

as

172

**OAKLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT COHORT ONE  
FOLLOW-UP STUDY**

as

*Prepared by:*

*Office of Institutional Research  
Oakland Community College  
August 1996*

## *HIGHLIGHTS*

- Returning and nonreturning students differ on several key demographic variables. Nonreturning students are on average older than continuing students, and tend to have less well-educated parents. Males are overrepresented among nonreturning students, as are minority students.
- The percentage of continuing students stating an intention to gain an associate degree or credits for transfer increased between 1994 and 1995. Nearly half (46%) of these students reported that this shift was due to a change in educational plans or goals. Nearly three quarters (74%) of continuing students plan eventually to earn a bachelor's degree or higher.
- Nearly half (49%) of continuing students feel that they have made significant progress in attaining their personal goals while at OCC. An additional 42% feel they have also made significant progress in independent learning skills. Over one third of continuing students feel they have made no progress in understanding the scientific method (34%) and in mathematical skills (33%). A full quarter (25%) feel they have not made progress in the effective use of technology.
- Just under one third of nonreturning students stated that they achieved their educational goals while at OCC, while two thirds said they did not. Among the students who did meet their goal, the most common one was the completion of a specific course (59%) or successful transfer to another college (28%).
- Among nonreturning students who did not complete their goals while at OCC, nearly half (44%) stated that financial reasons had influenced their decision not to reenroll at the college. When probed for details, the majority said they did not have tuition money at the deadline, or were unable to earn enough money while enrolled.
- Nearly two thirds (63%) of nonreturners stated that their decision not to enroll was due to personal reasons. While nearly half (45%) of these respondents said that these problems were related to scheduling conflicts, over one third (38%) did not provide specific details, saying only that "other" personal reasons influenced them.
- Just under two thirds (65%) say that returning to OCC is part of their long-term educational plan. One half (50%) of nonreturning students surveyed say they intend to complete at least a bachelor's degree.
- Overall, nonreturning students feel they made less progress while at OCC than did continuing students. Nonreturners feel they made the most progress in their independent learning skills (28%) and their ability to achieve personal goals (28%). However, they felt they made no progress in mathematical skills (55%), understanding scientific method (51%), and effective use of technology (37%).
- Nearly two-thirds(64%) of nonreturning students reported that they are working full-time. Almost three quarters (73%) of those working feel that their current employment is related to their studies at OCC.

**Oakland Community College**  
**Outcomes Assessment**  
**Cohort One ( Fall 1994 Students) Follow-up Study**

**INTRODUCTION:**

This cohort study constitutes an integral part of the assessment plan designed by the student outcomes assessment committee of the Academic Senate of Oakland Community College. The study uses a longitudinal model to track a particular cohort of students throughout their experience at OCC. Information gathered by this method allows for a clear picture of students' progression from admission through departure, transfer or graduation. Assessment of student opinion and progress is made on a regular basis to determine if members of the cohort have met their intended outcomes.

The first report published last year summarized data collected on the Fall 1994 student cohort at the first assessment point. It included data related to the admission of the student and the perceptions of the students in their first term. Demographic information included gender, ethnicity, age, information about parents' educational background, socio-economic status and the high school attended by the student. This background information was obtained for use in analysis later in the study.

This follow-up report provides a summary of data collected about the cohort at the second assessment point in Fall, 1995. At this time data was collected on both the members of the cohort group who were continuing their education at the college and those who had not returned to OCC. Students were asked to update their educational, career goals and employment status. In addition, all cohort members were questioned on their perceptions of their educational progress and future plans. Non-returning students were interviewed about their decisions not to re-enroll at the college.

**METHODOLOGY:**

At the beginning of the cohort study it was conservatively estimated, using statistical measures (Van Marte & Gilbreath, 1980; Narins, 1994) that a final cohort size of 385 would constitute a valid student sample. In order to allow for expected attrition as the cohort moved through the College we calculated a starting sample size of 800 was needed.

For the Fall, 1995 follow-up study we initially determined from the College's student information system that 344 students (43%) of the original 800 were registered for the Fall term, while 456 (57%) had not returned to OCC.

Our concerns about attrition were borne out by this year's study, in that we were able to interview only 456 of the original cohort of 800 students despite repeated attempts to contact them. It proved particularly difficult to reach the non-returning group; 41% were interviewed in

contrast to 79% of the continuing students. Clearly the lack of current involvement with OCC makes the non-returning group inherently more difficult to contact. As we discovered the previous year, many of those we were unable to contact reflected the characteristics of a transient population; phone numbers were disconnected, residence changed, no forwarding addresses were available.

**Table 1a**  
**Response Rate - Continuing Students**

Response	Number	Percentage
Interviewed	271	78.7%
Refused	9	2.6%
Not Interviewed	64	18.6%
Total	344	

**Table 1b**  
**Response Rate - Non-returning Students**

Response	Number	Percentage
Interviewed	185	41%
Refused	5	1%
Not Interviewed	266	58%
Total	456	

## **ANALYSIS:**

### **Section I**

#### ***Demographics of Continuing and Nonreturning Students***

Analysis revealed that continuing and nonreturning student respondents differ on several key variables. While the gender breakdown of continuing students was quite similar to that of the original cohort (56% female, 44% male), males were slightly overrepresented among the nonreturning students (49% female, 51% male). Continuing students are also closer to the mean age of the original cohort (21.0 years), while nonreturning students are on average older (26.4 years).

Data on respondents' race also indicate that the continuing students are comparable to the original cohort (86% white, 14% nonwhite) while nonwhite students were overrepresented in the nonreturning population (77% white, 23% nonwhite).

More differences are apparent in the educational attainment of respondents' parents. Among continuing students, over half (56%) of fathers had at least some college, and over one third (37%) had a four year college degree or more. Among nonreturning students, less than one half (45%) had at least some college, while one quarter (25%) had a four year college degree or more.

Household income does not vary considerably between the continuing and nonreturning students. In both groups, just under one fifth (roughly 20%) reported a household income of under \$30,000, while an additional quarter (approximately 25%) reported an income of above \$60,000. In addition, the mean ASSET scores of students in both groups were comparable to those of the original cohort.

### **Section II**

#### ***Continuing Students:***

Our interest in interviewing this group was focused on the extent to which they are achieving their educational and career goals at OCC and their progress through the institution. In addition, we were interested in assessing the extent to which goals had been modified and the factors influencing those changes.

#### **Reason for being at OCC:**

These students were asked to indicate the single most important reason for being at OCC. The major reasons given remained the same as the previous year with the largest group indicating their desire for transfer credits as their primary impetus (*Table 2*). However, comparison with the reasons indicated by students in 1994 indicates some movement, with an increase (8%) in the percentage citing transfer credit and associate degrees (8% more) as their motivation and a decrease in those indicating "other" reasons (12%). Further study could be directed to consideration of OCC's role in comparison with external influences and personal development.

**Table 2**

**Which of the following is the single most important reason for your being at OCC?**

1995	1994		
3.0%	4.4%	To gain a certificate	8
32.8%	23.6%	To gain an associate degree	89
53.5%	47.6%	To gain transfer credits	143
4.4%	6.3%	To gain job skills for a new career	12
1.1%	1.8%	To upgrade existing job skills	3
3.3%	2.6%	To gain personal enrichment	9
1.8%	13.7%	Other reason	5

**Change in reason for being at OCC:**

Eighty of the continuing students (30%) had changed their primary reason for being at OCC from that reported in their first term. When asked a follow-up question about this change, the largest group (26%) reported that they decided to continue their education. The second largest group (20%) reported a very similar reason of “changed educational goal”. A further 16% said they “changed their career goal”, while 19% said they were confused by the terminology when first questioned. This comment suggests revision of the wording of the first survey may be needed to make it more easily understood by students entering college.

Internal consistency of this data is reinforced by cross-tab analysis of the data using students’ reasons for being at OCC correlated with their opinions of why their reason changed. This information shows that transfer students were most likely to say they had “decided to continue their education”, while those now citing an associate degree as their goal were most likely to say they had “changed their educational goal.” Those who now cited job skills for a new job as their motivation were also likely to report changing their career goals.

**Length of stay at OCC:**

When asked how much longer they intended to stay at OCC the largest group (27%) reported one year, the next largest (21%) identified two years (Table 3). The change this illustrates from 1994 data may indicate the movement of a core group of the cohort through the institution. Cross-tab analysis predictably showed clear differences in the length of time students intend to stay at the College linked to the reason given for attending OCC. Transfer credit students, for example, are

more likely to choose two semesters or one year while associate degree students are more likely to cite two years.

**Table 3**  
**How much longer do you expect to stay at OCC?**

	1995	1994	
32	12%	7%	One semester
39	14%	6%	Two semesters
21	8%	4%	Three semesters
74	27%	13%	One year
58	21%	47%	Two years
11	4%	8%	Three years
11	4%	5%	More than three years
23	9%	9%	Unsure

**Pattern of enrollment:**

As indicated last year, most students (83%) intend to enroll continuously over the fall, winter and spring terms. Fourteen percent indicated their intention to take a break between semesters. Further analysis indicated no significant differences in this intention between the different groups of students.

**Number of Credits:**

When asked how many credits they expect to take at OCC, the largest group of students (24%) indicated 62. Seventeen percent reported they would take 60 credits, which may demonstrate some confusion over the number of credits required for an associate degree. However, slightly fewer students than last year (20% in comparison with 28%) were unable to answer this question. The mean number of credits reported was 55 in comparison with the mode of 62.

**Transfer Intentions:**

When asked about their intentions to transfer to another institution of higher education, 74% of our continuing student group intend to transfer to a four-year school, 7% intend to transfer to a two-year school and 12% do not intend to transfer (Table 4). It would seem that there may be some confusion about the status of Walsh College within these responses; some students are identifying it as two-year, others as four-year college.

**Table 4**

**Do you intend to transfer to a 2-year, 4-year college or another type of school?**

27	12%	Not intending to transfer
14	6%	Undecided about transfer
15	7%	To a 2-year college
168	74%	To a 4-year college
5	2%	Another type of school or college

These transfer intentions match very consistently with the educational goals reported by the group. The largest group (39%) reported that they hope to obtain a bachelor's degree, while another 35% intend to gain a professional, master's or higher degree (*Table 5*). Further analysis reveals that 43% of those at OCC for the primary reason of gaining an associate degree want to complete a bachelor's in the long-term. A similar percent of transfer students aim for a bachelor's, while 46% want to obtain a professional, master's or higher.

**Table 5**

**Which best describes the amount of education you want to complete in the long-term?**

8	3%	Personal improvement courses
14	5%	Professional development courses
17	6%	Professional certification
21	8%	Associate degree
104	39%	A bachelor's degree
90	35%	A professional, master's degree or doctorate
8	3%	Other

In addition, over half (56%) of the respondents reported themselves as "very sure" about this long-term educational goal while an additional 38% were "somewhat sure." The associate degree (58%) and transfer (61%) groups are more likely to be "very sure."

147  
↓  
99



**Educational Progress:**

Continuing students were asked a series of questions related to their progress at OCC. In particular they were asked to rate their progress on a set of measures based on the College’s core competencies (Table 6). In response to these questions students were most likely to judge that they had made significant progress in their “ability to attain personal goals” (49%), and “independent learning skills” (42%). They were most likely to perceive that they had made “no progress” in “understanding scientific method” (34%), “mathematical skills” (33%), “effective use of technology” (25%) and “greater awareness of world problems” (24%). It would appear from additional narrative responses that some students may perceive that unless they have taken a course obviously and directly related to one of the competencies they have made “no progress” in that area. Even with that caveat it may be an issue of concern, for example, that a quarter of the group thinks it has not gained skills in the technology area.

**Table 6**

**To what extent have you made progress in the following educational areas as a result of your attendance at OCC?**

	<i>Significant progress</i>	<i>Some progress</i>	<i>No progress</i>	
<b>Independent learning skills</b>	112 42%	138 52%	15 6%	+
<b>Communication skills</b>	96 34%	150 56%	25 10%	
<b>Ability to solve complex problems</b>	74 28%	169 63%	23 9%	+
<b>Ability to attain personal goals</b>	132 49%	122 46%	11 5%	+
<b>Mathematical skills</b>	58 23%	115 45%	92 33%	- ✓
<b>Interpersonal skills</b>	85 32%	159 60%	21 8%	+
<b>Greater awareness of world problems</b>	83 31%	118 45%	62 24%	- ✓
<b>Effective use of technology</b>	70 26%	128 48%	65 25%	- ✓
<b>Understanding scientific method</b>	51 20%	122 47%	87 34%	- ✓

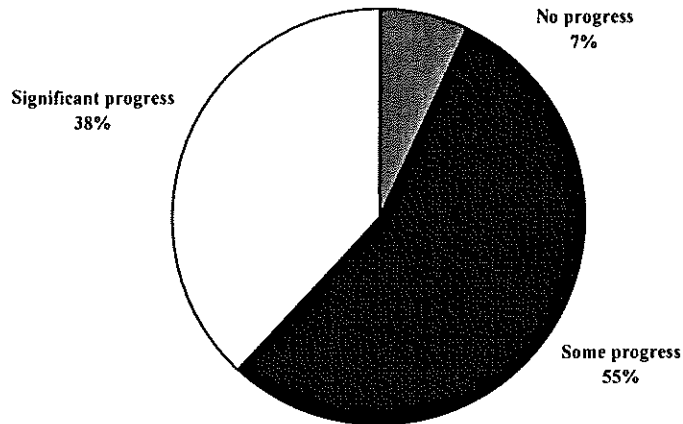
**Progress towards career goals:**

Thirty-eight percent of continuing students interviewed reported that they made “significant progress” toward their career goal while 55% said they made “some progress”. Eight percent of the group reported “no progress”, while one respondent noted that his/her attendance was not related to a career goal. Crosstab analysis suggested that the respondents whose primary reason for attendance was to gain a certificate were the most likely to report “significant progress” toward their career goal (63%). Transfer credit and associate degree students were more likely to

say they made “some progress.” However, the small size of the certificate group necessitates caution in drawing conclusions from this information.

**Chart 1**

**How much progress have you made toward your career goals?**



When asked to explain in what way they made progress toward their career goal, 57% said they gained some of the skills needed, while 30% felt they defined their goal more clearly and 3% achieved their goal.

***Employment:***

In order to provide additional insight into their achievement of career goals respondents were asked about their current employment status. Thirty-six percent of the group were employed full-time while 48% were employed part-time. Five percent were unemployed but seeking work, while an additional eleven percent were unemployed but not seeking work (*Table 6*). Almost two-thirds (62%) of the group said that their current job was related to their studies at OCC, while 22% felt it was somewhat related.

128

95

***Licensing or professional examinations:***

A very small percentage of the group (3%) at this time has taken licensing or professional examinations related to their academic studies. Seven of the eleven students who took these exams passed.

### Section III

#### *Non-returning Students:*

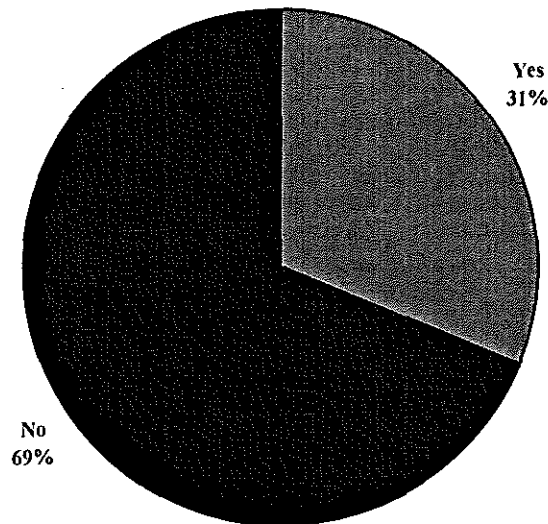
Student information system data recorded that individuals in this group of the cohort were not registered at OCC in fall 1995. Thus, the focus of interest in interviewing this group of students was the extent to which they had completed their educational and career goals while attending OCC.

#### **Completion of educational goal:**

When asked if they completed their educational goal while attending OCC almost one third (31%) of respondents in this group did so, while 69% reported they did not. Of those who completed their goal the largest group (59%) identified it as completion of one or more courses. An additional 28% transferred to another college, with the most popular choices being Wayne State and Michigan State.

Chart 2

Did you accomplish your educational goals while attending OCC?



**Table 7**  
**What was your educational goal?**

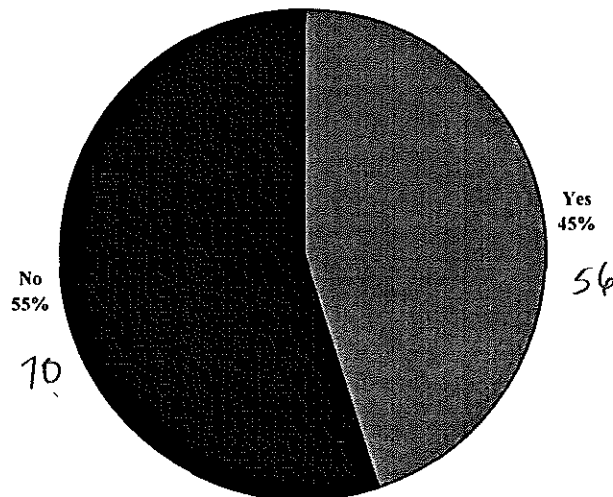
59%	To complete a course or courses	31
28%	To transfer to another college	16
7%	Another goal	4
7%	No response	

**Decision not to enroll at OCC in Fall 1995:**

The group of respondents who had not completed their educational goal were asked further details about their decision not to re-enroll in college during the Fall 1995 term. We grouped the reasons most frequently cited by students into three major categories of financial, personal and academic. Forty-five percent indicated financial reasons influenced their decision, while 55% said it was unrelated. (*Chart 3*) Of those who said financial reasons were involved, the major issues reported were lack of money at registration (68%) and the inability to earn enough income while enrolled. (*Table 8*)

**Chart 3**

**Was your decision not to return related to finances?**



**Table 8**  
**Which financial reasons apply to you?**

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
<b>Tuition was too expensive</b>	41% 23	59% 33
<b>Did not apply for financial aid</b>	34% 14	64% 36
<b>Financial aid denied</b>	13% 7	82% 46
<b>Insufficient financial aid</b>	9% 5	84% 47
<b>Could not earn enough income while enrolled</b>	63% 35	36% 20
<b>Did not have enough money at registration</b>	68% 38	30% 17
<b>Other</b>	18% 10	71% 40

When asked if their decision not to re-enroll was related to personal matters, almost two-thirds (63%) agreed, while 37% disagreed. (Chart 4) The personal reason most often cited were the time conflict between job and classes (45%). (Table 9) Thirty-eight percent reported that it was a personal reason other than those we listed. This suggests some additional pre-testing of the survey instrument may be necessary to determine if we are omitting something important. On the other hand it is possible that some students may be unwilling to disclose the nature of their personal reason.

Chart 4

Was your decision not to return related to personal reasons?

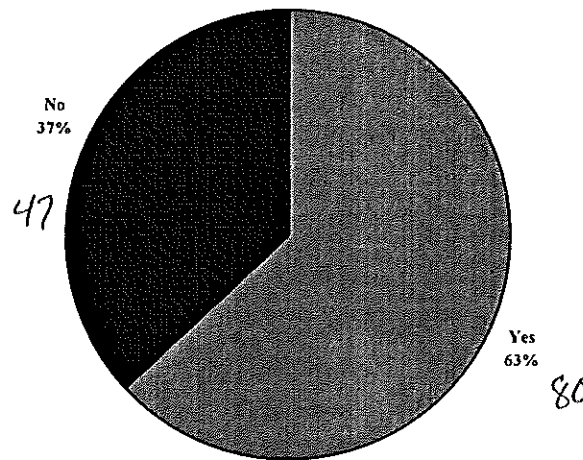


Table 9  
Which personal reasons apply to you?

	Yes	No
Moved away from the college	8% 6	90% 72
College experience was not what I expected	6% 5	91% 73
Accepted a new job	28% 22	70% 56
Time/schedule conflict with job and classes	45% 34	54% 43
Personal illness	7% 6	90% 73
Family illness or death	10% 8	88% 71
Other	38% 31	58% 47

When asked, 25% of the respondents said that their decision was related to academic reasons, while 75% said it was not (Chart 5). Of the academic reasons given the largest single group of respondents (40%) said they were dissatisfied with the instructor. One third of the group indicated dissatisfaction with the quality of education, one third with their own academic performance, and a similar number said that the courses they needed were not available.

Chart 5

Was your decision not to return related to academics?

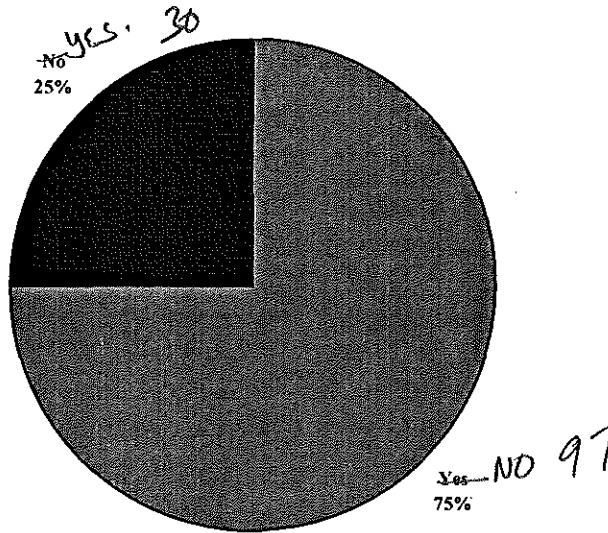


Table 10  
Which academic reasons apply to you?

	Yes	No
Courses I needed were not available	32% 10	65% 20
Courses were too difficult	10% 3	87% 26
Courses were not challenging	10% 3	83% 25
Dissatisfied with the quality of education	33% 10	63% 19
Dissatisfied with my academic performance	33% 10	63% 19
Dissatisfied with the instructor	40% 12	57% 17
Other	33% 10	60% 18

Plans to return to OCC:

Two thirds of all the respondents (65%) indicated that they intend to return to OCC, while 18% are unsure if they will return. Only 16% said they did not intend to do so.

119  
29

**Long-term educational plans:**

When asked how much education they want to complete in the long-term, the largest group (31%) chose a bachelor's degree, followed by 26% indicating they want to complete an associate degree. A total of 19% indicated a professional, master's or doctorate degree as their goal. Just over half (55%) are "very sure" about this goal, while 36% are "somewhat sure."

**Educational Progress:**

The non-returning students were asked the same series of questions related to their educational progress at OCC as was asked of the continuing students. They were asked to rate their progress on a set of measures based on the college's core competencies (Table 11). In response to these questions students were most likely to judge that they had made significant progress in their "independent learning skills" (28%) and their "ability to attain personal goals" (28%). They were most likely to perceive that they had made "no progress" in "mathematical skills" (55%), "understanding scientific method" (51%), and "effective use of technology" (37%). These responses are considerably more negative than those of continuing students with higher percentages indicating no progress and lower percentages judging that they had made significant progress.

**Table 11**

**To what extent have you made progress in the following educational areas as a result of your attendance at OCC?**

	<i>Significant progress</i>	<i>Some progress</i>	<i>No progress</i>
<b>Independent learning skills</b>	50 28%	102 56%	28 15%
<b>Communication skills</b>	39 22%	94 53%	44 24%
<b>Ability to solve complex problems</b>	33 19%	97 54%	49 27%
<b>Ability to attain personal goals</b>	49 28%	91 51%	39 21%
<b>Mathematical skills</b>	26 15%	54 30%	99 55%
<b>Interpersonal skills</b>	40 23%	97 54%	42 23%
<b>Greater awareness of world problems</b>	44 25%	72 40%	63 35%
<b>Effective use of technology</b>	38 19%	80 45%	67 37%
<b>Understanding scientific method</b>	22 12%	63 37%	93 51%



**Progress towards career goals:**

Thirteen percent of the non-returning student group interviewed reported that they made "significant progress" toward their career goal while 48% said they made "some progress".

Thirty six percent of the group reported "no progress", while five respondents noted that their attendance was not related to career goals. There is substantial difference here between the progress reported by this group and by the continuing students; twenty-five percent fewer non-returning students reported making "significant progress" towards their career goals.

When asked to explain in what way they made progress toward their career goal, 67% said they gained some of the skills needed, while 22% felt they defined their goal more clearly and 5% achieved their goal. This reflects a very similar pattern to the definitions of progress given by the continuing students.

**Employment:**

In order to provide additional insight into their achievement of career goals respondents were asked about their current employment status. Sixty-four percent of the group were employed full-time while 16% were employed part-time. Eight percent were unemployed but seeking work, an additional nine percent were unemployed but not seeking work and 3% were self employed ( Table 12). This reflects a much higher level of full-time employment (64%) than that demonstrated by continuing students (36%). More than two-thirds (73%) of the group said that their current job was highly related to their studies at OCC, while 26% felt it was somewhat related.

**Table 12**

**To what extent have you made progress toward your career goal?**

Significant progress	13%	22
Some progress	48%	47
No progress	36%	67
Attendance not related to a career goal	3%	5

**Licensing or professional examinations:**

A small percentage of the group (7%) at this time has taken licensing or professional examinations related to their academic studies. Ten of the thirteen students who took these exams passed.

## CONCLUSION

Two years into the cohort study, there are several notable differences among continuing and nonreturning students. Males and minorities are overrepresented among the nonreturners, as are older students and those with less well-educated parents. In addition, nonreturners feel that they made less progress while at OCC than do continuing students. Two-thirds of nonreturners report that they did not achieve their educational goals while at the college, although the majority of them say that their longterm educational goals include returning to OCC.

Among continuing students, nearly half report significant progress toward attaining personal goals and independent learning skills. However, about one third of continuing students feel that they have made no progress in mathematics skills, effective use of technology, or understanding the scientific method, suggesting that additional inquiry into students' perceptions of their skills in these areas might be worthwhile.