

Strategic

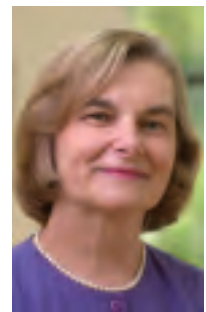
Oakton 2013-2017  
Connecting  
What matters

Plan

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*Sometimes, reaching out and taking someone's hand is the beginning of a journey. At other times, it is allowing another to take yours.* —Vera Nazarian



In an impassioned speech delivered just before his death in 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. observed, “In this pluralistic interrelated society we are all tied together in a single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality.” Dr. King’s words remind us of the relationships that bind us to each other.

At the heart of Oakton’s new strategic plan is that sense of “connectedness”—a theme that builds on the commitments made in the previous strategic plan, *Change Matters*. Dr. Edward Hollowell, the preeminent adult and child psychiatrist, characterizes connectedness as “being a part of something larger than oneself . . . the force that urges us to ally, to affiliate, to enter into mutual relationships, to take strength, and to grow through cooperative behavior.” Hollowell believes that the single most important contributing factor in being a successful student, and indeed, a successful individual and a successful organization is the ability to make meaningful connections.

Since Oakton opened its doors more than four decades ago, employees have shared in work that changes lives. Now is the time to expand that work, adopting new strategies for ensuring the learning, persistence, and attainment of our students.

Approved by the Board of Trustees in April 2012, *Connecting What Matters* affirms an invigorated commitment to teaching and learning—and reinforces the vital links between achieving and connecting. The three overarching goals—Academic Excellence, Student Success, and Connected Communities—spell out the priorities of connecting students with the Oakton community, connecting the curriculum with student goals and the ever-changing demands of the workplace, and connecting employees with one another and the mission, vision, and values of the College during the next five years.

In the months ahead, we look forward to forging these connections with our students, with our diverse constituencies, and with each other. As the words of Herman Melville tell us, “We cannot live only for ourselves. A thousand fibers connect us . . . and among those fibers, as sympathetic threads, our actions run as causes, and they come back to us as effects.”

Jody Wadhwa  
Chair, Oakton Board of Trustees

Margaret B. Lee  
President



Specific activities comprising strategic planning included the following:

Fall 2011-

**Spring 2012** President Margaret B. Lee initiated the process for a new strategic plan in Fall 2011. In keeping with Oakton's approach to developing a strategic plan, the College engaged both internal and external constituencies through the first seven months of the academic year. Beginning in September with an open invitation to think together about the future in a modified "World Café" model, the Strategic Planning Committee crafted a plan that not only builds on *Change Matters*, the strategic plan for 2008 – 2012, but also responds to current and emerging priorities for the College. In December 2011, the Committee scheduled Town Hall meetings at both campuses, providing the opportunity for faculty, staff, administrators, and students to comment on the first draft and the proposed goals. A second round of Town Hall gatherings, as well as an all-faculty meeting, enabled faculty to comment on the second draft, which included both broad goals and more specific objectives. The Committee also sought comments on the draft from more than 300 external stakeholders who included members of advisory committees, local elected and appointed officials, K-12 leaders, and Oakton Educational Foundation Directors. In addition, the student representative asked for input from students.

After considering all suggestions and ideas, the Strategic Planning Committee recommended a final plan. The Board of Trustees adopted the plan on April 17, 2012.

**Year 2017** Develop a new strategic plan. Affirmation or revision of Oakton's vision, mission, and values will take place as appropriate.

# Key Characteristics and Trends

## External

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

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

### Population

The district population remains virtually unchanged from ten years ago. The 2010 census showed 435,000 residents living in the communities that comprise Oakton's district. Projections indicate little growth in the immediate future.

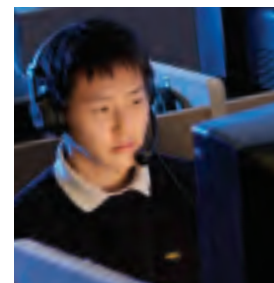
The population is white (72 percent), Asian (14 percent), Hispanic/Latino (8 percent), Black or African-American (5 percent), and all other groups including two or more races (1 percent). The decade from 2000 to 2010 saw an increase in Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and 'other' or 'two or more races' residents.

For the most part, district residents are well-educated and upper middle class. For example, 51 percent of adults age 25 and above have a college degree, compared to 30 percent statewide and 27 percent nationally. The estimated 2008 median household income in Oakton's district was \$83,100 compared to \$55,900 statewide and \$52,175 nationally.

### Education

Schools within Oakton's district are high quality. Educators take great pride in the academic achievement of their students and the proportion of high school graduates—as many as 97 percent—pursuing higher education.

Shifting national perceptions about higher education as a private good to benefit individuals, rather than a public good to benefit society, play out in reduced public financing of higher education and greater reliance on student tuition and fees. Oakton's good fortune to have a strong tax base buffers the College from the most dramatic effects of reduced state funding, but concerns remain that the state may change its funding formula, threatening the ability of colleges in districts like Oakton's to benefit from robust local tax bases. An additional concern centers on the taxpayers, who, faced with reduced home values and increased property taxes, may resist supporting public institutions.





Explicit state and national mandates call for more college graduates. Shortly after the presidential election in 2008, the Obama administration set a goal for five million more degrees/certificates by 2020 as compared to 2010. The State of Illinois has set a goal that 60 percent of Illinois adults will have a college degree or certificate by 2025, compared to the current 43 percent.

Technology continues to evolve and expand, with what seems to be a never-ending array of new applications, equipment, and uses. Colleges and universities approach technology from multiple directions: as a tool to enhance learning and teaching; as the subject of study; and as a means to improve efficiency and effectiveness in managing the organization and delivering services to multiple constituencies. Just since *Change Matters*, online education has exploded in the number of colleges and universities offering distance learning courses and the number of students taking them. At the same time, social media has transformed the way people communicate for personal, educational, and professional reasons.

### **Business and Industry**

The economic base and labor markets within Oakton's district comprise a diverse array of businesses, industries, and service providers. At the same time, the financial turmoil during the last few years has led to increased home foreclosures, higher unemployment, and economic uncertainty for many district residents. Identifying jobs for which to retrain workers, with confidence they will be able to obtain employment, remains challenging. Fields in which job opportunities exist, such as manufacturing, appear not to be aligned with the interests of district residents.

### **Financial Trends**

The fiscal situation in Illinois is not expected to improve in the near future, creating uncertainties about the amount and reliability of state funding for higher education, including the availability of the Illinois MAP (Monetary Award Program) grant for student financial assistance.

The fiscal situation at the federal level also is creating uncertainties regarding grant funding for special programs such as those supported through the National Science Foundation and the Department of Education. Additionally, grant applications and requirements for reports on grants received are becoming more complex and time consuming.



Students are graduating from college with high debt and poor job prospects, prompting prospective students to begin questioning the value of postsecondary education. Doubts about student financial assistance; e.g., the federal Pell grant and the Illinois MAP grant, place additional financial pressure on students and their families.

Demands for external accountability continue to grow with respect to complexity and the number of reports required. Many accountability reports are unfunded, yet still require the College to devote staff and other resources to responding.



**Internal Environment** In addition to examining trends and characteristics shaping the external environment, participants in Oakton's strategic planning process reviewed trends and characteristics describing the College's programs, services, personnel, facilities, and other resources.



### Students

A substantial number of students enter Oakton unprepared for college. Many may lack knowledge about how to navigate higher education or be unable to overcome the economic challenge to pay for their education. Others need additional academic skills to succeed in college-level courses. For example, 30 percent of recent high school graduates place into developmental writing, and 66 percent place into developmental math, including intermediate algebra. These figures comport with those found at community colleges across the nation.

The associate's degree appears to be less appealing than a bachelor's degree, as evidenced by the significant number of students who transfer prior to earning the associate's degree and the large cadre of students who take Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses but do not complete a degree or certificate. Moreover, except in selected fields such as health care careers, students can enter the labor market without earning an official credential.

Students' ability to pay for their educations continues to decline because of uncertainties about financial aid, increased textbook costs, and a stressed labor market that is reducing employment opportunities outside the College.

More students from other countries enroll with different cultural and family expectations and a lack of understanding about higher education in the United States. They experience cross-pressures to assimilate, and at the same time, honor the culture with which they identify.

The College is witnessing increased numbers of students with documented disabilities (physical, emotional, learning), and they and their families have differing expectations for Oakton to serve them.

A substantial number of Oakton students enroll part time, and even full-time students often take less than 15 credit hours per semester, thereby extending the time to earn a degree well beyond two years after entry.



### **The Institution**

With substantial financial resources, Oakton remains fortunate to draw more than half its revenues from a local property tax base with a large Equalized Assessed Valuation. Although uncertainties linger about state support and the ability for community colleges to draw from their local tax base, the College at present continues to enjoy an advantageous financial position.

The Equalized Assessed Valuation of property in Oakton's district declined from \$28 billion in 2009 to \$25 billion in 2010, the most recent year. The tax cap currently in effect guarantees that institutions will not lose revenue from local property taxes, but this may not last. An immediate concern is that local property tax payers may begin to question what they perceive to be high property tax rates when the value of their property is declining. In the future this scenario could lead to taxpayer resistance with respect to paying property taxes at or near current rates.

At the beginning of 2012, the College launched its five-year Facilities Master Plan. Implementation will result in new and renovated facilities, primarily at the Des Plaines campus. Oakton will begin to articulate ideas about facilities renovations and/or construction beyond the current plan.

College initiatives to improve student success are underway (e.g., the reorganization of developmental mathematics known as RoadMATH; expanded orientation for new full-time, traditional-aged students; and recommendations for a variety of support services from the Student Success Working Group). Preliminary data about the success of the new initiatives show much promise.

### **Employees**

More than 35 full-time faculty and 50 staff retired in the period 2010 - 2012. New faculty and staff will provide fresh ideas and build on Oakton's history of employee engagement and institutional loyalty.

Thinking more creatively, the College now recruits more broadly for employee replacements, especially for full-time faculty, and includes provisions for seeking full-time faculty from adjuncts/part-time faculty.

The College reorganized the Office of Student Affairs in 2010 - 2011 to provide more effective, timely, integrated, and efficient services for students.



Oakton is . . . connecting what matters: Connecting students with the College community and the curriculum with student goals. Connecting the curriculum with the demanding, ever-changing requirements of our world and workplaces. Connecting employees with one another and with the mission, vision, and values of the College.

Oakton Community College proudly shares *Connecting What Matters*, its strategic plan for 2013 - 2017. Ideas from numerous members of the College community, and the local, state, and national agendas that have made college completion and student success paramount priorities for all colleges and universities, inform the goals and objectives of this plan. *Connecting What Matters* builds on and evolves from previous strategic plans.

Working together, Oakton has met many of its previous goals, and continues the commitment to their spirit and intent, recognizing they laid a firm foundation for excellence, change, and meeting the expectations of multiple stakeholders, both internal and external to the College.

These and the following commitments have been made, work is in progress, and the College fully expects them to continue and grow stronger.

- The College adopted a Facilities Master Plan in 2010 that now guides the construction of new facilities, as well as renovations of existing classrooms and service areas.
- The College will continue to invest in anti-bias strategies with programs, services, and curricula to make Oakton a more inclusive institution for students and employees.
- Green initiatives have made sustainability a priority in a wide range of institutional practices, academic offerings, and in the use of the grounds and internal environment.
- Professional development opportunities, both internal and external, continue to support employees in meeting the College's strategic goals and objectives, and in meeting their responsibilities to maintain and develop a high level of currency and competence in their work.
- Investments in technology catalyze teaching and learning, as well as enhance administrative services, communication, outreach, and the management/operations of the College.
- The College's financial health is strong. Oakton continually monitors changes in funding and expenditures to ensure financial stability.

Moving into the next five years, the College identifies three overarching goal areas for special emphasis, along with several specific objectives to be implemented for each.

**We stand together and look forward.**



# Strategic Goals and Objectives 2013 - 2017



## Goals:

**Student Success** Oakton will demonstrate a renewed commitment to student success. The College will cultivate and engage in practices that foster the attainment of academic, career, and personal outcomes determined and developed through collaboration between the student and the College. Oakton expects extra- and co-curricular activities and programs to support these efforts. Oakton will identify specific obstacles to student success and develop innovative, effective strategies to help students overcome these obstacles. In addition to students' goals, Oakton acknowledges that success is tied to College, state, and national priorities relating to completion and transfer.

- The number of Oakton degrees and certificates earned by students will increase at least 15 percent by 2017, an additional 950 credentials.
- The College will recognize a 15 percent improvement in students' success in developmental and college-level gateway courses by 2017.
- The College will require orientation for all new full-time students and strongly encourage participation for new part-time students, especially those for whom Oakton is their first college.
- Oakton will support multiple pathways, including social media, through which current and prospective students can obtain information, transact business (e.g., register, pay bills, access grades), and attend Oakton.
- The College will expand opportunities for students to earn credit for prior learning.
- Oakton will champion initiatives that foster a sense of belonging and engagement in the life of the College and in its programs and activities.
- Oakton will increase connections with its district schools, especially around issues of mutual interest such as aligning curricula, improving students' readiness for college, and providing opportunities for students to earn college credit prior to high school graduation through dual credit and other approaches.
- Oakton will strengthen connections with other colleges and universities to promote transfer.

**Academic Excellence** Oakton will deepen its tradition of being recognized for academic excellence. Courses, curricula, and programs—both credit and noncredit—will reflect current and emerging content, creative and effective pedagogy, and learning environments that support multiple modes of delivery and student engagement. Recognizing that learning in classes and courses is central to the student’s experience and success at Oakton, the College will pursue enhanced student success and academic excellence in traditional and emerging learning venues.

- All programs will use the results of learning outcomes assessments to improve teaching and learning.
- Every Oakton credit class will provide Web-based information, resources, and support to students by fall 2014.
- Oakton will offer hybrid sections in at least 40 different courses across disciplines by spring 2017.
- Oakton will encourage faculty to develop and deliver innovative content, materials, and pedagogy.
- Oakton will expand opportunities for students, inside and outside the classroom, to participate in activities that engage them with issues that confront local and global society.
- Oakton will strengthen career program advisory committees and linkages with business and industry to respond to changing and emerging workforce development needs.
- The College will enhance opportunities for students to have workplace experiences through expanded internships, practica, clinicals, service learning, and other activities.
- Oakton will use the College campuses as living laboratories for courses and activities that emphasize the study and practice of sustainability.

**Connected Communities** Oakton values all members of the College community. Oakton will continue to transform its practices to combat all forms of exclusion and bias in curricula, programming, and institutional policies and procedures and assure that the administration, faculty, staff, and students reflect and value diversity of culture, race, class, gender expression, sexual orientation, religion, ability, and age. Oakton will continue to be responsive to the needs and interests of community members and area businesses and organizations for transfer, career, and continuing education, and for programs that support the intellectual and cultural life of the community. The College will foster a culture of employee engagement that includes philanthropy, service, and support for programs and activities.



- Oakton will offer a coordinated array of programs and training to strengthen the anti-bias perspective and cultural competence of employees, and 80 percent of employees will participate in at least three programs over the life of this plan.
- The Professional Development Teams will provide new and innovative opportunities aimed at building community among employees across the College.
- The College will explore options for designated space that will contribute to building, nurturing, and sustaining the spirit of community within and among employee groups.
- The College will continue to build and enhance partnerships with business, civic, and community organizations.
- The College will actively encourage the participation of employees in College-sponsored events and activities including, but not limited to, speakers, athletics, performing arts productions, and Oakton Educational Foundation benefits, with a target that 50 percent of employees will do so each year.



# Implementation of Goals



**Making Progress on Goals and Objectives** The College anticipates existing departments and committees will take the lead in developing and implementing plans, programs, services, and activities to meet *Connecting What Matters* goals and objectives. Some objectives will require the appointment of cross-institutional teams to collaborate on achieving goals and objectives.

**Financial Support** Financial support for implementing *Connecting What Matters* will come from several sources. First, many activities will be funded through the College's annual operating budget. Second, special projects that advance the attainment of strategic goals and objectives which require funding beyond the College's operating budget will be approved as part of the regular budget cycle. Third, external grants and support from the Oakton Educational Foundation will be sought as appropriate.

**Monitoring and Reporting Progress** Those identified as the leads for each goal and objective will compile information annually about progress, and the President will prepare an annual report to the College and the Board of Trustees.

## Additional References

Additional information about Oakton Community College is available at [www.oakton.edu](http://www.oakton.edu) and in a number of publications, including the *Oakton Community College Catalog*, *Comprehensive Annual Financial Report*, *Annual Budget*, *President's Report to the Community*, and brochures and newsletters. For more information, call the Office of College Advancement at 847.635.1806.



In accordance with the Illinois Community College Act, Oakton provides, at minimum, the following educational programs and services:

- Baccalaureate and general education for students planning to transfer to four-year colleges and/or to earn an associate degree in liberal arts, science, engineering, or fine arts.
- Occupational education to provide students with career training suitable for obtaining employment or enhancing occupational skills.
- General or developmental studies for students requiring additional preparation before they can begin college-level education.
- Continuing education for residents, employers, and employees of the community desiring classes without having to enroll in formal college-level courses.
- Public service activities to meet specialized needs of the community; such activities may include workshops, seminars, and customized employee training programs offered on or off campus.
- Student services, such as counseling and advisement, testing, and tutoring.



Oakton's vision, mission and values are based on long-standing and fundamental principles guiding the College's work and the relationships among all those who work and study at Oakton, as well as members of the community and professional colleagues throughout the nation. The vision, mission and values were formally ratified by the Board of Trustees on October 20, 1998. They were reaffirmed by the Board on October 15, 2002.

## **We are the community's college.**

We are dedicated, first, to excellence in teaching and learning.

We challenge our students to experience the hard work and satisfaction of learning that leads to intellectual growth and support them academically, emotionally and socially.

We encourage them to entertain and question ideas, think critically, solve problems, and engage with other cultures, with one another, and with us.

We expect our students to assume responsibility for their own learning, to exercise leadership and to apply ethical principles in their academic, work, and personal lives.

We demand from ourselves and our students tolerance, fairness, responsibility, compassion and integrity.

## **We are a community of learners.**

We provide education and training for and throughout a lifetime.

We seek to improve and expand the services we offer in support of the people in the communities we serve.

We promote a caring community of staff and faculty members, students, administrators, and trustees who, in keeping with our values, work together to fulfill our mission.

## **We are a changing community.**

We recognize that change is inevitable and that education must be for the future.

We respond to change informed by our values and our responsibility to our students and our communities.

We challenge our students to be capable global citizens, guided by knowledge and ethical principles, who will shape the future.

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