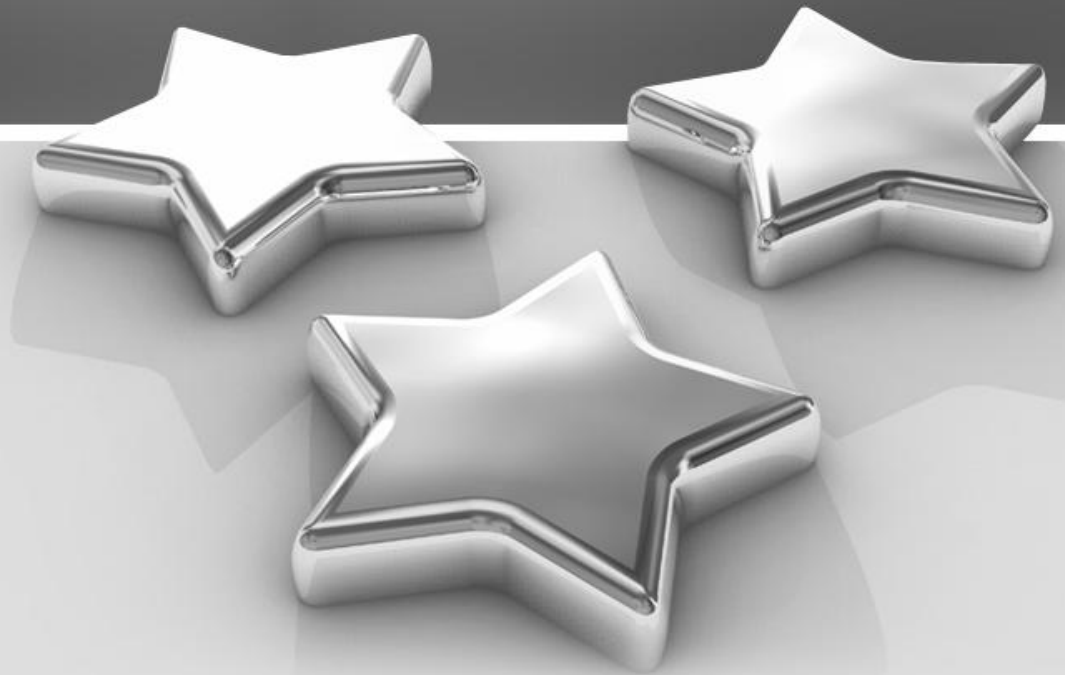


AGSC&STARS

2007-2008 Annual Report

Prepared by
Keith Sessions
Executive Director of AGSC/STARS



AGSC&STARS

2007-2008 Annual Report



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Message from the Chair

Dear Supporters of the AGSC/STARS Program:

This fall, we will celebrate a decade of transfer student success. In the fall of 1998, the STARS Office began to offer AGSC approved transfer guides for prospective transfer students in Alabama. Since that time, over 540,000 transfer guides have been viewed/printed through the state's articulation website. Through hard work, dedication, and cooperation, transfer students in Alabama no longer face many of the obstacles and hurdles once faced when transferring from one of Alabama's public institutions of higher education to another. Through the AGSC & STARS Program the loss of course credit upon transfer between our in-state public institutions of higher education has been drastically reduced. Today, Alabama has positioned itself, not only in the southeast - but also nationally, as a leader in the articulation of coursework from one institution to another. Over the last few years, the AGSC/STARS Program has been recognized as a model state articulation program by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). Many states are looking to Alabama's articulation program as an example of what can be accomplished if higher education leaders set lofty goals and work together to achieve them.

Over the past year, like those before, the AGSC and STARS staff have worked diligently and continued to move the program forward. I commend and appreciate their tireless work and unwavering commitment. I extend special commendations to Dr. Keith Sessions, the Executive Director for the program, the faculty who serve on academic committees, and the administrators who support the program on their campuses. It has been a pleasure and honor to lead the work associated with maintaining and improving this program.

The AGSC/STARS Program has had, and continues to have, a positive impact on transfer students across the State of Alabama. In the 2007-2008 academic year over 82,000 transfer students, academic advisors, faculty members, and college administrators obtained or viewed transfer guides online using the STARS System. As mentioned earlier, since 1998 over half a million students have used STARS to assist them in reaching their academic goals. It is estimated that the STARS Program has saved Alabama taxpayers (students and their parents) millions of dollars by preventing the loss of course credit upon transfer. In addition, hundreds of thousands of students have chosen to remain in Alabama as they work toward the completion of their bachelor's degree.

The AGSC and STARS staff thank the Alabama Legislature for its continued support of this worthwhile program. Annual funding from our state allows our program to improve and facilitate the movement of students between all Alabama community colleges and all Alabama public universities each year. We thank all of you who contact your representatives on behalf of the AGSC/STARS program. Your support will help to insure that the AGSC/STARS program continues to grow and the benefits continue for thousands of transfer students in our state.

Again, we want to thank each of you for your continued support of the AGSC/STARS Program. The AGSC and the STARS staff look forward to the opportunities and challenges that a new year brings. Though much has been accomplished over the last decade and a half, more can be done. We look forward to partnering with each of you as we continue to raise the AGSC/STARS Program to even greater heights in years to come.

Sincerely,

Barbara A. P. Jones
2007- 2008 Chair of the AGSC



Members & Alternates

APPOINTING AUTHORITY	VOTING MEMBER	ALTERNATE MEMBER
Alabama A&M University	Dr. Barbara A.P. Jones <i>Professor, School of Business</i>	Dr. Juarine Stewart <i>Associat Provost for Academic Affairs & Undergraduate Studies</i>
Alabama State University	Dr. Alfred Smith <i>Assistant VP for Academic Affairs</i>	Dr. Evelyn White <i>VP for Academic Affairs</i>
Auburn University	Dr. Linda Glaze <i>Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies</i>	Dr. Jeffrey M. Barksdale <i>Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Services Auburn University Montgomery</i>
University of Alabama System	Dr. Dan Osborn <i>Academic Programs and Policy University of Alabama in Birmingham</i>	Dr. Charles Nash <i>Vice Chancellor The University of Alabama System</i>
University of South Alabama	Dr. B. Keith Harrison <i>Associate VP for Academic Affairs</i>	Dr. Victoria Rivizzigno <i>College of Arts and Sciences Department of Earth Sciences</i>
Regional Universities	Dr. William Meehan <i>President Jacksonville State University</i>	Dr. Richard Holland <i>President University of West Alabama</i>
Regional Universities	Dr. Ed Roach <i>Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Troy University</i>	Dr. Roosevelt Newson <i>Vice President for University Programs University of North Alabama</i>
State Board of Education (2-Year)	Dr. James Mitchell <i>President Wallace Community College Selma</i>	Dr. Joe Morris <i>Dean of Instruction Jefferson State Community College</i>
State Board of Education (2-Year)	Dr. Susan Price <i>Vice Chancellor for Instructional and Student Services Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education</i>	Dr. Nancy Chandler <i>Interim President Enterprise-Ozark Community College</i>
State Board of Education (2-Year)	Dr. Rod Britt <i>Dean of Academic Division Southern Union State Community College</i>	Dr. Vicki Hawsey <i>President Wallace State Community College</i>
NON-VOTING MEMBERS:		
AGSC Secretary	Mrs. Deborah Nettles – <i>Administrative Assistant to the ACHE Executive Director</i>	
Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE)	Dr. Gregory Fitch – <i>Executive Director</i> Dr. Elizabeth French – <i>Director Institutional Effectiveness and Planning</i>	
Statewide Transfer & Articulation Reporting System	Dr. Keith Sessions – <i>Executive Director</i> Mr. Shannon Nichols – <i>Programmer (IT Director)</i> Mr. Dendy Moseley – <i>Program Coordinator</i>	



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Looking Back 2007-2008: A Status Report

Improved Communication and Partnerships Among Institutions

One of the most important outcomes of the legislation that created the AGSC and expanded the STARS System, was the bringing together of administrators, faculty, and staff from both the two-year and four-year institutions in Alabama to solve the transfer problem that impacted both sectors. Over the last fourteen years, higher education leaders have worked together to create an effective and efficient statewide articulation program.

Four years ago, the AGSC created and implemented AGSC/STARS Institutional Points of Contact (primary and alternates) at each and every public two-year and four-year institution in Alabama. These individuals work together to facilitate communication and understanding of the articulation program. Often these individuals work through problems that arise when students transfer from one institution to another. Communication between institutions is one of the most important elements in the whole transfer process. The STARS Office continues to provide training and workshops for these individuals and their institutions.

Students who transferred prior to the articulation legislation may have encountered numerous obstacles and hurdles primarily due to miscommunication between two-year schools offering courses and four-year schools accepting these courses for transfer credit. Often students were told one thing at one institution and then told something totally different at other institutions. Students now obtain state approved transfer guides that protect them from the “he said/she said” syndrome that they faced decades ago.

Over the past year, the STARS staff has made a concerted effort to try to encourage communication and teamwork among the various state institutions – both two-year and four-year. A number of four-year institutions have created “Community College Days” in which they either send representatives from their institutions to the surrounding community colleges or they bring in community college staff for transfer/articulation workshops. The STARS Office (when invited) usually sends staff to these workshops to make presentations and field questions from both two-year and four-year representatives related to articulation issues and concerns. These workshops have increased communication between the institutions and provided an annual forum for articulation and transfer discussion between the institutions involved. The STARS Office strongly encourages these types of communication efforts and partnerships.

This year, like previous years, the STARS office provided multiple workshops/training sessions for advisors, counselors, administrators, faculty, institutional points of contacts and others to help explain the transfer process and how it impacts their institutions. At each of these workshops, both two-year and four-year members were invited to attend. We plan to continue to provide similar workshops across the state. Institutions interested in hosting a workshop/training should contact the STARS office. The STARS staff will be glad to assist in any way possible to set up a workshop on two-year or four-year campuses. The STARS staff is able to tailor presentations and training to the meet the various needs of two-year and four-year faculty and staff.

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Looking Back 2007-2008: A Status Report (continued)

Increased Role and Effectiveness of Academic Committees

The foundation of the AGSC/STARS Program falls directly on the continuous work of the various faculty-based academic committees established by the AGSC in the 1990s. Some of these committees are very active and meet regularly to discuss issues (including articulation matters) that impact their disciplines. Following is a list of the roles and responsibilities of the various academic committees:

Required Roles and Responsibilities:

- ★ On-going review and recommendation for approval or disapproval of new and/or revised courses from two-year and four-year institutions as general studies courses.
- ★ Review of all previously approved courses in the discipline every three year period. (1/3rd of courses in first year, 1/3rd in second year, and 1/3rd of the courses in the third year).
- ★ Annual review of the established discipline specific guidelines for their discipline.
- ★ Bi-annual review of the discipline templates and development of new discipline templates, as necessary. Continuing dialogue with the faculty in their discipline, campus curriculum committee(s), departments, and discipline organizations at their respective institution.
- ★ Communicate with state professional organizations in the discipline where one exists.
- ★ Provide an annual report to the Executive Director of the AGSC/STARS recapping activities and decisions of the committee for that academic year.
- ★ Other tasks as may be assigned by the AGSC.

Three years ago, the AGSC also suggested that the academic committees take on additional roles (suggested but not required):

Suggested Roles:

- ★ Study, discuss, and keep in touch with the changes in the field of study.
- ★ Sponsor periodic professional developmental activities for faculty in the field.
- ★ Create and maintain a communications network that provides for sharing and collaboration among faculty at different institutions.
- ★ Investigate and share information on research and good practices in the field.

Routinely these committees are asked to review previously approved guidelines and requirements for transfer courses in their disciplines. In addition, the STARS office is in the process of sending out at least a third of all of the previously approved courses and ratified templates for their review. This activity occurs each year and ensures that the transfer courses and templates are up-to-date and still viable for use by prospective transfer students. The goal is to review all the previously approved courses and templates every three years. Not only does this improve the reliability of the information that is disseminated, but it also encourages the committees to discuss and address articulation issues on a more routine basis.

We respect the time constraints and job requirements of each of the full-time faculty. It should be noted that each of the members of the various AGSC Academic Committees are appointed by his/her institution and are not paid for his/her service. Much has been done to try to use technology to simplify the work of the academic committees. The AGSC and STARS Staff take this opportunity to thank each and every faculty member who diligently serves on an academic committee. Their work impacts the lives and academic achievement of thousands of students each year.

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Looking Back 2007-2008: A Status Report (continued)

Increase Efforts to Publicize and Promote the AGSC/STARS Program throughout Alabama

Each year, the STARS office continues to look for ways to increase publicity and visibility of the AGSC and STARS Program throughout the state. The following publicity efforts took place this past year.

Publicity Projects Undertaken in 2007-2008

- ★ STARS representatives sent out to make presentations to various groups of students, advisors, counselors, administrators, and educational and government leaders across the state
- ★ STARS purchased various promotional items (pens, highlighters, clipboards, calculators, etc.) to distribute as gifts for students, advisors, counselors and administrators
- ★ STARS provides institutions/schools with web access to various print ads (color and black & white) to use in course schedule books, school newspapers, and other on-campus printed materials
- ★ STARS provided "GET THE GUIDE" post cards to four-year recruiters to hand-out when recruiting community college students
- ★ STARS provided "GET THE GUIDE" post cards and posters to two-year counseling/advising offices to hand out and post on their campuses
- ★ STARS provided "GET THE GUIDE" post cards and posters to high school counseling/advising offices across the state for students who may be considering attending a community college prior to transferring to an in-state four-year university (sent out in publicity packages to all high school counseling offices in Alabama)
- ★ STARS created new "GET THE GUIDE" bookmarks to hand out to prospective transfer students around the state

STARS In-State Visits

In promoting the STARS Program, staff members are routinely sent to various colleges and organizational meetings to promote and publicize the program to all groups directly and indirectly impacted. This past year the STARS staff visited multiple universities, colleges, and high schools in Alabama. In addition to campus visits, STARS staff members are often invited to present at state professional conferences. If you would like to have an AGSC/STARS presentation on your campus, please contact STARS office at 334-670-3690. There is no charge for this service.

STARS Out-of-State Visits

This year, the STARS staff did not travel out of state. However, our office often fields questions from other states that are looking to implement some type of statewide articulation program. This year, Delaware and Kentucky have had similar legislation come forward that would create a statewide articulation programs in their states. Their educational leaders have contacted us on numerous occasions to discuss what we have accomplished in Alabama.

Community College Freshman Orientations

Each year, a number of two-year institutions in Alabama invite members of the STARS staff to talk to their incoming freshmen at "new student orientation programs." These campus visits allow the STARS staff an opportunity introduce STARS and answer questions about the transfer of credit to the various four-year institutions in Alabama. Many of the two-year colleges now require their new students to obtain a STARS Transfer Guide in one or more majors prior to enrolling in their first freshman class.

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Looking Back 2007-2008: A Status Report (continued)

Improvements to STARS Website and STARS Usage Reports

The STARS staff is constantly looking for ways to enhance and improve the AGSC/STARS website. The website is located at <http://stars.troy.edu>. Since the website has become the primary tool for gaining information related to the Alabama Articulation Program, it is vital that the website is user friendly.

Approved Course Syllabi Available Online

In the last few years links to approved course syllabi (.pdf format) were added to the website so that students, faculty, and advisors have a better understanding/knowledge of the course content as offered at the institution for which it is approved. These syllabi are also used by the AGSC Academic Committees to make transfer articulation decisions.

LIVE HELP Feature on Website

This year, we implemented a "LIVE HELP" feature on our website. Currently, we are monitoring the use of "LIVE HELP" to determine if we need to continue this feature in future years. The software used to run "LIVE HELP" is very expensive. This year, as we face state budget cuts, a decision to continue or suspend this service will need to be addressed by the STARS staff.

Interactive CD ROM

Another project that the STARS staff has begun to work on is an "AGSC/STARS Interactive Training CD-Rom." Once it is developed and copies are made, we will be able to send these CDs out to counselors, advisors, faculty, staff and students. The CD-Rom will provide general training information based on the needs of the end-user. It will also interface with current web pages to provide up-to-date information that tends to change on a regular basis. While we have decided on the CD-ROM content, we were unable to pay to have them developed and copied. The cost of developing and reproducing this medium may be cost prohibitive this year as we face state budget restraints.

STARS Usage Reports

Like the website, STARS Usage Reports have also become an important output of the STARS System. Both the two-year and four-year institutions request information regarding the use of STARS. Through the STARS reporting system, Institutional Points of Contacts at the four-year and two-year institutions receive monthly reports that provide detail data on the use of the STARS system by institutions and programs. The STARS staff continues to listen to the requests and comments made by those who depend on the reports when making decisions related to transfer students. Over the last few years, the reports have been modified or changed so that they are more useful to those who need the usage information. Each month, four-year institutions receive student information from end-users who are considering a transfer to their institution. This is FREE RECRUITING information provided to the four-year institutions at no cost. Institutions needing additional institution specific reports should contact our office. The STARS staff will do everything possible to accommodate these report requests. For more information about STARS Usage Reports please contact Shannon Nichols at 334-670-3691.



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Looking Back 2007-2008: A Status Report (continued)

Substantial Progress Made in Research of Transfer/Native Student Success

During 2007-2008, a sub-committee was created by the AGSC to address the need for additional research that focused on the success of transfer and native students in our state. This sub-committee of the AGSC met multiple times during the past year. They continue to meet on a regular basis in an effort to determine how transfer and native students fair in terms of reaching their educational goals. The current sub-committee members are Diane Sherman (ACHE), Dan Osborn (UAB), Yardley Bailey (UA System), Joe Morris (JSCC), Bob Lockwood (Post-Secondary Education), Subrena Simpkins (ACHE) and Keith Sessions (STARS).

It was decided by the sub-committee that the AGSC should first use the information that has been collected for the last decade by ACHE (Alabama Student Database). Through the work of this sub-committee and the ACHE staff, substantial progress has been made in conducting a carefully designed study to evaluate the success of community college students and native students as they work toward the goal of obtaining their bachelor degrees.

The research project has been divided into two stages that will be addressed over a two to three year period. This year the sub-committee focused its primary efforts on STAGE 1 questions pertaining to the graduation rates, retention rates, and time-to-degree of transfer and native students. In 2008-2009, the sub-committee will expand STAGE 1 and begin to focus on STAGE 2 objectives and research questions. STAGE 2 involves looking at other independent variables (age, ethnicity, gender, etc.) to see if they have an impact on student success in terms of graduation rates, retention rates, and time-to-degree.

At the AGSC/STARS Annual Retreat (July of 2008), the AGSC was briefed by the sub-committee and ACHE representatives on their initial findings for STAGE 1. At the time this document was printed, these reports and the statistical analysis were still being revised and refined. Once the research is complete, a final report from the AGSC on their findings will be made public. The research will be on-going. The AGSC would like to continue to run these reports on an annual basis in order to provide the AGSC and the State of Alabama with important data relative to student success in our institutions of higher education.

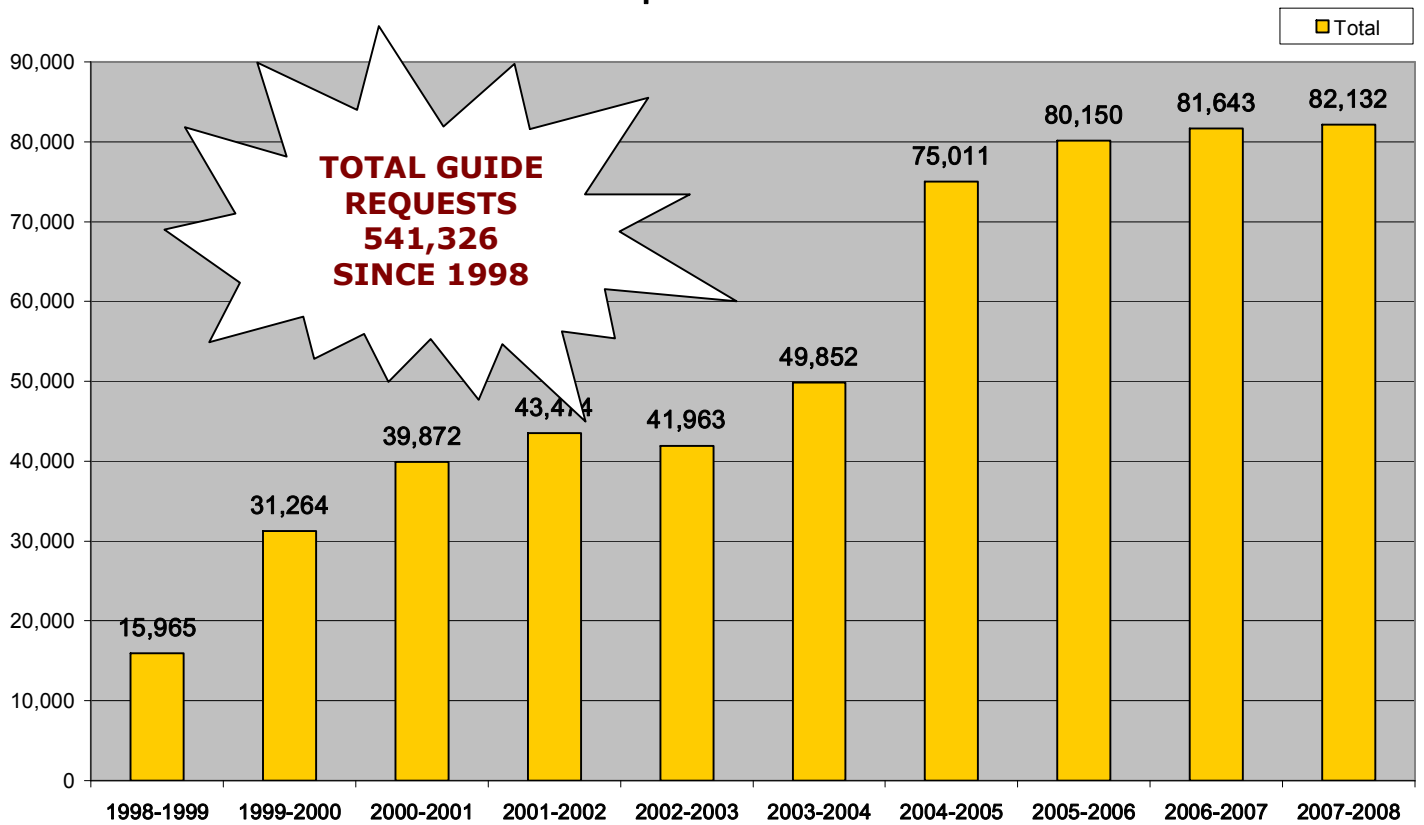
If you need additional information, or if you have questions about this research effort, please contact Dr. Keith Sessions at 334-670-3797.

STARS

Usage Reports for 2007-2008



Annual STARS Transfer Guide Requests Since 1998

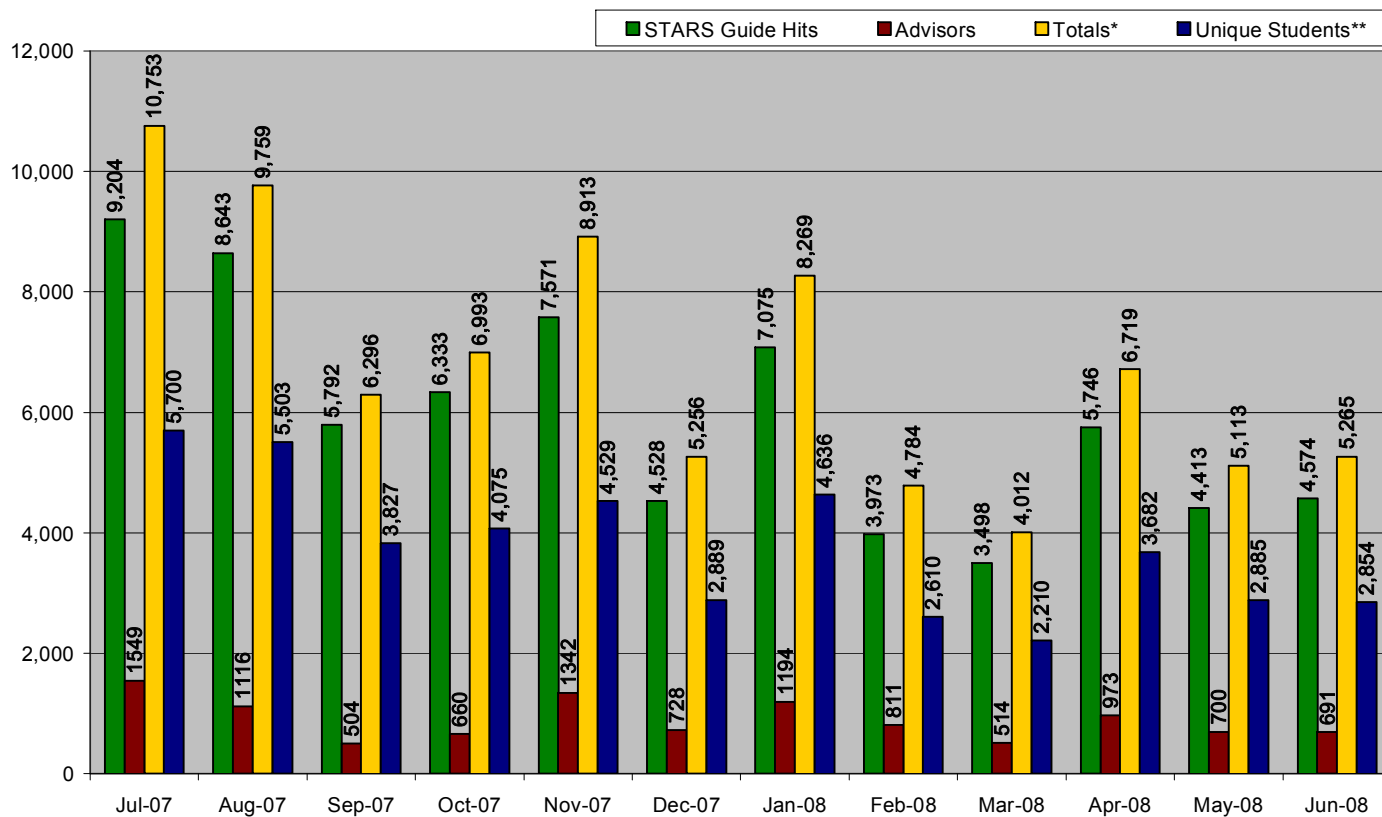


STARS

Usage Reports for 2007-2008 (continued)



Annual STARS System Usage from July 2007 - June 2008



* The totals represent the number of transfer guides that were accessed.

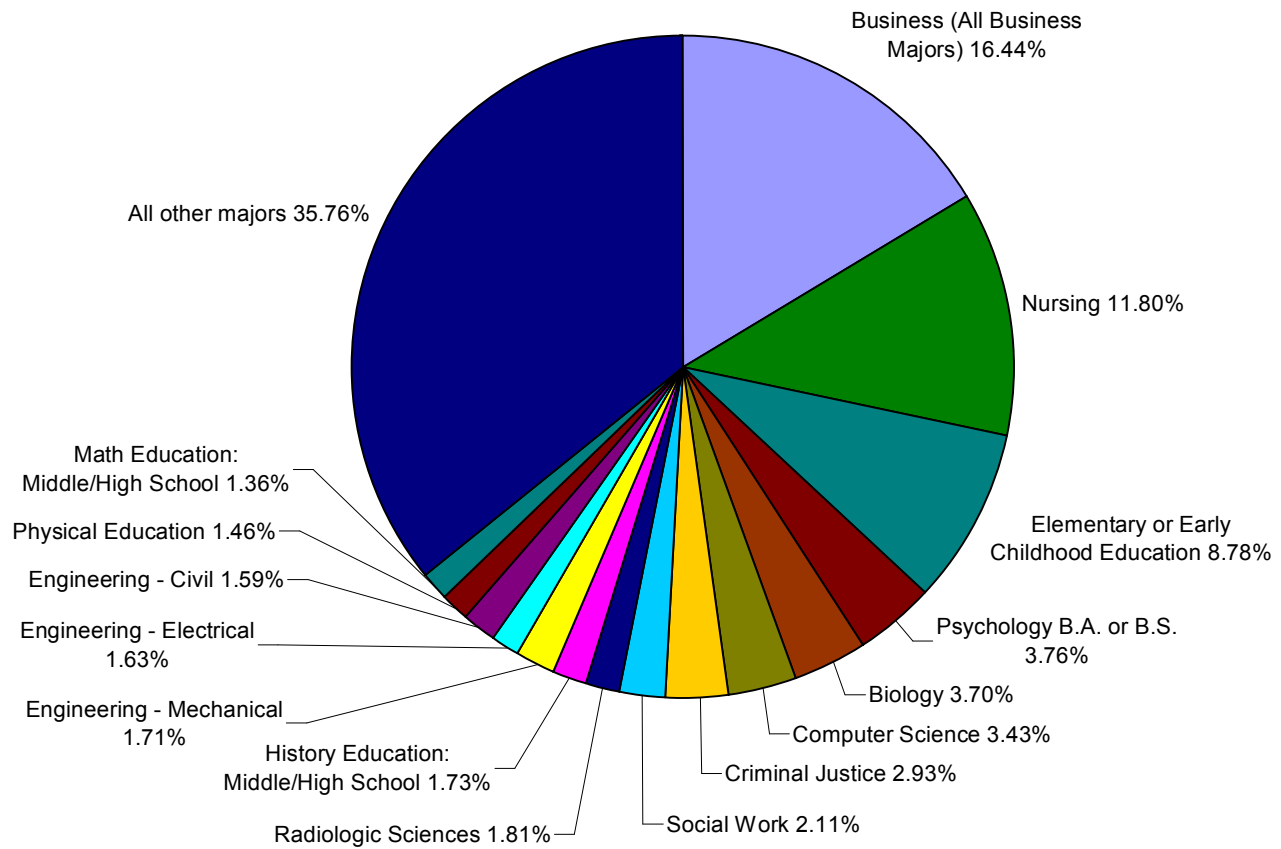
** Students are counted as unique users per month. Example: A student who obtains a guide in July and again in September would be counted as a unique user for both months. While a student who obtains two or more guides in a given month is only counted once.

STARS

Usage Reports for 2007-2008 (continued)



Annual Two Year Usage by Major for July 2007 - June 2008

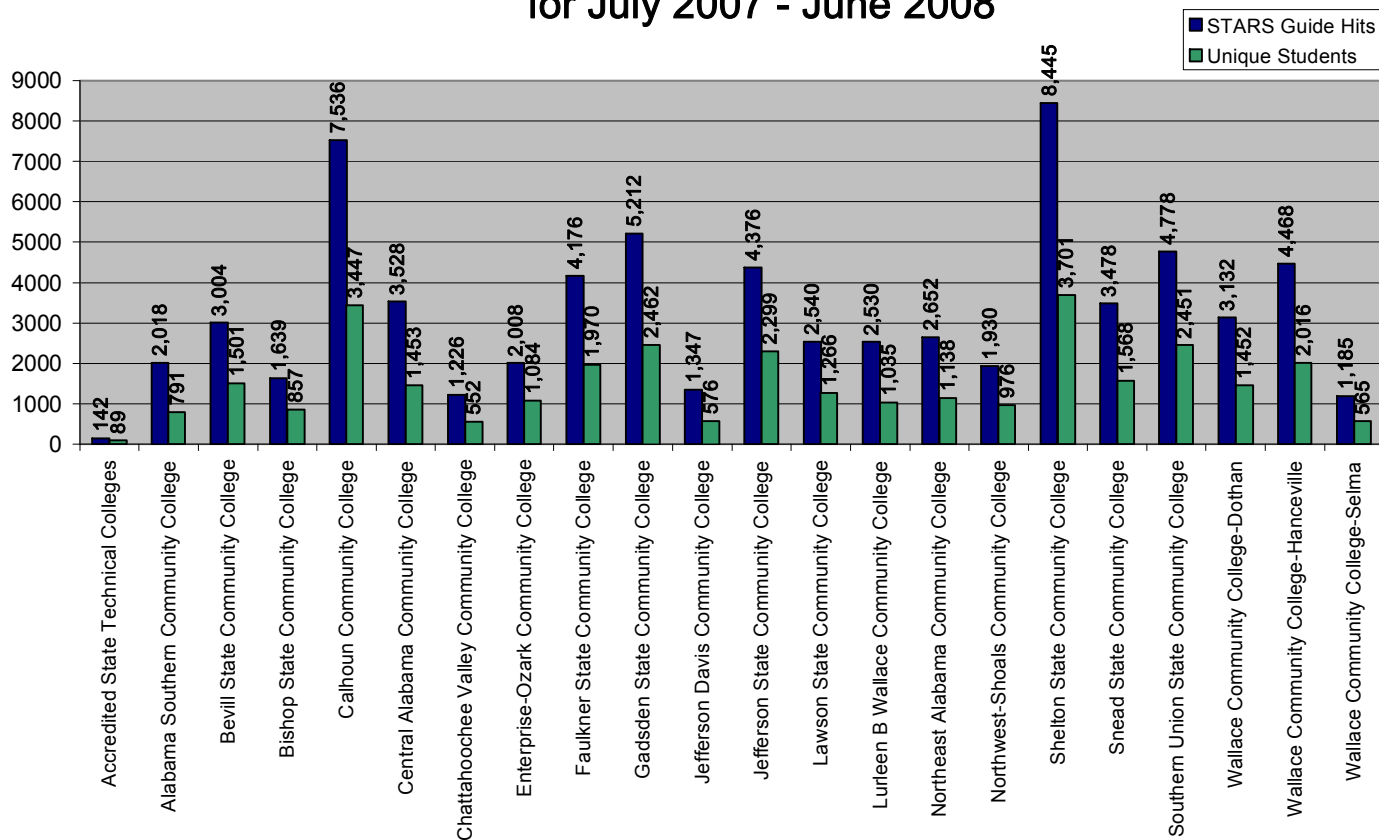


STARS

Usage Reports for 2007-2008 (continued)



Annual Two Year Usage by Institution for July 2007 - June 2008



UNIQUE STUDENTS EXPLANATION - Students are counted as unique users per month. Example: A student who obtains a guide in July and again in September would be counted as a unique user for both months. While a student who obtains two or more guides in a given month is only counted once.

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Looking Ahead to 2008-2009: AGSC Priorities



At the July 2008 AGSC Annual Retreat/Meeting the following priorities for the AGSC were approved for 2008-2009.

The AGSC will:

1. Complete Stage I of the Evaluation Project that calls for "a carefully designed study to evaluate the success of community college students who transfer to state universities and release the findings. Make substantial progress toward processing data for Stage II.
2. Complete the review of the final third of AGSC approved/ratified courses and templates for program offerings in order to maintain the transferable General Studies Program for students in Alabama's two-year and four-year institutions. Recommend timing for future reviews.
3. Strengthen communication about the STARS Program with students, administrators, faculty, parents, legislators, and the general public. Develop a plan to measure the effectiveness of the communication with the various publics. Hold annual meeting with points of contact at four-year institutions. Content of the meeting should be such that it will be considered imperative that the point of contacts attend.
4. Improve navigation and currency of information on Area V web pages at four-year institutions in an effort to facilitate the transfer of students from two-year to four-year institutions. Towards this end, ask responsible persons to make points of contact at the four-year institutions responsible for maintaining the appropriateness of Area V pages at their institutions.
5. Oversee (through the STARS Office) the review the Area V web pages for all four-year institutions for navigability and rate them: user friendly, accessible with effort, or cumbersome/inaccessible. This information will be shared with each of the four-year institutions.

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Legislation ACT 94-202 Section (e)

To view the complete legislative act please go to <http://stars.troy.edu/agsc/legislation.htm>.

"(e) The computerized advisement system for students operated by Troy State University which includes a comprehensive undergraduate program and course information for all public two-year and four-year institutions of higher education, existing on the effective date of this amendatory act, shall ensure students at each two-year institution accredited by the Southern Association's Commissions on Colleges, the opportunity to enter into a contract with a four-year institution guaranteeing the transfer of credit earned for courses taken at the two-year institution pursuant to the terms of the contract provided the student is admitted to the four-year institution. Under this contract, all agreed upon credits transferred from a two-year institution to a four-year institution shall fulfill degree requirements at the four-year institution as if they were earned at the four-year institution. Information regarding this advisement and contracting program shall be included in the official catalog of each institution of higher education. All public two-year and four-year institutions in the state accredited by the Commission on Colleges shall participate in this system.

"In addition, there is created an articulation and general studies committee which shall consist of ten members composed as follows: two representing the state's regional universities, three representing the state's two-year colleges (one of whom shall be black), one representing each of the following: Auburn University, the University of Alabama System, the University of South Alabama, Alabama State University, and Alabama A&M University. The Executive Director of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education and the Director of the computerized advising system operated by Troy State University shall serve as nonvoting members.

"Unless provided by the governing board of the respective institution, the representatives to the articulation and general studies committee shall be selected in the following manner: The presidents of the state's regional universities shall select the two representatives of these institutions on the committee. The State Board of Education shall select the representatives of the state's two-year colleges on the committee. The Chancellor of the University of Alabama System and the Presidents of Auburn University, the University of South Alabama, Alabama State University, and Alabama A&M University shall each select the representative of their institutions on the committee. It is the intent of the Legislature that women be represented on the committee. This committee, utilizing whatever resources and task forces it deems appropriate, shall develop no later than September 1, 1998, a statewide freshman and sophomore level general studies curriculum to be taken at all colleges and universities. Nothing herein shall be interpreted as restricting any institution from requiring additional general studies courses beyond the statewide general studies curriculum.

"This committee shall also develop and adopt no later than September 1, 1999, for the freshman and sophomore years, a statewide articulation agreement for the transfer of credit among all public institutions of higher education. Under this articulation agreement, all applicable credits transferred from a two-year institution to a four-year institution shall fulfill degree requirements at the four-year institution as if they were earned at the four-year institution. The committee shall further examine the need for a uniform course numbering system, course titles, and descriptions.

"A four-fifths vote of the entire voting membership of the committee shall be required for the adoption of the articulation agreement and general studies curriculum. Upon adoption of the articulation agreement and general studies curriculum, this committee shall continue its duty and authority prescribed herein. The committee shall meet at least annually, or at other times as convened by the chair. The committee shall elect annually a chair from its membership. The chair of the committee shall rotate annually between a representative of the four-year institutions and a representative of the two-year institutions.

"In case of problems in the administration or interpretation of the articulation agreement or the general studies curriculum, institutions shall present the problem to the articulation and general studies committee for resolution. A majority decision of the committee shall be final and binding.

"The budget recommendation of the commission shall not include an appropriation for institutions of higher education violating the stipulations of this section.



Senate - March 10, 1994 - *Amended and Passed*
House - March 10, 1994 - *Concurred in Senate Amendment*

Signed by
Governor Jim Folsom
March 17, 1994

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Contact Information



Questions and/or comments regarding this document should be sent to:



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<http://stars.troy.edu>