

MICHELE HAYS

CANDIDATE FOR OAKTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Candidate Name: Michele Hays
Website: MicheleHays4occ.com
Occupation: Community Advocate
Education: Thomas More College, Crestview Hills, KY Bachelor of Arts, Drama;
Associate of Arts, English; Associate of Arts, Communication

Civic Involvement: Back On Their Feet, Evanston IL, 2017- present, Founder and Administrator; Evanston Citizens for Appropriate Special Education Parent Partner, 2019; Brummel Park Neighbors and Hands Across Howard, Chair 2005 - present; Member of Evanston Police Chief's Advisory Council, 2005 - 2017; Volunteer Voter Registrar with League of Women Voters and OPAL 2015-2017; PTA President at Chute Middle School, 2013-15; Battle of the Books Club Coordinator, Washington Elementary School, 2008 - 2018; Board Chair, Puerta Abierta Preschool 2004-5

1. Why are you running?

I believe that Oakton Community College is a grossly undervalued resource, especially for workforce development programs but also as a gateway to 4-year institutions, and I think I can bring it more attention, increase participation, and uncover and help remove barriers to access. All communities in District 535 can benefit from the programming Oakton offers, and I am eager to serve its diverse constituency.

2. What are your qualifications?

As the child and sibling of college professors, I was effectively raised on-campus, and am comfortable with academics and academia. However, I am now part of a blue-collar family: my husband is an Evanston Firefighter whose career began at Oakton Community College. This ability to bridge different experiences has enabled success in my current work with Back On Their Feet, a group dedicated to connecting people in need to resources. Working as a volunteer has taught me to solve problems, but more importantly to first frame and define problems. My work also puts me in contact with people whose critical voices I can help amplify as Oakton decides how to provide service.

3. What do you hope to accomplish during your tenure on the board?

I would like Oakton Community College to take an active role not only in local high schools, but in local government, including Cook County, local municipal governments, and entities such as libraries and recreation departments. Government is always searching for ways to improve workforce development and improve the quality of life of its citizens as well as their ability to contribute. Oakton can serve workforce development as both a gateway to a 4-year institution as well as more immediately with its many certificate programs. My goal is to make Oakton the primary partner for this purpose for all governments within District 535.

At the same time, I would like to learn from potential students what barriers exist to accessing an education at Oakton to create strategies addressing these barriers: for instance, In Chicago, the CTA U-Pass offers free transportation to students enrolled full-time in the City Colleges; we

need something similar to serve our suburban students. I am eager to hear from constituents who have something to share about accessing Oakton, please contact me via my website or find me on Facebook: let me know what you want out of your Community College.