



Simplifying the Transfer Process in Alabama

AGSC&STARS

2012-2013 Annual Report



Prepared by Keith Sessions
Executive Director of AGSC/STARS

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

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LETTER FROM 2012-2013 AGSC CHAIR

Dear Supporters of the AGSC/STARS Program:

The AGSC/STARS Program exemplifies a system of collaboration and cohesiveness among Alabama's two-year colleges and public universities. Beneficiaries of this cooperation are the close to 1,000,000 transfer students who have sought or continue to seek seamless transfer of college credits and avoidance of course duplication in the transfer process. Created in 1994, the AGSC/STARS Program truly reflects a model system of cost efficiency, responsiveness and transparency.

Even through recent reductions in state appropriations, the AGSC/STARS Staff continues to make the process work by placing the state's transfer student as priority one. Indeed, with a staff of less than four full-time employees, the office continues to make a huge difference in higher education delivery in our state.

In addition, dedicated faculty members who volunteer to serve on academic committees coupled with administrators who support the program are also vital in the overall success of this exemplary system of complimentary parts.

Even though state appropriations have been reduced over the years, the Alabama Legislature remains supportive and recognizes the value of AGSC/STARS to the students and tax payers of our state. Such annual support is vital to the program's continued success.

As we turn our focus toward a new academic year and the challenges that await, the Articulation and General Studies Committee and the STARS Staff remain steadfast in their commitment of responsive service to students, to provide a forum for shared academic collaborators, and to be a model of efficiency that other states want to model.



Sincerely,

Dr. John W. Schmidt

Senior Vice Chancellor for Advancement
and External Relations
Troy University



AGSC VOTING MEMBERS & ALTERNATES

(as of July 19, 2013)

APPOINTING AUTHORITY	VOTING MEMBER	ALTERNATE MEMBER
Alabama A&M University	Dr. Barbara A.P. Jones Interim Dean, College of Business and Public Affairs	Dr. Juarine Stewart Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Studies
Alabama State University	Dr. Sharron Herron-Williams Interim Associate Provost for Academic Affairs	No current alternate
Auburn University	Dr. Constance Relihan Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies	No current alternate
University of Alabama System	Dr. Beth Bennett Professor, Communication Studies (UA)	Dr. Charles Nash Vice Chancellor (UA System)
University of South Alabama	Dr. B. Keith Harrison Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs	Dr. Victoria Rivizzigno Associate Dean College of Arts and Sciences
Regional Universities	Dr. William Meehan President Jacksonville State University	Dr. Richard Holland President University of West Alabama
Regional Universities	Dr. John Schmidt (AGSC CHAIR) Senior Vice Chancellor for Advancement and External Affairs Troy University	Dr. Suzanne Ozment Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs University of Montevallo
State Board of Education (2-Year Institutions)	Dr. Mark Heinrich Chancellor Alabama Community College System	Dr. James Mitchell President Wallace Community College Selma
State Board of Education (2-Year Institutions)	Dr. Gary Branch President Faulkner State Community College	Dr. Amelia Pearson Interim President Southern Union State Community College
State Board of Education (2-Year Institutions)	Dr. Joe Morris Vice President Jefferson State Community College	Dr. Bruce Crawford Vice President for Instructional Services Lawson State Community College

EX-OFFICIO NON-VOTING MEMBERS

Alabama Commission on Higher Education	Dr. Gregory G. Fitch Executive Director	Dr. Elizabeth C. French Director, Institutional Effectiveness and Planning
AGSC Secretary	Mrs. Deborah Nettles Administrative Assistant to the Executive Director Alabama Commission on Higher Education	
AGSC/STARS Program	Dr. Keith Sessions Executive Director	



IMPACT OF PRORATION AND BUDGET CUTS

While STARS Usage numbers have risen to an all-time high, state funding for this program continues to decline. (SEE BUDGET COMPARISON CHART BELOW)

The AGSC/STARS Office continues to work on a annual budget of less than \$375,000.

AGSC/STARS Budget Comparison (last five years)

Fiscal Year	Allocated Budget	Proration Amount	Operating Budget*
2008-09	\$ 500,000	\$ 88,391	\$ 411,609
2009-10	\$ 399,542	\$ 29,966	\$ 369,576
2010-11	\$ 394,348	\$ 11,831	\$ 382,517
2011-12	\$ 390,486	NO PRORATION CUTS	\$ 390,486
2012-13	\$ 374,867	NO PRORATION CUTS	\$ 374,867

Operating and personnel costs are at the lowest levels they have been since the program was created. While we have made the necessary cuts over the last few years to stabilize the program, additional proration and budget cuts will continue to erode the work that has been done since 1994.

* The operating budget amount does not include deductions for administrative fees retained by ACHE. Each year ACHE retains 3% of the budget to cover their administrative costs. In most years, a portion of this money is un-used by ACHE and later returned to the STARS Office.

2013-2014 AGSC/STARS BUDGET

The 2013-2014 state allocation for the AGSC/STARS Program has been level-funded. As a result the allocated budget will be \$374,867. ACHE will retain a 3% administrative fee of \$11,246. This will result in a FINAL OPERATING BUDGET for 2012-2013 of \$363,621.

WHILE TIMES ARE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT, THE STARS STAFF REMAINS DEDICATED TO MONITORING EXPENDITURES AND WHEN NECESSARY, MAKING ADDITIONAL CUTS TO ENSURE THAT THE PROGRAM SURVIVES AND MOVES FORWARD.



LOOKING BACK AT 2012-2013: A STATUS REPORT

AGSC/STARS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. The AGSC continued to work with and support the STARS staff in an effort to maintain program through difficult financial times.
2. The AGSC begin to review “institution only” templates in an attempt to reduce duplication of programs that have similar titles and CIP codes. This review will continue through 2014.
3. The STARS staff launched the new AGSC/STARS Website on July 15, 2013. The new site provides easier navigation and incorporates some new features that did not exist on the old site (see page 8 for more information about new website).
4. The 2012-2013 STARS usage numbers dropped slightly from the previous year. This year 73,524 transfer guides were obtained through the AGSC/STARS website.
5. The STARS staff worked with the AGSC and the two-year and four-year institutions to update faculty membership on various discipline committees.
6. The STARS staff continued the annual (and bi-annual) review of AGSC Ratified Templates for various program offerings for both the GSACs and the PACs.
7. The STARS staff made campus/site visits to all of the public two-year colleges. During these visits we delivered STARS “Get the Guide” postcards, highlighters, and pens to all of the two-year advising offices to distribute to incoming freshmen.
8. The STARS staff made campus/site visits to four four-year universities.
9. The STARS staff and other AGSC members presented AGSC/STARS related programs at in-state conferences (i.e. - ALACRAO). We also made presentations (or provided reports) to the Alabama Chief Academic Officers, the ACCS Presidents, the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, and the Alabama State Board of Education.
10. The STARS staff sent out an electronic copy of the 2011-2012 AGSC/STARS Annual Report the Governor’s office and to all members of the Alabama Legislature.
11. The Alabama State Board of Education passed a resolution of support of the work of the AGSC and STARS on March 28th—(see page 7 for copy of resolution).



A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE AGSC/STARS PROGRAM

Approved by Alabama State Board of Education on March 28, 2013

WHEREAS, the Statewide Transfer & Articulation Reporting System (STARS) is a web-based data system that allows students, advisors, faculty and administrators of all Alabama public community and technical colleges and universities to access information about the general studies curriculum, articulation of degree program requirements, and the transfer of academic credit; and

WHEREAS, In the late 1980's and early 1990's the members of the Alabama State Legislature began to proactively address the growing problems that in-state public college students faced when they would attempt to transfer their college course credit from one public institution of higher education to another; and

WHEREAS, In March of 1994, ACT 94-202 was passed and the Articulation and General Studies Committee (AGSC) was created; and

WHEREAS, The AGSC was given responsibility for the on-going oversight and monitoring of the STARS System; and

WHEREAS, Students who attend public two-year colleges in Alabama use the STARS web site to obtain an AGSC approved transfer guide in their major; and

WHEREAS, These transfer guides, if used correctly, guide students through their first two years of coursework and prevent the loss of credit hours upon transfer to the selected public four-year universities in Alabama while saving them time and tuition dollars; and

WHEREAS, each year over 80,000 transfer guides are obtained and used by prospective transfer students and their advisors in Alabama; and

WHEREAS, Advisors and counselors across the state can now use the information provided on the STARS Transfer Guides to help students as they attempt to plan out their education process; and

WHEREAS, Since the Fall of 1998, over 900,000 STARS Transfer Guides have been obtained by students and their advisors - this number should pass the one million mark within the next year or so; and

WHEREAS, One of the greatest outcomes of the AGSC/STARS Program is the cooperation and teamwork that has resulted from the establishment of over 30 discipline committees across the state. These committees are made up of faculty members from both the public two-year and four-year institutions; and

WHEREAS, The Alabama Articulation Program has been viewed as a model transfer program in the southeast region and throughout the nation; Other states such as Texas, Michigan, Kentucky, and Mississippi have all inquired about the implementation and success of Alabama's program; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alabama State Board of Education hereby voices its support of the AGSC/STARS Program, the students utilizing this program, and the individuals that are working tirelessly to ensure that the students within the Alabama Community College System have the opportunity to seamlessly transfer to public four-year institutions in the state of Alabama.





AGSC/STARS WEBSITE UPDATE

AGSC/STARS Launches New Website

Over the last 16 months, the STARS staff has been working to update and improve the AGSC/STARS website that is used by thousands of students, advisors, counselors, faculty members, and administrators each week. Most of the information that was on the old site was updated and retained on the new site. The new site still has a main entry page that allows people to navigate to one of four main parts of the site: (1) STARS Transfer Guide System, (2) STARS Home Page, (3) AGSC Home Page, or (4) a AGSC/STARS Contact Page. The new site consists of over 1,000 web pages that have been developed and maintained by a staff of three people at no additional cost to the state taxpayer. By redesigning the website “in-house”, we have saved thousands of dollars.

End-users can now access virtually all the web site content using the tab-menu bar that is available across the top of all content pages. This allows the user to find information quicker and move from one part of the site to another in less than three clicks. In addition, a transfer student can now access the “GET THE GUIDE” system pages from any page on the website.

The overall look and feel of the site has also been modified and updated. The dark black background has been replaced white and tan backgrounds. More images of students and counselors have been added throughout the site to give the new site visual interest.

New Website Features

There are a number of new pages that provide additional information and/or enhance the overall site. Here is a list of a few of these new features:

- Facebook and Twitter pages
- “Transfer Student Survival Guide” Page
- “The Counselor’s Connection” Page (Available in Fall 2014)
- Updated FAQs page for both students and administrators
- Webinar Information Page (Webinars to start in Fall of 2014)
- Embedded Online Presentations (Available in Fall 2014)
- Request form for “on-site training/presentations”
- Request STARS promotional materials page
- Common definitions and terms page



STARS STAFFING UPDATE

Currently, the STARS Office Staff is made up of three full-time employees and one part-time secretary. The current staff is as follows:

- Keith Sessions — Executive Director
- Shannon Nichols — Computer Programmer and IT Manager
- Dendy Moseley — Program Coordinator
- Anita Walker — Administrative Secretary (part-time)



Mr. Dendy Moseley has recently applied for a different job with Troy University. Should he be offered this position, he has informed our office that he would accept the Troy position. If this change in employment were to occur, our staff would be reduced by one full-time employee, and in the short-term (next few years), we would not replace him. While the work Mr. Moseley does is valuable to the success of the program, we simply cannot afford to hire another staff member to replace him due to recent budget cuts and future funding restrictions. If the budget for this program increases in future years, then at that time, we would consider the hiring of an additional staff member to fill the void left by the departure of Mr. Moseley.

STARS TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

If possible, the web server that houses the AGSC/STARS Web Site and generates the transfer guides for students needs to be replaced during the 2013-2014 fiscal year. This server is now over ten years old. It has served the state well, but an upgrade is greatly needed. The Progress Software that is used by our programmer to write the code that generates the transfer guide for students is also more than 10 years old. It is outdated and technical support for the version we have is no longer available. Finally, the desktop computers used by the STARS staff are close to five years old and will soon need to be replaced. The estimated prices for these three upgrades are as follows:

- Web Server = \$4,000 to \$7,000
- Progress Software = \$20,000 to \$30,000
- New Desktop Computers = \$1,500 x 3 = \$4,500



TOTAL ESTIMATED COST = \$28,500 to \$41,500*

*We should have a more exact figure in the coming weeks. We are discussing our current software needs with PROGRESS company.



SOME INTERESTING STARS FACTS... DID YOU KNOW?

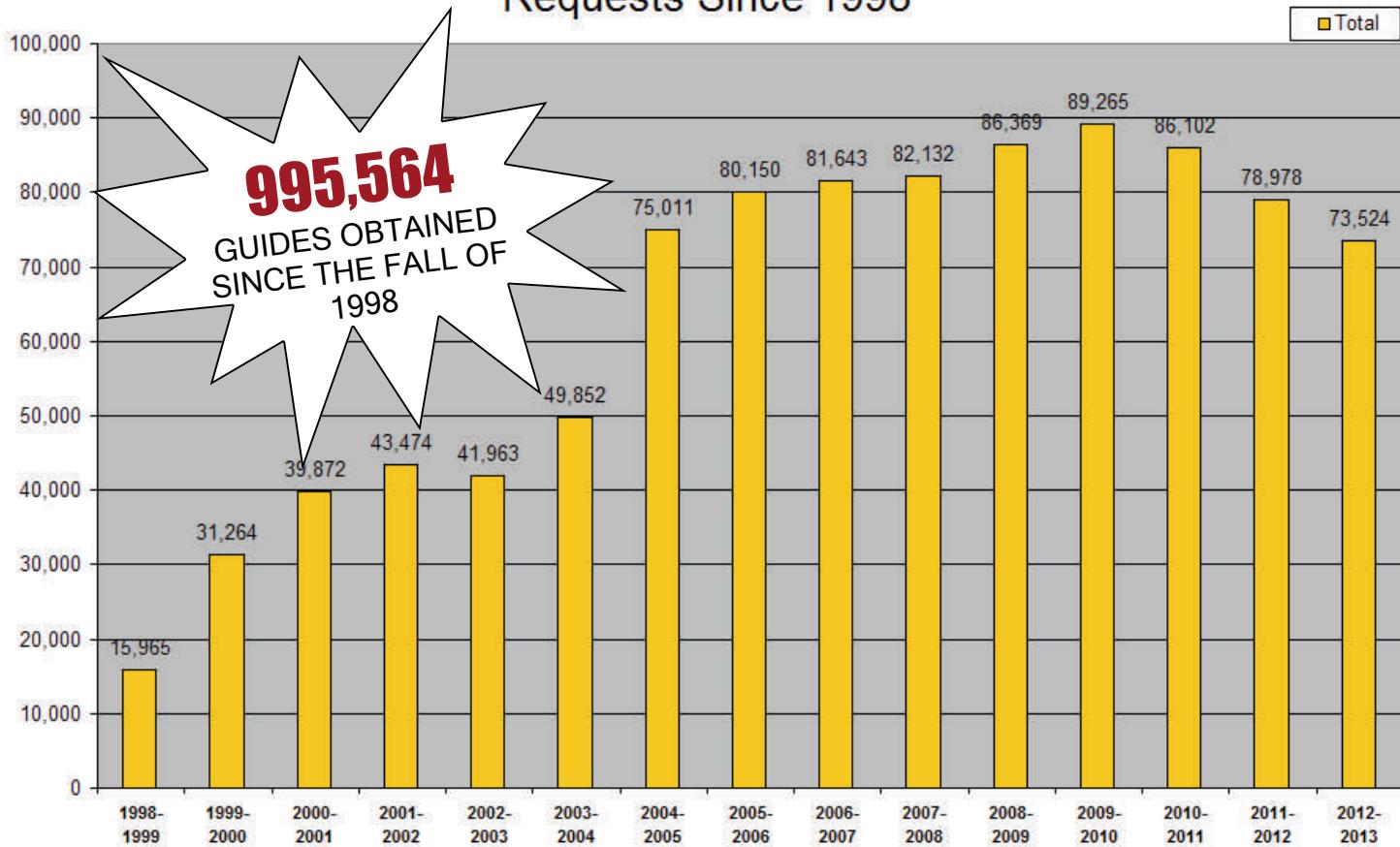
- The STARS Office maintains over 150 different program templates (these templates become the transfer guides that protect thousands of transfer students each year).
- The STARS Office maintains over 1,700 courses in the course database. Of those, 1,346 courses have been approved for statewide transfer by the AGSC. (The STARS Office works to keep current syllabi for each approved course on file and makes them available through the STARS website.)
- The STARS Office works with approximately 540 two-year and four-year faculty members who volunteer to serve on more than 30 separate discipline committees.
- The STARS Office works directly with over 90 two-year and four-year points of contact to maintain STARS and implement AGSC policy throughout the state.
- The STARS Office maintains over 1,000 web pages on the official STARS website. All coordination and maintenance of the STARS Program is accomplished by a staff of less than four.
- If you add up all the years of service by the current STARS staff, you have over 65 years of experience working with the state articulation program.



STARS USAGE REPORTS



Annual STARS Transfer Guide Requests Since 1998



(including requests from July 2012 through June 2013)

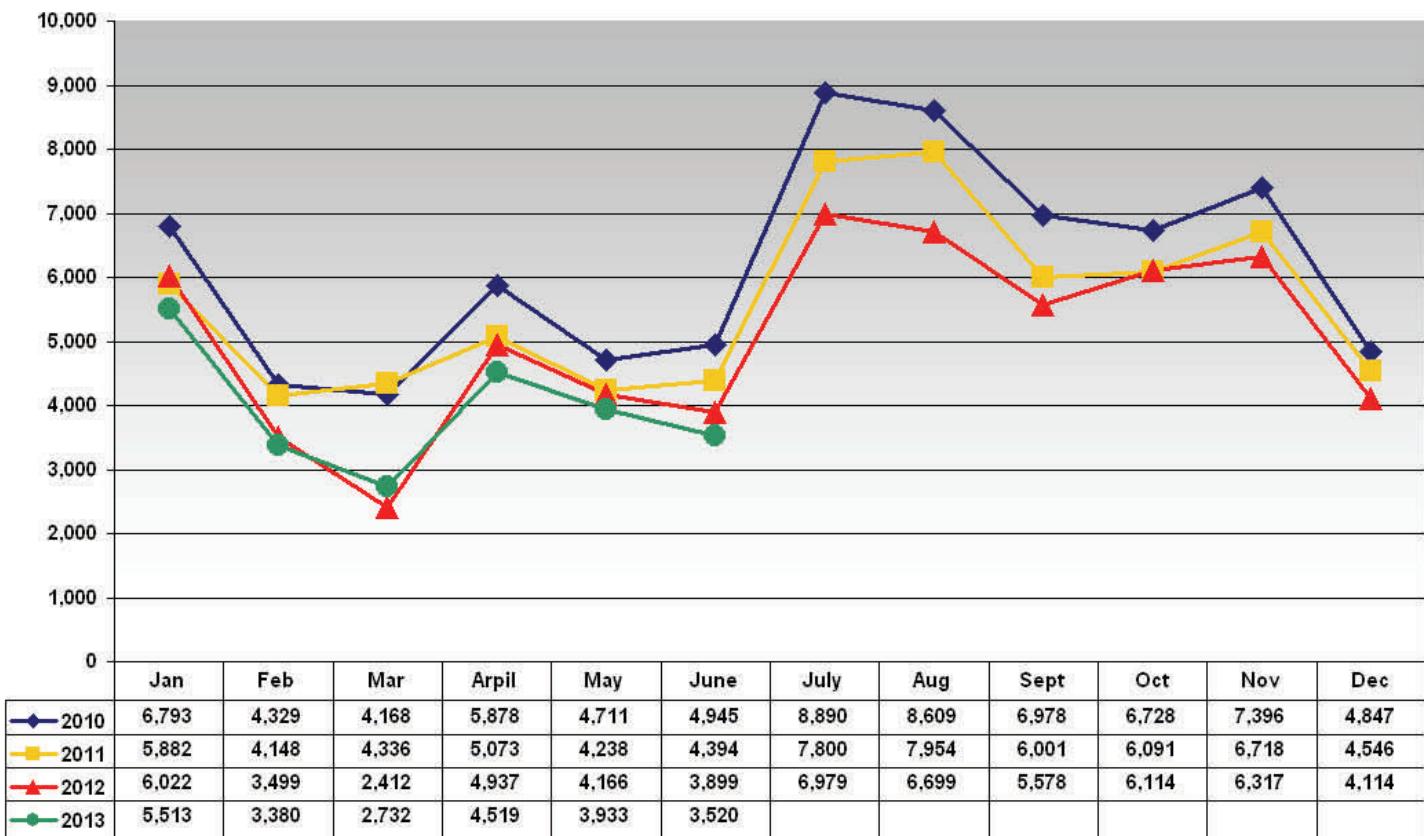
TOTAL REQUESTS SINCE FALL OF 1998 = 995,564

We should pass the 1,000,000 mark in 2014.

NOTE: For more detailed reports, please see the STARS website - <http://www.getthequide.net>.
If you need a specific report for your institution, please contact Mr. Shannon Nichols at snichols@stars.troy.edu.

**STARS USAGE REPORTS****[continued]**

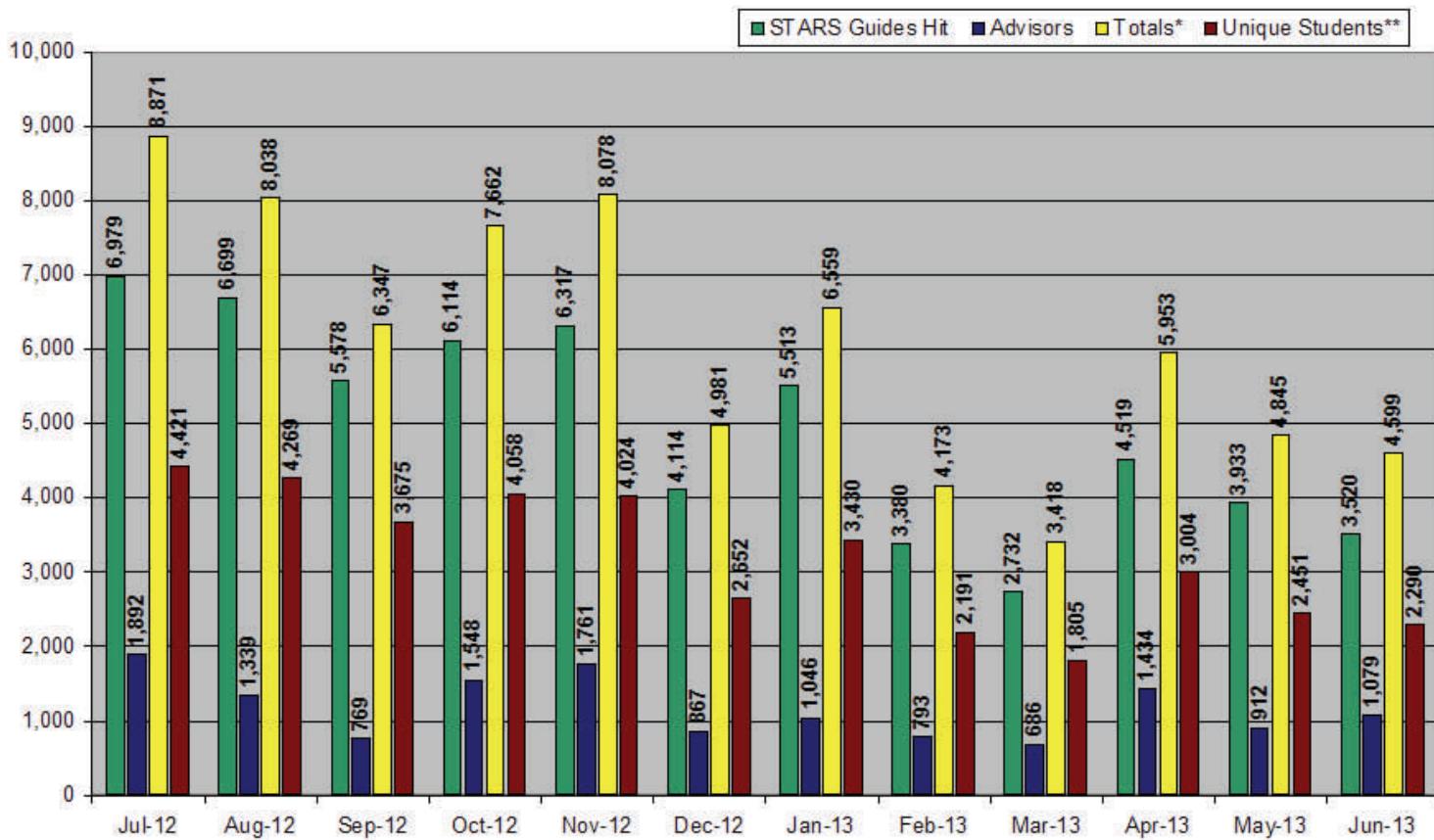
(January 2010 through June 2013)

Trendline for STARS Guides Obtained by Two-Year Students

NOTE: For more detailed reports, please see the STARS website - <http://www.getthequide.net>.
 If you need a specific report for your institution, please contact Mr. Shannon Nichols at snichols@stars.troy.edu.

STARS USAGE REPORTS**[continued]**

Annual STARS System Usage from July 2012 - June 2013



* TOTALS - This is the total of all transfer guides viewed on screen in the month.

** UNIQUE STUDENTS PER MONTH - The unique student totals take into account that many students who use STARS print multiple guides. This number takes out students who print multiple guides in a given major and only counts them one time during a given month. This number should provide a more accurate picture of how many individual students have printed guides in specific majors.

**TOTAL REQUESTS
FOR 2012-2013 = 73,524**

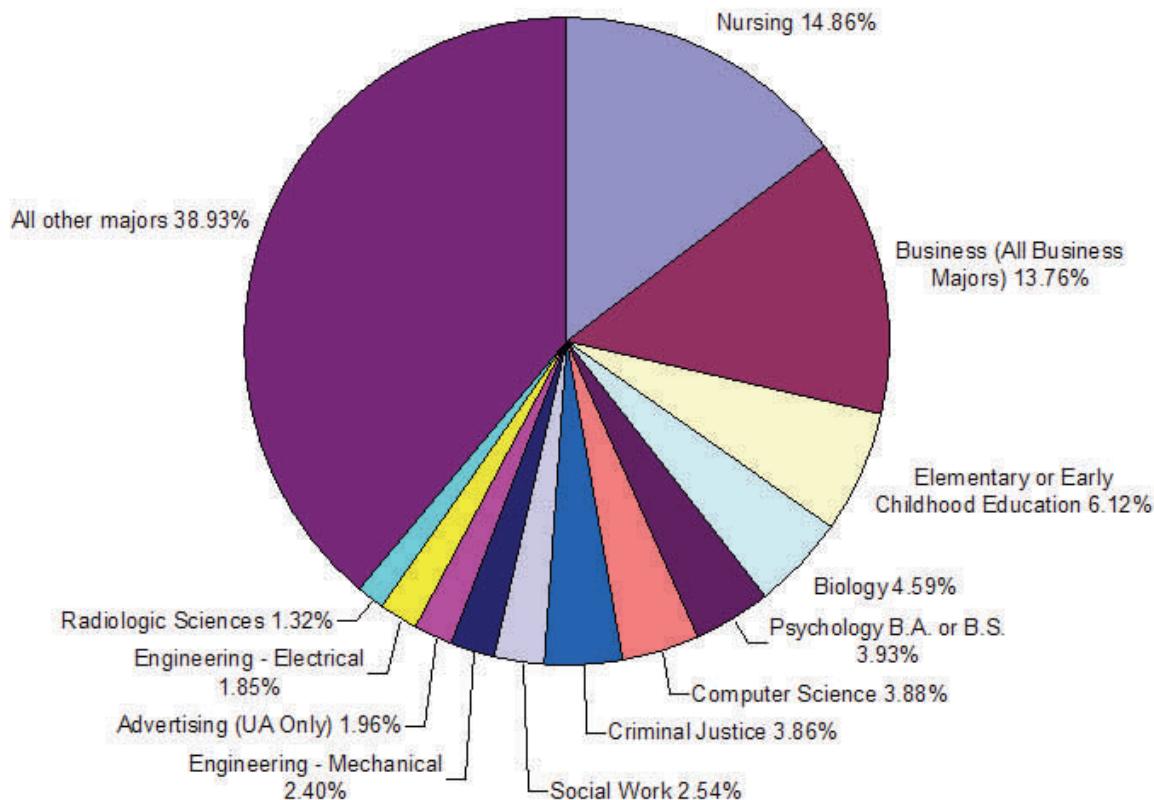


STARS USAGE REPORTS

[continued]



Annual Two-Year Usage by Major for July 2012 - June 2013

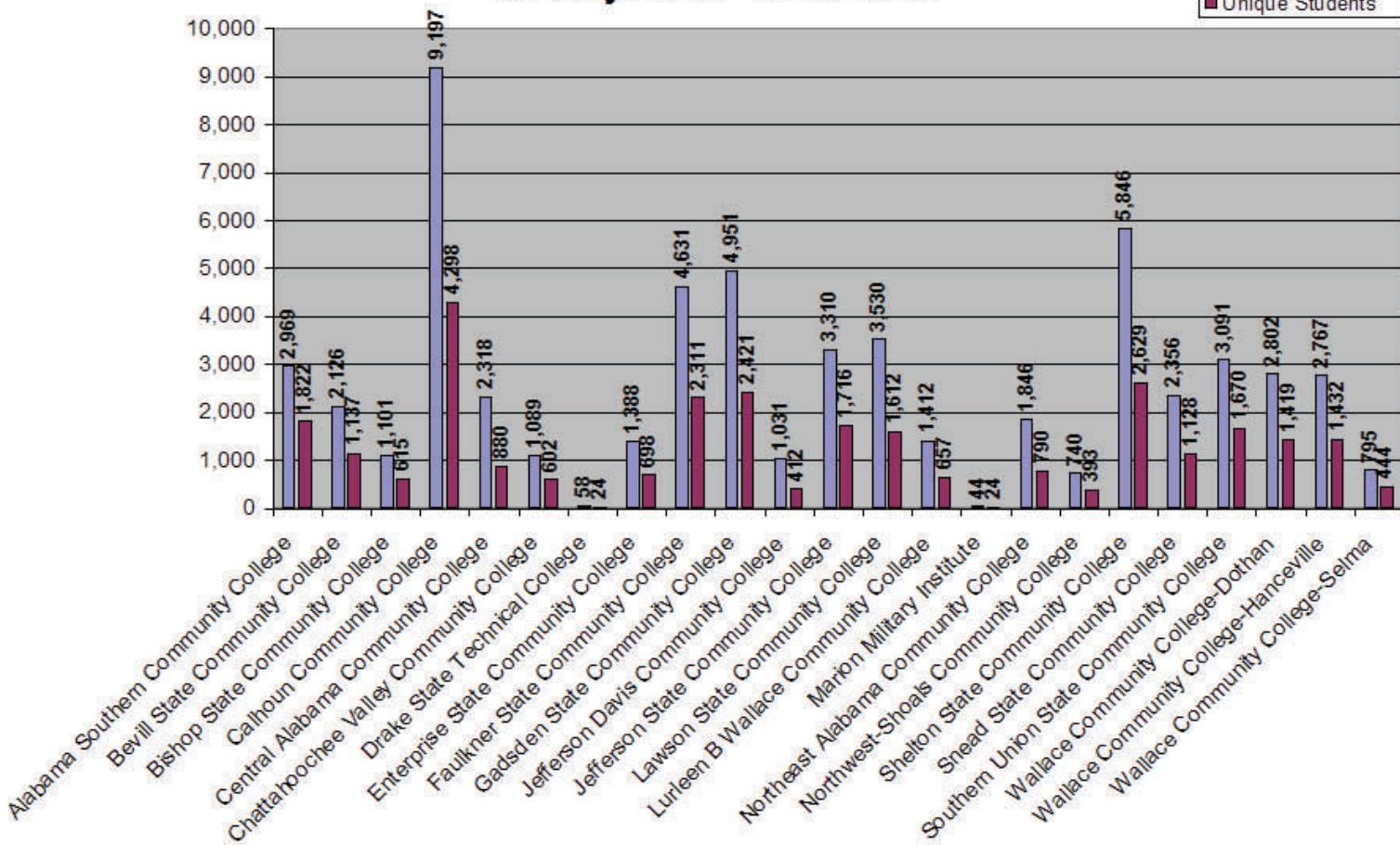


(including requests from July 2012 - June 2013)

NOTE: For more detailed reports, please see the STARS website – <http://www.getthequide.net>
If you need a specific report for your institution, please contact Mr. Shannon Nichols at snichols@stars.troy.edu.

STARS USAGE REPORTS**[continued]**
**Annual Two-Year Usage by Institution
for July 2012 - June 2013**

■ STARS Guide Hits
■ Unique Students



(including requests from July 2012 – June 2013)

UNIQUE STUDENTS - The unique student totals take into account that many students who use STARS print multiple guides. This number takes out students who print multiple guides in a given major and only counts them one time. This number should provide a more accurate picture of how many individual students have printed/obtained guides.

NOTE: For more detailed reports, please see the STARS website - <http://stars.troy.edu/agsc/reports/reports.htm>.
If you need a specific report for your institution, please contact Mr. Shannon Nichols at snichols@stars.troy.edu.

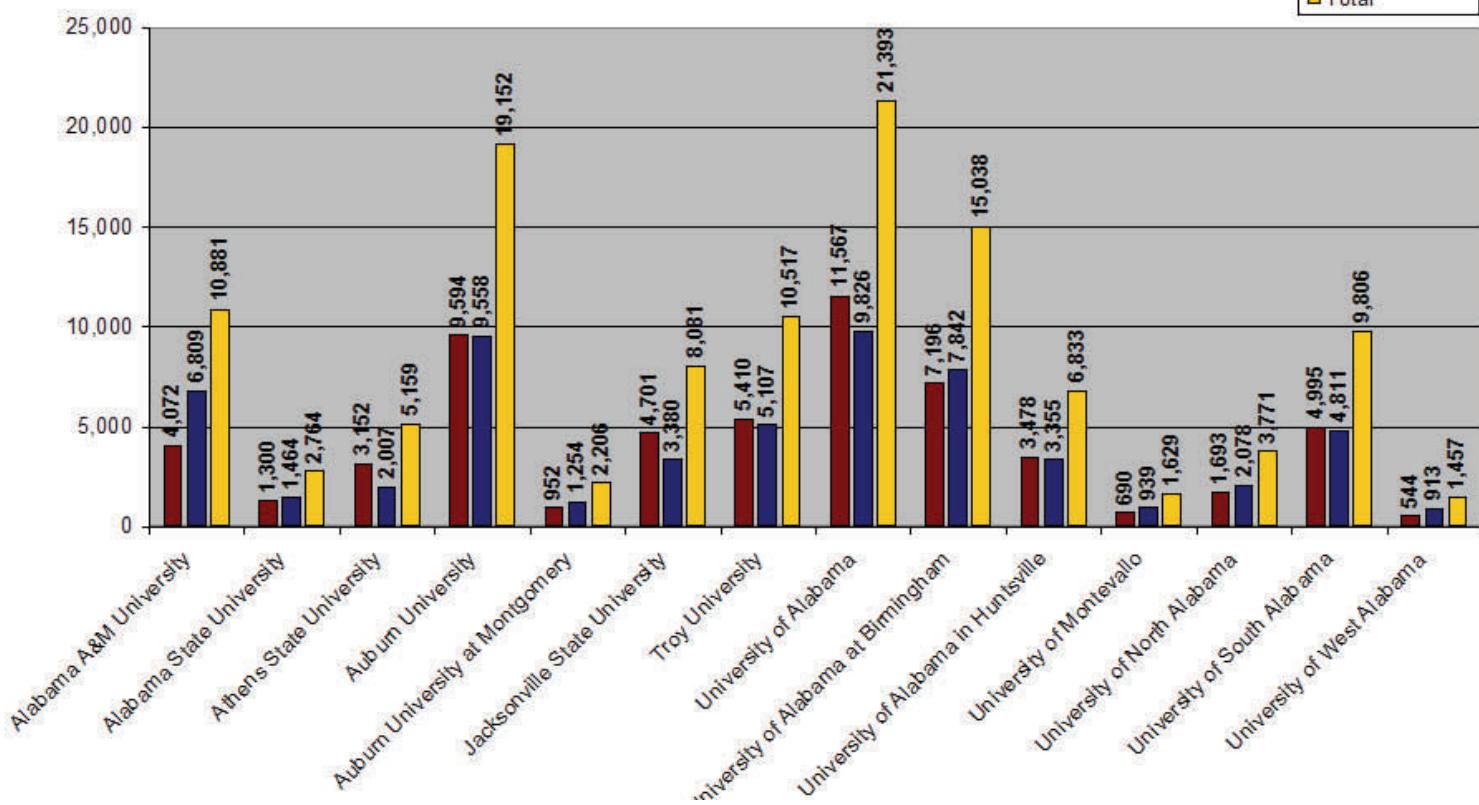
STARS USAGE REPORTS**[continued]**

(including requests from July 2012 – June 2013)



Transfer Institution Choices by Two-Year Students for July 2012 - June 2013

■ First Choice
■ Second Choice
■ Total



NOTE: For more detailed reports, please see the STARS website - <http://stars.troy.edu/agsc/reports/reports.htm>.
 If you need a specific report for your institution, please contact Mr. Shannon Nichols at snichols@stars.troy.edu.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2013-2014: AGSC PRIORITIES

- Investigate the possibility and costs associated with conducting another external evaluation of the AGSC/STARS program similar to the 2002 Donald Crump Study.
- Craft AGSC/STARS legislative strategy in Fall 2013 for increased funding in the 2014-15 budget cycle followed by legislative visits.
- Identify student interns/grad assistants to augment the anticipated vacancies in AGSC/STARS staff.
- Examine collaborative approaches with other states for transfer of academic credits. At same time, review collaborative approaches with in state private colleges.
- Upgrade AGSC/STARS all technology and electronic data systems.
- Work with ACHE staff to determine if there is a way to track the graduation rates (BS/BA) of students who used the STARS Transfer guides during their time at the community college.
- Review scope of ACT 94-202 (articulation legislation) as it relates to the AGSC's oversight of four-year to four-year transferability.
- Review scope of AGSC's role in monitoring and approving courses offered through various online instructional delivery systems.

AGSC/STARS LEGISLATION – ACT 94-202 – Section 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.



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



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