrative Affairs in an ongoing cycle of analysis and revisions. The final budget is presented for a public hearing in May and for board approval in June.

The budget cycle requires the requestor to tie the budget request to the college's areas of focus, through the strategic plan, the master plan, or student success initiatives. The budget cycle allows opportunities for funding the exploration of new academic programs and piloting non-academic programs. These "special funding requests" are processed through their own templates, and have supported such changes as mandatory new-student orientation, the establishment of the ¡Andale! office to improve retention and completion of Latino students, and implementation of the medical assistant academic program.

The Office of Research and Planning compiles, analyzes and disseminates a rich array of data to the college community to use in decision-making. The program review process, discussed in 5.D.1, is a key tool for documenting evidence of performance and evaluating operations. Assessment of student learning is a major component of the program review process for academic departments. The review asks the departments to identify the following:

- What is the evidence that students are meeting program objectives, succeeding in courses, etc.? What is the program doing or planning to do to improve student success? What is the program doing or planning to do to improve student completion?
- What is the program doing or planning to do to support its two to three most critical objectives in Oakton's strategic plan?

Student learning objectives and ties to college plans are key components for evaluating college operations, and these subsequently impact the budget allocation process. Improvements that are identified in the review process provide the rationale behind corresponding budget appropriations.

Equipment needs and physical space issues are regularly identified through the review and planning processes. Reviews in the various health and science curricula helped to drive the planning for the new science and health careers building, as concerns with outdated physical laboratory space and specialized health accreditation issues surfaced. Substantial reserve funds were directed to address this issue, and the Lee Center, which opened in the spring semester of 2015, became the capstone of the 2010 Master Plan. Similarly, issues that surfaced in reviews of Student Affairs operations led to the establishment of centralized enrollment centers at both the Skokie and Des Plaines campuses, and the development of the Student Center at Des Plaines.

Personnel needs may also surface through program review and planning efforts. While the college has a Strategic Hiring Committee to address the allocation of full-time faculty, department reviews can still address staffing levels. Concerns with academic advising led the college to increase the Advising, Transitions, and Student Success office staff.

Oakton's strategic planning process has consistently included the entire institution and the district community. Since the last visit of the HLC, Oakton has moved from "Learning Together, 2003-2008," to "Change Matters, 2008-2012," to "Connecting What Matters, 2013-2017," to our most recent strategic plan, "Success Matters, 2018-2022." Each plan has built on the earlier models but has also provided opportunities for creativity and new approaches.

It was fortuitous that a new strategic planning cycle coincided with the change in Oakton's presidency. President Smith assumed office in July 2015 as the college began the early planning phase. One of the first tasks was to identify members for the Strategic Planning, Accountability, and Resource Committee (SPARC). Led by the executive director of Research and Planning, SPARC includes full-time faculty, part-time faculty, administrators, staff and students, who are together guiding the development of the strategic plan.

Oakton contracted with Northern Illinois University's Center for Governmental Studies to develop an environmental scan, to help the college identify trends and future opportunities in Oakton's district. Concurrently the college began a series of strategic conversations. Multiple sessions and formats were used to solicit input from college employee groups, trustees, students, foundation board members, business and industry partners, and community and social service organizations. These formats included focus groups, surveys, open forums and meetings.

By late fall of 2016, the entire campus was involved in reviewing the mission, vision and values statement of the college, which was originally adopted in 1998. While the underlying principles remain consistent, the statement is now broken into separate mission, vision and values components. Representatives across the college developed three distinct options for each component, then a campus survey invited all constituents to identify their preferred options and suggest wording changes. The revised statements were approved by the board of trustees at the March 2017 meeting.

The college is currently engaged in a new process of integrated planning, as outlined in "A Guide to Implementing Success Matters, 2018-2022." The integrated planning process will begin with the development of institutional plans—academic, enrollment, staffing, diversity and equity, fiscal, student affairs, technology, facilities, marketing, and advancement plans—that will coordinate wide-ranging efforts, anticipate and prioritize budget demands, and identify complementary, competing, or contradictory goals. "Success Matters, 2018-2022" will then be cascaded down from the strategic plan to institutional plans, departmental plans, an implementation plan for monitoring, and individual performance plans. Along with President's Council, SPARC will adopt a role of building broad-based engagement in plan implementation, communicating progress, and monitoring responsibility and performance.

The Illinois Public Community College Act, approved in 1965, identified three revenue streams to support the state's colleges. One-third of Oakton's revenue was to be derived from local property taxes, one-third from tuition, and one third from state appropriations. Illinois has not met this level of obligation for many years, yet Oakton has still been able to maintain a balanced budget and meet the needs of the community.

Oakton considers the national and local economy, political challenges, and enrollment projections when developing plans for the future. Oakton is fortunate to have a healthy local property tax base, and in the face of declining state contributions the college has still been able to update facilities and keep services intact. FY16 through FY18 have been particularly challenging years, as a political impasse in Illinois left the state without an approved budget, and with only stopgap funding for higher education. Oakton's strong financial reserve helped the college weather this period of great uncertainty, but it was still necessary to inject a substantial tuition increase into FY16 and FY17.

Oakton's Capital Improvement Plan and Master Plan have an ambitious array of projects to support and improve the college facilities. A portion of the financial reserves are earmarked for our physical plant, as Oakton's board recognizes the impact facilities have on student success. Such plans are developed cautiously and revised regularly to ensure they comport with current financial realities.

Oakton's strategic planning team members use a wide range of resources to inform the planning process. These resources range from our own commissioned environmental scan from NIU's Center for Governmental Studies, to other publicly provided data from the Illinois Community College Board, the Illinois Board of Higher Education, and the Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System. We also receive data from Achieving the Dream, the American Association of Community Colleges, the American Council on Education, and general labor market reports.

College employees are also encouraged, wherever feasible, to participate in national organizations and conferences. These activities consistently provide insights into national and global trends, and leading edge initiatives, which can then be evaluated for relevancy to Oakton.

Program advisory committees for the career and technical education programs provide great insight into important shifts in the respective markets for each field. Such insights helped shift automotive technology from its old analog to its current digital platform. These seismic shifts can be seen in many disciplines.

While anticipating emerging factors such as technology is critical to effective planning, the process is not without missteps. For example, in 2006 Oakton worked with grants from a local business partner to establish the first RFID lab in Illinois. The curriculum and hardware were intended to train students for careers in supply chain logistics using RFID. This industry shifted so quickly and dramatically that the courses and equipment were absorbed into other programs. Oakton's scanning of the shifts in technology and the local economy led to the establishment of the Nanotechnology Education, Employment and Economic Development Initiative (NE3I), a partnership with the Illinois Science and Technology Coalition, Village of Skokie, North Suburban Educational Region for Vocational Education, and the Illinois Science and Technology Park. The goals are to prepare for emerging job markets for nano-technicians in northeastern Illinois. Oakton established a nanotechnology certificate and laboratory where students can gain hands-on experience with atomic and electron microscopes, nano-analysis tools, and fluorescent scopes that enhance 3-D imaging. Enrollments have been sluggish, and the college will need to continue to assess the utility and viability of the program.

College-wide committees also help Oakton anticipate emerging trends and feed into the planning process. For example the Academic Computing Committee provides direction and recommendations for the implementation of instructional technology within the college. Members come from all academic divisions, and stay abreast and informed of important trends in learning technologies. The Student Success Team considers shifts in Oakton's student population as it recommends interventions and initiatives to improve student retention and completion.



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## 5.D - Core Component 5.D

The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

1. The institution develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations.
2. The institution learns from its operational experience and applies that learning to improve its institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts.

### Argument

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#### Program Review

All instructional programs and academic concentrations participate in a formal five-year cycle of program review. Oakton's program review process is discussed more extensively in Criterion 3. The purpose of the program review is to ensure we continue offering high quality programs, identifying the current state of each program and outlining recommendations for the future. The schedule is set by the Illinois Community College Board, with occasional adjustments. A variety of data—including enrollment reports and reports from surveys and focus groups—are provided to the departments by the Office of Research and Planning. The departments evaluate a wide range of information, such as student learning and assessment data, enrollment and completion data, programmatic accreditation results, and connections to and impact on strategic goals. Career and technical education programs also use input from their respective advisory committees to assist in this process. And all units are encouraged to conduct peer visits with one or two similar institutions, to provide additional input and a standard for program comparison.

Student and academic support services offices also engage in the formal program review. This includes such areas as career services, learning and tutoring centers, athletics, the cashier's office, student life, and advising and counseling. As we considered the evidence of operational performance, Oakton identified one area to target for improvement. At one time Oakton involved all administrative units in periodic program review, but in 2012, when a revised process was implemented, that practice contracted to focus only on the units identified by the ICCB. Oakton would be better served if all college functions once again participate in this scheduled periodic process.

As a result, beginning in 2017-2018, Academic Affairs and Institutional Research will collaborate to create a new, inclusive program review process. Institutional Research previously oversaw the program review process, which created a disconnect for Academic Affairs. The new dean of Curriculum and Instruction will oversee the program review process for academic programs, conducting objective program evaluations following ICCB guidelines. The executive director of Research and Planning will coordinate the process for non-academic units under a new process that incorporates all non-academic units across the college.

#### Student Success/ATD

In 2010 Oakton initiated a Student Success working group charged with the development of a student success plan and building a culture focused on student success. To further support this work, Oakton joined the national program, Achieving the Dream in 2013. This project is outlined in great detail in Oakton's Open Pathway Quality Initiative proposal and report, "Increasing Student Success by Building Institutional Capacity for Continuous Improvement." The goals of this project are to "improve student success, enhance leadership commitment to student success, increase research capacity and the use of data-driven decision-making, develop interventions that are aimed at improving student achievement, and foster fundamental changes in the culture and operations of the college that will lead to measurable and lasting improvements in student outcomes." The Student Success Team has continued to evolve over the years, and is currently led by the vice president for Student Affairs and the vice president for Academic Affairs. The college initially identified three priority focus areas: placement, developmental education and persistence. The Office of Research and Planning continues to provide extensive data to the college as we develop, implement and evaluate interventions designed to improve student success in all three of these areas. The effort currently has four priority focus areas: Faculty Initiative for Student Persistence, Curricular Pathways for Students, First Year Persistence, and Mandatory Placement Implementation. Oakton's student success effort is discussed more extensively in Criterion 4.

### **Wildly Important Goal**

In support of the persistence work, Oakton's president requested the administrative leadership read the book, "The 4 Disciplines of Execution," which outlines strategies for achieving important strategic priorities. President Smith identified an ambitious "Wildly Important Goal" (WIG) for Oakton, to improve the college's fall-to-fall persistence rate from 45 percent to 54 percent. Each administrative area also identified departmental WIGs to support progress in persistence. For example, Academic Affairs led the Faculty Persistence Project, where a subset of faculty across the college worked to meet individually with students in the first three weeks of the term. Establishing connections between students and faculty has shown to impact persistence. The fall 2015 to fall 2016 persistence rate did increase, from 45 percent to 48 percent.

### **Assessment**

Since the last HLC visit in 2007, Oakton has also put extensive emphasis on assessment, the ongoing systematic process of collecting and analyzing data and information used to inform decision-making to improve student learning. In 2008 Oakton joined the HLC Assessment Academy, and established a joint team of faculty and administrators called OPAL, Oakton's Program for the Assessment of Learning. OPAL has led the college in rewriting the general education outcomes, and has formalized both Career and Technical Education (CTE) Course and Program Assessment and Transfer Course Assessment through the design and implementation of updated program and course assessment forms, constructive formal feedback, a guiding evaluation rubric, and consultations. Assessment of student learning has become part of the college culture. Oakton's efforts in this area are detailed in Criterion 4.

### **State and National Benchmarking**

Oakton also capitalizes on opportunities to use state and national data to study college performance. The Illinois Community College Board collects substantial data from all state colleges, and also submits data to the National Community College Benchmarking Project and the Integrated Post-Secondary Data System (IPEDS). Oakton's ATD participation provides additional benchmarking information, and the college regularly participates in both the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE).

### **Educational Foundation**

The Educational Foundation consistently documents its operational performance in order to develop strategies for increased future revenue and donor relation improvement. Gifts to the foundation are reviewed weekly. This allows development staff to share their best practices in appeals and acknowledgments. Monthly gift performance analysis provides a snapshot, by fund, of foundation revenues. Quarterly, the foundation provides its directors with a treasurer's report, which the investment committee uses to inform decision-making. To further enhance performance the Educational Foundation recently implemented new constituent management software, with dashboard capability to provide real-time information on campaign goals, staff activities, etc. The event module will allow fundraising event costs to be tracked, providing insight on where costs may be reduced.

Oakton is committed to improving the college's performance and has multiple mechanisms designed to move the college forward.

As stated in each of the areas outlined in 5.D.1, data are not just recorded but is used to evaluate programs and initiatives and shift directions when necessary. The program reviews are required to both identify the current status of each program and to identify recommendations for the future. When submitted to the Illinois Community College Board, the reviews must determine what actions the college is taking with the program: continue with improvements, significantly modify, discontinue, or review again.

After reviewing data and student progress, the Student Success Team was reorganized at the opening of the 2016-17 academic year, and will be extending the focus on fall-to-fall persistence to bring equity to persistence rates across racial/ethnic groups and age groups. While there are a number of new student success interventions that are expected to have a positive effect on the persistence rates of all students, the college believes that we will need additional focus, in particular, on the persistence rate of black students, which lags far behind all other student groups. The administrative team also joined in this effort by identifying wildly important goals related to bringing equity to persistence rates. As these interventions are implemented, the Student Success Team will continue to review and evaluate results, and alter actions as appropriate.

Similarly, the college assessment efforts guide each course and program to define learning objectives, and assess progress toward goals, hoping to see continued improvement over time. The OPAL assessment forms require an action plan, so a loop is created that ensures changes made to our courses. The state and national benchmarking opportunities provide data that inform the college and allow Oakton to expand successful initiatives, or search for new practices when progress lags.

Oakton's strategic plans, both "Connecting What Matters, 2013-2017," and its recent successor "Success Matters, 2018-2022," provide broad goals and clear detailed objectives. Progress toward these goals are measured periodically and give Oakton the opportunity to continue to improve the institution's effectiveness.

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## 5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

### Summary

Since Oakton's last comprehensive evaluation in 2007, the college has continued to demonstrate careful management of limited resources to ensure we fulfill our mission and meet the needs of our community. The economic downturn that began in 2008 created a temporary upsurge in Oakton's enrollment, followed by steady decline in subsequent years. Political challenges have depleted state funding in the two most recent fiscal years. Throughout these challenges Oakton's thoughtful financial stewardship has kept budgets healthy and allowed the college to move forward with its focus on student success. Substantial financial reserves were shifted to support new construction for the science and health careers academic programs, student one-stop services, and student life. Funds were also dedicated to update classrooms and address myriad deferred maintenance issues on both campuses.

Challenges do lie ahead, and Oakton needs to be poised to address issues of declining enrollment and continued uncertain state funding. The college governance processes and administrative structures form a stable foundation for meeting these challenges. Through the collaborative work on the accreditation process, Oakton has already identified efforts that need to be expanded, including expanding program review to meet new state requirements and enhancing the integration of planning processes.

Oakton has a solid planning framework, whose foundation is the college strategic plan. The planning process ensures that all stakeholders, both internal and external, play a vital role in the development of our college-wide goals and objectives, which are rooted in the college mission and guided by the college vision and values. With participation and support from the board of trustees, administration, faculty, staff, students, and the community, Oakton stands ready to continue to improve the quality of our educational offerings, as well as address future challenges and opportunities.

### Sources

*There are no sources.*





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