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**OAKLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
1996 OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT COHORT ONE  
FOLLOW-UP STUDY**

***Prepared by:***

***Office of Institutional Planning & Analysis  
Oakland Community College  
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**Oakland Community College  
Outcomes Assessment  
Cohort One Second Follow-up Study**

## **Introduction**

The cohort study described on the following pages represents a central component of the assessment plan developed by the Student Outcomes Assessment Committee of Oakland Community College's Academic Senate. By using a longitudinal model to track students' experience at OCC over a number of years, the study is intended to provide better understanding of student progression through the college, beginning with admission and continuing through departure, transfer, graduation, or return. In order to determine whether students in the cohort have met intended outcomes, progress is measured at the start of each fall term. This report constitutes the third such measurement for the first cohort. This group entered the college as first time students in the fall of 1994.

At this data collection point, members of the original cohort had split into three subgroups: those who have been enrolled each fall semester since 1994 (continuing) those who have left the college since the last measurement in fall 1995 (departed), and those who were not enrolled in fall 1995 but have returned to the college and are registered for classes in fall 1996 (returning). Those students who had left the college at the last measurement point (Fall 1995) and have not returned were not included as a subgroup, as they were surveyed last year. These groups were surveyed separately in order to determine not only progress toward college outcomes as well as educational and career goals, but also to identify reasons for departure and factors influencing the return to the college.

## **Methodology**

At the start of the cohort study in 1994, we estimated (using statistical guidelines noted by Van Marte & Gilbreath, 1980; and Narins, 1994) that a final cohort size of 385 would be required for validity. Based on expected rates of attrition, we selected a cohort of 800. At the Fall 1995 measurement point, we were able to contact 456 of these students, 271 of whom were registered for classes and 185 who had left the college since the Fall 1994 measurement point. At the Fall 1996 measurement point, we attempted to contact students currently enrolled at the college as well as those who had departed since the Fall 1995 term. We were able to reach 256 of the 405 students in these categories:

Table One  
Response Rates

Category	Number	Responses	Response rate
Continuing	205	148	72%
Departed	154	77	50%
Returning	46	31	67%

405

It should be noted that 395 students of the original cohort were not counted as part of the 1996 sample. These students left the college after the Fall 1994 term and have not re-enrolled in either Fall 1995 or Fall 1996. Since a sample of these students was surveyed in Fall 1995 as "departed", we did not attempt to recontact them in Fall 1996.

As Table One indicates, the response rate for departed students was substantially lower than the rates for continuing and returning students. After repeated attempts at contact, we were not able to reach half of this group. The difference may be partially explained by the transient nature of the population. Interviewing records indicate that 28 (18%) had moved without leaving forwarding address or telephone information. An additional 26 (17%) had disconnected or inaccurate phone numbers listed.

### Continuing Students

Of the 800 students in the original cohort, 205 were registered for classes in the fall of 1995 and again in the fall of 1996. We surveyed 148 of these continuing students to determine whether their reason for being at OCC and their expected length of stay had changed since the previous point of contact. We also asked continuing students about their longterm career and educational goals as well as the amount of progress they feel they have made in academic areas since coming to OCC. Analysis of demographic variables indicates that 55% of continuing student respondents are female and 45% male. Eighty-four percent are white and 9% are African-American, while 4% are Asian and 3% are Hispanic. Overall, the college is 60% female and 40% male. Eighty percent of all students enrolled in Fall 1996 are white, while 13% are African-American and 4% are Asian (source: Fall 1996 Enrollment Trends Report), indicating that females and African-Americans are slightly underrepresented in this data.

17. How know?

#### *Reason for Attending OCC:*

The majority of continuing students report that the most important reason for their enrollment at OCC is either to obtain an associate degree (48%) or to gain credits for transfer (43%). While the percent attending to gain an associate degree has increased 15% since the fall of 1995, the percent attending to gain transfer credit has dropped 11%, suggesting a possible shift in

educational goals among continuing students. However, when respondents were asked about longterm educational goals, the majority say they intend to transfer to a four year institution. While the data we have collected do not explain this difference, it is possible that as respondents accumulate credits at OCC, the longterm goal of transferring and eventually earning a bachelors degree takes second place to the more immediate goal of earning an associate degree.

Table Two  
Most Important Reason for Attending OCC 1

Reason	% Citing in 95	% Citing in 96	n
To gain a certificate	3%	3%	5
To gain an associate degree	33%	48.0%	71
To gain credits for transfer	54%	43%	64
To gain job skills for a new career	4%	2%	3
To upgrade existing job skills	1%	1%	1
To gain personal enrichment	3%	2%	3
Other	2%	1%	1

Almost two-thirds (65%) of 1996 survey respondents stated that they intend to stay at the college a maximum of three additional terms. Since these students first enrolled at OCC in Fall 94 and were enrolled in both Fall 95 and Fall 96, it is likely that many will have completed sufficient credits to transfer or to obtain an associate degree by next fall.

*Longterm Educational Goals:* 49 / 105 / 72  
 The majority of respondents (71%) say they plan eventually to attend a four-year college or university. More than half (53%) of all respondents intend to earn a bachelor's degree, while an additional one-third (33%) plan to obtain an advanced degree. When compared to last year's results, it appears that more continuing students now plan to earn a bachelors degree, while slightly fewer intend to earn an associate degree or an advanced degree. However, in both 1995 and 1996, the majority stated an intention to transfer to a four year college or university with a long term educational goal of at least a bachelor's degree. In addition, the majority of continuing students surveyed both years said they were "very sure" about educational goals. This suggests that while short-term educational goals may have shifted, students' longterm aspirations have remained constant over time.

V.S. 93 69%

Table Three  
Longterm Educational Goals #7

<i>Goal</i>	<i>% Citing in 95</i>	<i>% Citing in 96</i>	<i>n</i>
Personal improvement courses	3%	1%	1
Professional development courses	5%	2%	2
Professional certification	6%	4%	5
Associate degree	8%	2%	2
Bachelor's degree	39%	53%	72
Professional or masters degree	35%	33%	45
Other	3%	5%	6

*Educational Progress:*

In both the 1995 and 1996 surveys, continuing students were asked to respond to a series of questions about their progress in specific academic areas. As was the case in 1995, 1996 responses revealed that students were most likely to report significant progress toward personal goals and independent learning skills. In both 1995 and 1996, continuing students were most likely to report no progress in mathematical skills, awareness of world problems, use of technology, and understanding of the scientific method.

Table Four  
Educational Progress

9

S.P. n=

Area	% Citing Significant Progress in 95	% Citing Significant Progress in 96
Independent learning skills	42%	45%
Communication skills	34%	39%
Ability to solve complex problems	28%	29%
Ability to attain personal goals	49%	48%
Mathematical skills	23%	20%
Interpersonal skills	32%	37%
Greater awareness of world problems	31%	26%
Understanding scientific method	20%	24%
Effective use of technology	26%	28%

97  
411  
41  
24  
46  
26  
29  
28  
26  
27

Analysis by gender suggests that women are more likely than men to say that they made significant progress in interpersonal skills while at OCC. While men outnumber women in reporting significant progress in independent learning skills, complex problem-solving, technology use, and understanding scientific method, these differences are not statistically significant. Analysis reveals no statistically significant racial differences in response to these questions.

*Career Goals*

73

Nearly one half (49%) of 1996 respondents reported significant progress toward their career goals while at OCC, and an additional 43% reported some progress. These figures represent a positive shift from last year's responses, when fewer students reported significant progress and more reported some progress.. When asked to explain their progress, over half (56%) said that they had gained some of the skills needed, and just over one quarter (26%) said that they had defined their goal more clearly. Further analysis indicates that there are no significant gender or racial differences in reporting progress toward career goals.

76

35

Table Five  
Progress Toward Career Goals

#10

<i>Progress</i>	<i>% Citing in 95</i>	<i>% Citing in 96</i>
Significant progress	38%	49%
Some progress	55%	43%
No progress	7%	8%

97, n= 31  
 44 31  
 53 37  
 31 2

*Employment*

Forty-two percent of 1996 respondents reported that they are currently employed full-time; an additional 44% are employed part-time. These figures are comparable to those reported last year, although full-time employment has increased 6% while part-time has decreased 4%. Nearly half (47%) say that their current employment is not at all related to their OCC studies. This represents a major shift from last year, when less than one fifth reported that their employment was not at all related. Current data do not shed any light on this shift, suggesting that this might be an appropriate area for further investigation.

**Departed Students**

A total of 154 students from the original cohort were no longer enrolled at OCC in Fall 1996 although all had been enrolled in Fall 1994 and Fall 1995. These students were categorized as "departed" and were surveyed in order to determine their reasons for leaving OCC as well as their feelings about the progress they made while at OCC. We were able to contact by telephone 77 of the departed students. An additional 394 students from the original cohort were not enrolled in the Fall 1996 term, but as this group was also absent in the Fall 1995 term they were not surveyed at this point.

Two-thirds (66%) of departed students responding to the survey are female, while one third (34%) are male. Ninety percent are white, 7% are African American, 2% are Asian, and 1% are Hispanic. When compared to overall college enrollments, this group overrepresents females and minorities.

*Educational Attainment*

When asked to state whether they had accomplished their educational goal at OCC, respondents were nearly evenly split. Just under half (48%) said that they had accomplished their goal, while the remaining 52% reported that they had not. When compared to the responses of last year's departing students, more completed their goals before leaving the college, possibly due to their longer stay.

When asked what their goal had been, over one-half (54%) said that they had planned to transfer to another institution, while an additional one-third (35%) had planned to complete a specific course or set of courses. Among those who responded that they had transferred, the most popular transfer institution was Oakland University (27%). Eastern Michigan University, Wayne State University, and University of Michigan-Dearborn each accounted for an additional 9% of transfers.

Table Six  
Goal Completion

<i>Goal Completed</i>	<i>% Citing in 95</i>	<i>% Citing in 96</i>
Yes	31%	48%
No	69%	52%

97  
58  
42

**Reasons for Departure**

Those who reported that they had not accomplished their goal were asked to state whether their decision not to leave the college could be categorized as financial, academic, or personal. As was also found in last year's study of 1995 departing students, financial and personal reasons were most commonly cited.

Table Seven  
Reasons for Departure

2,416

<i>Reason</i>	<i>% Citing in 95</i>	<i>% Citing in 96</i>
Financial	45%	40%
Personal	63%	65%
Academic	25%	13%

97

Within the financial category, a lack of money at the time of registration and an inability to earn enough money while enrolled were frequently cited. Within the personal category, scheduling conflicts and confidential or personal reasons were commonly mentioned.

**Longterm Educational Goals**

Over half (55%) of respondents reported longterm plans to earn at least a bachelor's degree. Half of respondents say they are very sure about their goal. These figures are consistent with departed students surveyed in 1995. When compared to continuing students, however, far fewer of departing students intend to earn a four year or advanced degree.



Table Eight  
Longterm Educational Goals

9

Goal	% Citing in 95	% Citing in 96
Associate degree	26%	24%
Bachelors' degree	31%	36%
Masters/professional degree	19%	20%

97  
 31  
 38  
 23

*Plans to return to OCC:*

Just under half (49%) of departing students surveyed reported that they plan to return to OCC at some time in the future. An additional one-third (33%) do not plan to return, while 17% are unsure. In 1995, nearly two-thirds stated an intention to return and only 16% had no plans to return.

*Educational Progress:*

Departing students were also asked about their progress in specific educational areas. On average, departing students are less likely to feel that they made significant progress in these areas while at OCC. However, both continuing and departing students were most likely to cite significant progress in independent learning skills and the ability to attain personal goals, and most likely to report no progress in mathematical skills, understanding the scientific method, and effective use of technology. The following graph displays responses. The same patterns are apparent in last year's departing students, suggesting that mathematics, science and technology may be areas of particular concern.

Table Nine  
Educational Progress

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Area	% Citing Significant Progress in 95	% Citing Significant Progress in 96
Independent learning skills	28%	34%
Communication skills	22%	25%
Ability to solve complex problems	19%	21%
Ability to attain personal goals	28%	35%
Mathematical skills	15%	13%
Interpersonal skills	23%	27%
Greater awareness of world problems	25%	23%
Understanding scientific method	12%	9%
Effective use of technology	19%	21%

97 n=?  
 44  
 44  
 27  
 43  
 33  
 38  
 36  
 29  
 31

*Career Goals*

The majority of respondents (62%) reported some progress toward career goals while at OCC, while nearly a quarter (23%) reported significant progress and 10% reported no progress. In 1995, over one-third of departing students felt they had made no progress toward career goals, and just 13% reported significant progress. These shifts in responses may be due in part to the additional year 1996 respondents spent at OCC.

Table Ten  
Progress Toward Career Goals

12

Progress	% Citing in 95	% Citing in 96
Significant progress	13%	23%
Some progress	48%	62%
No progress	36%	10%

97  
 44  
 43  
 13

*Employment*

14

Over half (56%) of respondents are currently working full-time, and additional 20% are working full-time. Ten percent are unemployed, while the remaining 14% are either unemployed but not seeking work or self-employed. These figures are consistent with responses from departing students surveyed in 1995, suggesting that the majority of students leaving the college without

completing a degree or transferring to another institution are going directly back into the workforce.

### Returning Students

In fall 1996, 46 students who were not enrolled the previous fall returned to OCC. Thirty-one of these students were contacted in order to gain a better understanding of their activities during the time away from the college as well as their reasons for returning. Just over half (55%) of returning students are female and just under half (45%) are male. Eighty-one percent are white, 16% African-American, and 3% Asian. Compared to overall college enrollments, these figures slightly underrepresent females and slightly overrepresent African-Americans.

#### *Educational Goals:*

Nearly half (48%) of respondents indicated that they had returned to OCC in order to gain an associate degree, while an additional 39% plan to gain transfer credits. Three percent are here to upgrade existing skills or to gain skills for a new career, and the remaining 7% are here for personal enrichment. When asked their current reason for attending OCC, half stated the same reason noted on the initial 1994 survey.

Table Eleven

#### Most Important Reason for Returning to OCC

<i>Reason</i>	<i>% Citing</i>	
To gain an associate degree	48%	15
To gain credits for transfer	39%	12
To gain job skills for a new career	3%	1
To upgrade existing job skills	3%	1
To gain personal enrichment	7%	2

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In order to determine how many respondents had returned to OCC for the same reason they initially enrolled, we crosstabulated responses for 1994 and 1996. One-quarter (25%) indicated in 1994 and again after returning in 1996 that they were attending OCC in order to gain an associate degree, and an additional one-quarter (25%) indicated in both years that they were attending to gain transfer credits. However, it should be noted that these percentages represent relatively small actual numbers as only 31 returning students responded to the survey.

*Return to OCC*

Students returning to the college were also asked about the factors which had most influenced their decision to return. The decision to earn an OCC degree was the most frequently cited influence, followed by an increased motivation to continue the educational process.

Table Twelve  
Factors Influencing Return to OCC

*Number # 4*

<i>Factor</i>	<i>% Citing</i>
OCC is the best option financially	10%
Need additional credits for transfer	16%
Decided to earn an OCC degree	32%
Increased motivation to continue education	23%
OCC reputation	13%
OCC location	6%

When asked how long they expect to stay at OCC, returning student responses varied considerably. The most frequently cited response was three additional terms (29%), although responses ranged from as low as one semester (3%) to as high six or more semesters (22%). The majority of respondents (83%) intend to enroll continuously, and more than half (52%) plan to complete 60-62 credits.

Nearly half (48%) of respondents plan to earn a bachelor's degree in the long term, and an additional 23% plan to earn an advanced or professional degree. These responses are consistent with those of continuing students, suggesting that time off from college does not necessarily influence longterm educational goals. The majority of respondents said they were very sure of these goals, which is also consistent with the responses of continuing students.

*Time off  
Return to OCC*

Table Thirteen  
Longterm Educational Goals

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Goal	% Citing
Associate degree	3%
Bachelors degree	48%
Masters degree	23%
Other	3%

*Amount of Time Away from OCC:* 2

Over one-third (36%) of respondents said they had taken off a total of three terms before returning to OCC. An additional third (29%) were gone for two terms, while 13% were gone one term.

3

*Use of Time Away from OCC:*

Respondents were also asked to explain how they spent their time away from OCC. Over half (52%) said that they had spent their time off attending to personal business. In many cases, respondents indicated that family issues--births, deaths, and illnesses--had occupied most of their time. Twenty-six percent mentioned financial issues, explaining that they spent their time away from OCC working to save money for tuition. An additional 16% either spent the time travelling, or moved away from the area temporarily. The remaining 6% took classes at another college during their time off.

## **Conclusion**

At the third measurement point, the cohort had split into three subgroups: continuing, departed, and returning students. Those who were categorized as departed at the last measurement point (Fall 1995) and were still absent from the college in Fall 1996 were not recontacted. Demographic analysis indicates that female and white students are slightly overrepresented among respondents in the departing group.

Among continuing students, reason for attending OCC has shifted, although the longterm goal of transferring to a four year institution has remained stable. When asked about their educational progress in specific areas, 1995 and 1996 responses were comparable, suggesting that the additional time at the institution has not necessarily resulted in improvements in perceived progress. However, 1996 respondents were more likely to report significant progress toward career goals than 1995 respondents.

Departed students surveyed in 1996 were more likely to report that they accomplished their goals before leaving the college than those surveyed in 1995. More than half reported a longterm goal of transferring to another institution. Those who did not complete their goal before leaving were asked about the reasons for their departure; as was also the case in 1995, financial and personal reasons were most commonly cited. About half of departing students reported an intention to earn a bachelors degree or higher in the longterm.

Finally, returning students were asked about their activities during their time away from the college as well as the reasons for their return. About half indicated they had returned to the college to earn an associate degree, while an additional one third indicated they returned to gain transfer credits. Over half reported that they had spent the time off attending to personal business, while an additional one-quarter had worked to save money for tuition.