



Simplifying the Transfer Process in Alabama



# 2013-2014 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 2013-2014 AGSC CHAIR

Dear Supporters of the AGSC/STARS Program:

It has truly been a privilege to serve as the 2013 – 2014 Chair for the AGSC/STARS program. Words fail to accurately communicate my gratitude for the conscientious work product delivered by each AGSC/STARS committee member! The impact of the AGSC/STARS program touches literally thousands of students matriculating through Alabama's institutions of higher education. Created in 1994, AGSC/STARS is truly a model system of cost efficiency, responsiveness and transparency, saving the taxpayers of Alabama literally hundreds of thousands of dollars annually.

Thanks to the excellent work of this year's AGSC/STARS team, the following accomplishments were realized:

1. We recently passed the one million mark in printed transfer guides since the fall of 1998. Surpassing the one millionth milestone translates into billions of saved dollars for Alabama taxpayers over the past 16 years. This is truly a program about which we all can be very proud!
2. We successfully informed our lawmakers about the importance of AGSC/STARS and the valuable impact it has on higher education in our state. The legislation creating AGSC/STARS is truly a high point for Alabama higher education.
3. We were able to successfully obtain an increase in program funding, thanks to the generosity of our state legislature. This budget increase represents the first in five years.
4. We successfully launched a new website last summer which now has been used by thousands of college students, administrators, faculty and staff members.
5. We updated our technology (a new server, PCs and printers) to replace antiquated equipment.
6. We continue to work with academic/curriculum committees and faculty members across our great state to review and approve templates and courses that serve as the foundation for the STARS transfer guide system.

These successes and many more would have been impossible had it not been for the excellent work and strong leadership of Dr. Keith Sessions and his very able staff!

Thank you, Dr. Sessions!



Thanks to everyone for a great year!

*Mark*

Mark A. Heinrich, Ph.D.  
Chancellor  
Alabama Community College System



## AGSC VOTING MEMBERS & ALTERNATES

( as of July 1, 2014 )

APPOINTING AUTHORITY	VOTING MEMBER	ALTERNATE MEMBER
Alabama A&M University	<b>Dr. Barbara A.P. Jones</b> Interim Dean, College of Business and Public Affairs	<b>Dr. Juarine Stewart</b> Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Studies
Alabama State University	<b>Dr. Sharron Herron-Williams</b> Interim Associate Provost for Academic Affairs	New appointment pending
Auburn University	<b>Dr. Constance Relihan</b> Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies	<b>Dr. Charles Israel</b> College of Liberal Arts Department of History Chair
University of Alabama System	<b>Dr. Gregg Janowski</b> Associate Provost for Assessment and Accreditation University of Alabama at Birmingham	<b>Dr. Charles Nash</b> Vice Chancellor University of Alabama System
University of South Alabama	<b>Dr. B. Keith Harrison</b> Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs	<b>Dr. Victoria Rivizzigno</b> Associate Dean College of Arts and Sciences
Regional Universities	<b>Dr. William Meehan</b> President Jacksonville State University	<b>Dr. Richard Holland</b> President University of West Alabama
Regional Universities	New appointment pending	<b>Dr. Suzanne Ozment</b> Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs University of Montevallo
State Board of Education (2-Year Institutions)	<b>Dr. Mark Heinrich</b> Chancellor Alabama Community College System	<b>Dr. James Mitchell</b> President Wallace Community College Selma
State Board of Education (2-Year Institutions)	<b>Dr. Gary Branch</b> President Faulkner State Community College	<b>Dr. Amelia Pearson</b> Provost and Dean of Instruction Central Alabama Community College
State Board of Education (2-Year Institutions)	New appointment pending	<b>Dr. Bruce Crawford</b> Vice President for Instructional Services Lawson State Community College
EX-OFFICIO NON-VOTING MEMBERS		
Alabama Commission on Higher Education	<b>Dr. Gregory G. Fitch</b> Executive Director	<b>Dr. Elizabeth C. French</b> Director, Institutional Effectiveness and Planning
AGSC Secretary	<b>Mrs. Deborah Nettles</b> Administrative Assistant to the Executive Director Alabama Commission on Higher Education	
AGSC/STARS Program	<b>Dr. Keith Sessions</b> Executive Director	

## LOOKING BACK AT 2013-2014: A STATUS REPORT

### AGSC/STARS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. The AGSC continued to work with the STARS staff in an effort to increase the annual budget appropriation for the AGSC/STARS Program. As a result of these increased efforts, the Alabama State Legislature increased the program budget by \$200,000 from \$374,867 to \$574,867 for the 2014-2015 fiscal year.
2. The AGSC and the STARS office continued to review "institution only" templates in an attempt to reduce duplication of programs that have similar titles and CIP codes. This review should be completed in 2014-2015.
3. The STARS staff launched the new AGSC/STARS Website in the Summer of 2013. The new site provides easier navigation and incorporates some new features that did not exist on the old site. We have received positive comments from end-users around the state.
4. Over 86,000 STARS Transfer Guides were obtained in 2013-2014. This is the highest usage amount we have had since 2009-2010. OFFICIAL usage was down from last year by 16% . However, UNOFFICIAL use was up over last year's figures by 161%! This resulted in an overall increase of 18%. We believe this increase was a direct result of the new website format that launched last summer. (See graph on page 11)
5. The STARS staff continued to work 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 routine 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 for their distribution to incoming freshmen.
8. The STARS staff made campus visits and presentations to five four-year universities during the past year.
9. The STARS staff and other AGSC members presented AGSC/STARS related programs at various conferences and college transfer programs across the state and throughout the region.
10. The STARS staff sent out electronic copies of the 2012-2013 AGSC/STARS Annual Report to the Governor's office, members of the Alabama Legislature, and other constituents across the state.



## AGSC/STARS WEBSITE REPORT

### Tracking Usage and Visitor Hits Since Launch of New Website in Summer of 2013

This year we began to track overall usage (hits and visits) to some of the primary pages that students, counselors, advisors, and administrators access through the new AGSC/STARS Website.



- ▷ AGSC/STARS HOME PAGE  
<http://stars.troy.edu> or <http://www.gettheguide.net>  
 Total page visits since launch date of July 15, 2013 = **126,397**  
 Avg hits per day = **361**
- 



- ▷ GET THE GUIDE ENTRY PAGE  
[http://stars.troy.edu/get\\_the\\_guide.html](http://stars.troy.edu/get_the_guide.html)  
 Total page visits since launch date of July 15, 2013 = **99,889**  
 Avg. hits per day = **274**
- 



- ▷ "OFFICIAL GUIDE" REQUEST PAGE  
[http://stars.troy.edu/get\\_the\\_guide\\_step\\_1.html](http://stars.troy.edu/get_the_guide_step_1.html)  
 Total page visits since launch date of July 15, 2013 = **90,189**  
 Avg. hits per day = **257**
- 



- ▷ STARS PAGE  
<http://stars.troy.edu/stars.html>  
 Total page visits since launch date of July 15, 2013 = **72,961**  
 Avg. hits per day = **200**
- 



- ▷ "OTHER SITUATIONS" PAGE  
[http://stars.troy.edu/get\\_the\\_guide\\_other\\_situations.html](http://stars.troy.edu/get_the_guide_other_situations.html)  
 Total page visits since launch date of July 15, 2013 = **10,771**  
 Avg. hits per day = **32**
- 



- ▷ AGSC PAGE  
<http://stars.troy.edu/agsc.html>  
 Total page visits since launch date of July 15, 2013 = **10,930**  
 Avg. hits per day = **32**
- 



- ▷ "UNOFFICIAL GUIDE" REQUEST PAGE  
[http://stars.troy.edu/scripts/cgiip.exe/unofficial\\_guide.html](http://stars.troy.edu/scripts/cgiip.exe/unofficial_guide.html)  
 Total page visits since launch date of July 15, 2013 = **48,760**  
 Avg. hits per day = **139**
-

### STARS STAFFING UPDATE

Currently, the STARS Office Staff is made up of two 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
- Anita Brown — Administrative Secretary (part-time)

This year we lost a full-time staff member (Dendy Moseley) to Troy University. We are grateful for the seven years of service that he gave to the STARS Program. He is to be commended for his work and efforts to improve the program and during difficult funding times.

With the increase in state appropriations for the AGSC/STARS Program, it is projected that the STARS Office will look to hire 2-3 part-time workers this year and use this time to re-evaluate the need for full-time staff members based on forth coming budget projections over the next few years.



### STARS TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

This year we were able to purchase a new web server to replace the current server that has been in operation for the past ten years. The new server has been ordered and should be in operation during the fall of 2014. The cost of this server was \$4,607.



In addition, the office was able to purchase the latest version of the PROGRESS SOFTWARE that is used to run and maintain the STARS TRANSFER GUIDE database. The software upgrade/update allows us to receive periodic updates, fixes, and 24/7 technical support. It will also provide other enhancements that we can use to improve the STARS TRANSFER GUIDE process. After much negotiation, we were able to purchase the software at close to 50% off the educational purchase price. The cost of this software was \$18,148.

We also updated our two office laser printers. We purchased a color laser printer for \$1,078 and a black & white laser printer for \$601. The total amount spent on the new printers was \$1,679.

Finally, we purchased two new desk-top computers and monitors for our full-time staff members. The cost of these two computers was \$2,400. If we hire additional staff members in the coming year we will most likely purchase three new computers for the part-time staff members.

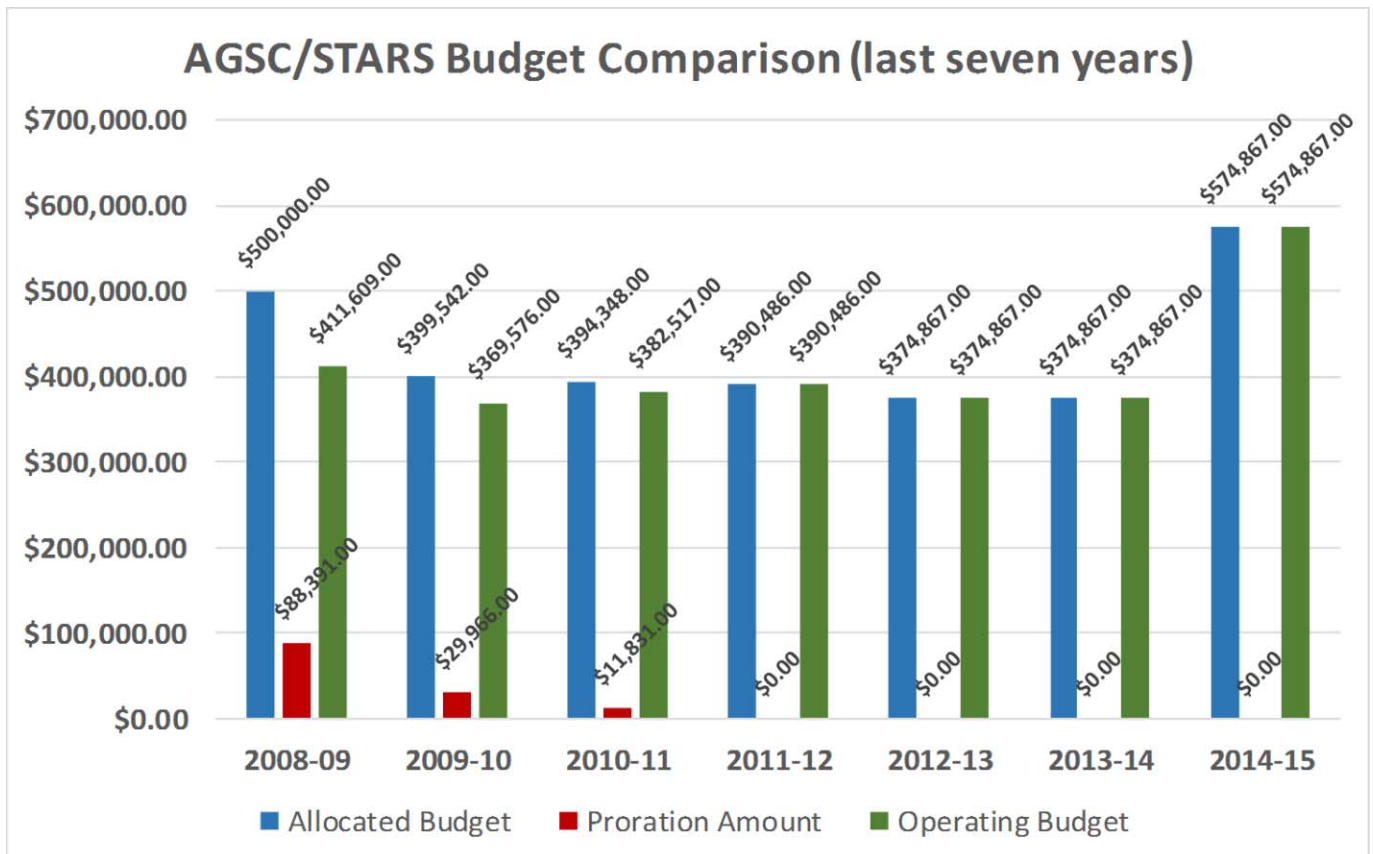
## INCREASE IN FUNDING FOR AGSC/STARS

The 2014-2015 budget for the AGSC/STARS Program has been increased by \$200,000. This is the first increase in funding since 2008.



### AGSC/STARS Budget Comparison ( last seven 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	\$0	\$ 390,486
2012-13	\$ 374,867	\$0	\$ 374,867
2013-14	\$ 374,867	\$0	\$ 374,867
2014-15	\$ 574,867	\$0	\$ 574,867







## IMPACT ON DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS DUE TO BUDGET INCREASES

Due to the work of many, the AGSC and STARS staff successfully informed our lawmakers about the importance of AGSC/STARS and the valuable impact it has on higher education in our state. As a result of these efforts, the Governor of Alabama and the Alabama State Legislature approved a **\$200,000 increase to the AGSC/STARS budget for 2014-2015**. This is the first budget allocation increase for AGSC/STARS in the past six years. This increase will allow for some, if not all, of the following (many of these activities had been eliminated or reduced over the last five years due to severe budget cuts):

- 1) Increase in personnel/staffing (hire part-time interns and/or grad assistants—see page 7)
- 2) Continue to upgrade/improve technology (see page 7)
- 3) Continue to find ways to update/improve website—add new features as needed
- 4) Increase travel and visibility across state—attempt to visit all campuses
- 5) Increase educational/training at all levels
- 6) Improve awareness through increased advertising and promotional efforts
- 7) Work with AGSC to initiate a “Program Evaluation” by an outside consulting group



BETTER SERVING THE TRANSFER STUDENTS OF ALABAMA!



DID YOU  
KNOW



## SOME INTERESTING AGSC/STARS FACTS...

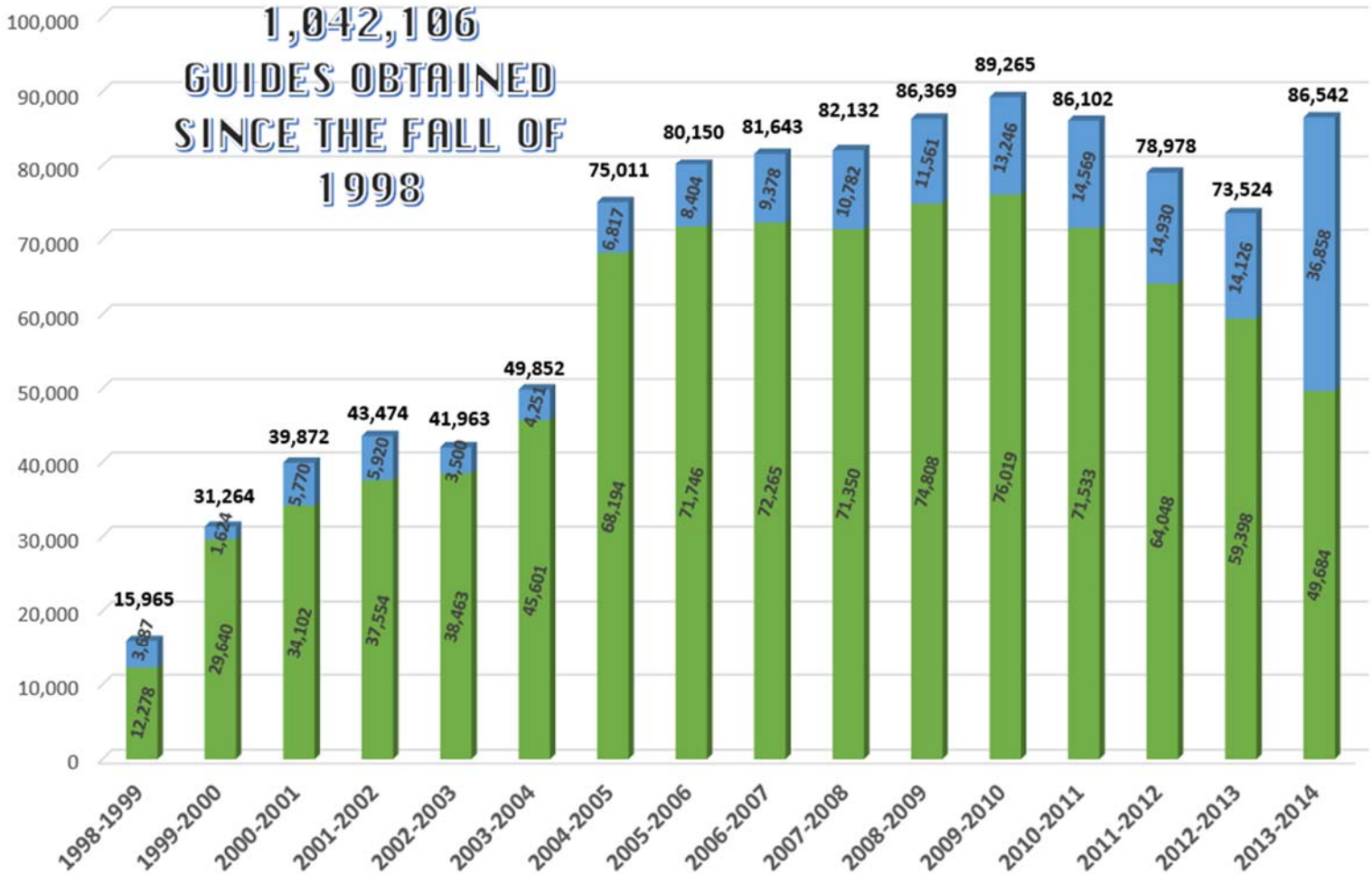
- The STARS Office maintains **over 150 different program templates** (these templates become the transfer guides that protect thousands of transfer students each year).
- The STARS Office **maintains over 1,700 courses** in the course database. Of those, **1,346 courses have been approved for statewide 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 three**.
- 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

Official STARS Guides Unofficial STARS Guides



**OVER 1 MILLION GUIDES OBTAINED!!!**

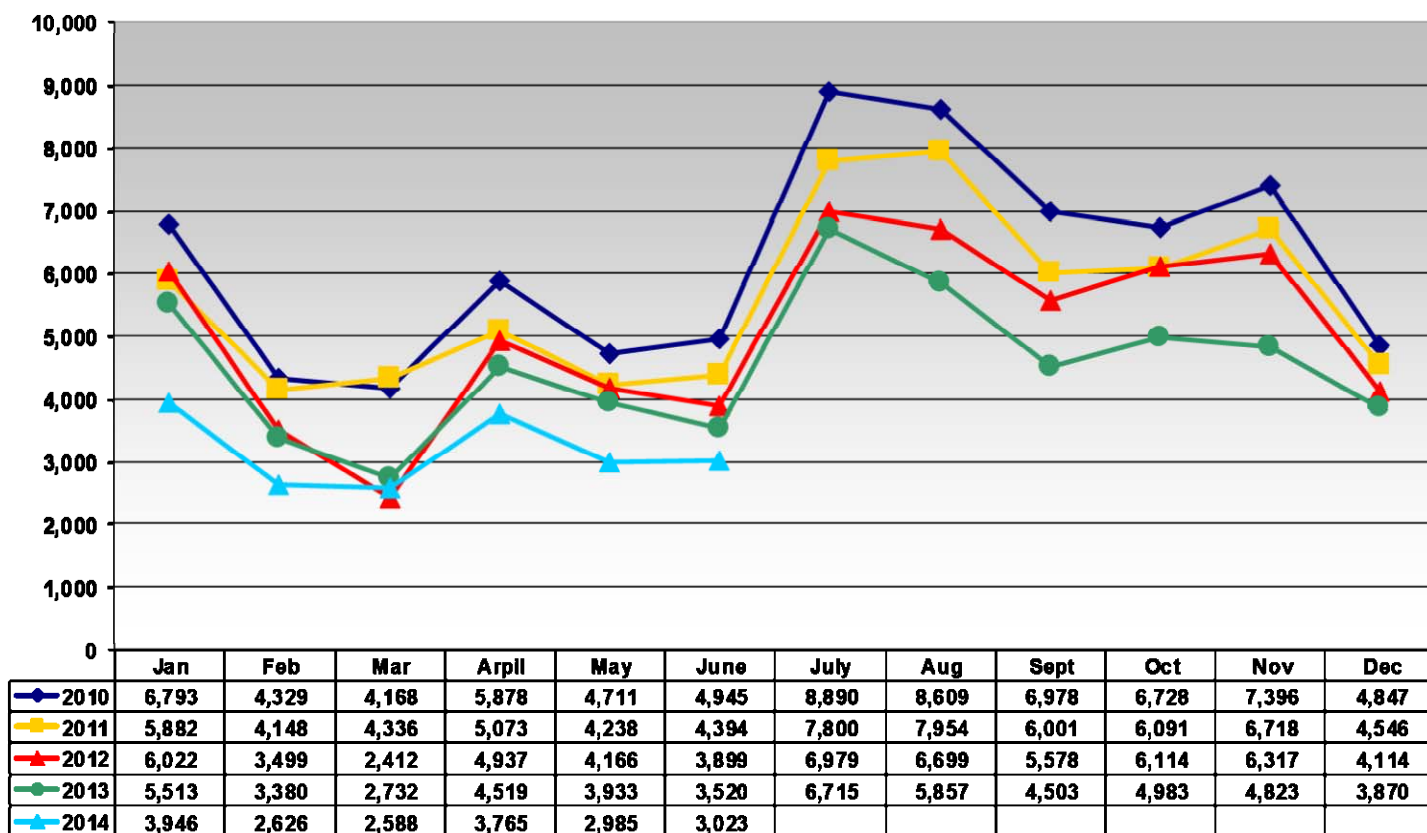
NOTE: For more detailed reports, please see the STARS website - <http://www.gettheguide.net>.  
If you need a specific report for your institution, please contact Mr. Shannon Nichols at [sgnichols@troy.edu](mailto:sgnichols@troy.edu)

## STARS USAGE REPORTS

[ continued ]

( January 2010 through June 2014 )

### Trendline for Official STARS Guides Obtained by Two-Year Students



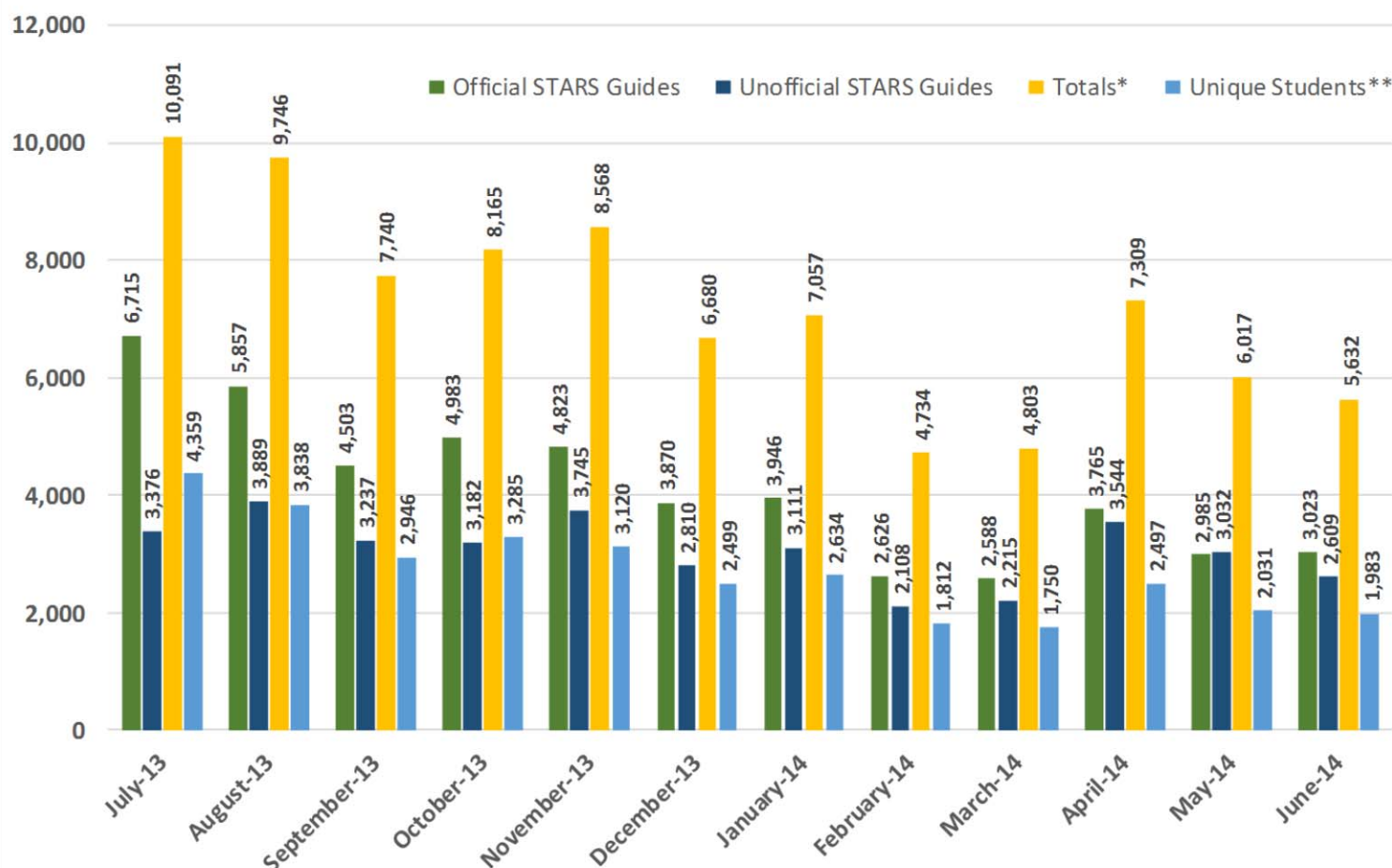
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## STARS USAGE REPORTS

[ continued ]

### Annual STARS System Usage from July 2013 - June 2014



\* **TOTAL AMOUNTS** include the number of official guides obtained plus the number of unofficial guides obtained.

\*\* **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://www.gettheguide.net>.  
If you need a specific report for your institution, please contact Mr. Shannon Nichols at [sgnichols@troy.edu](mailto:sgnichols@troy.edu)

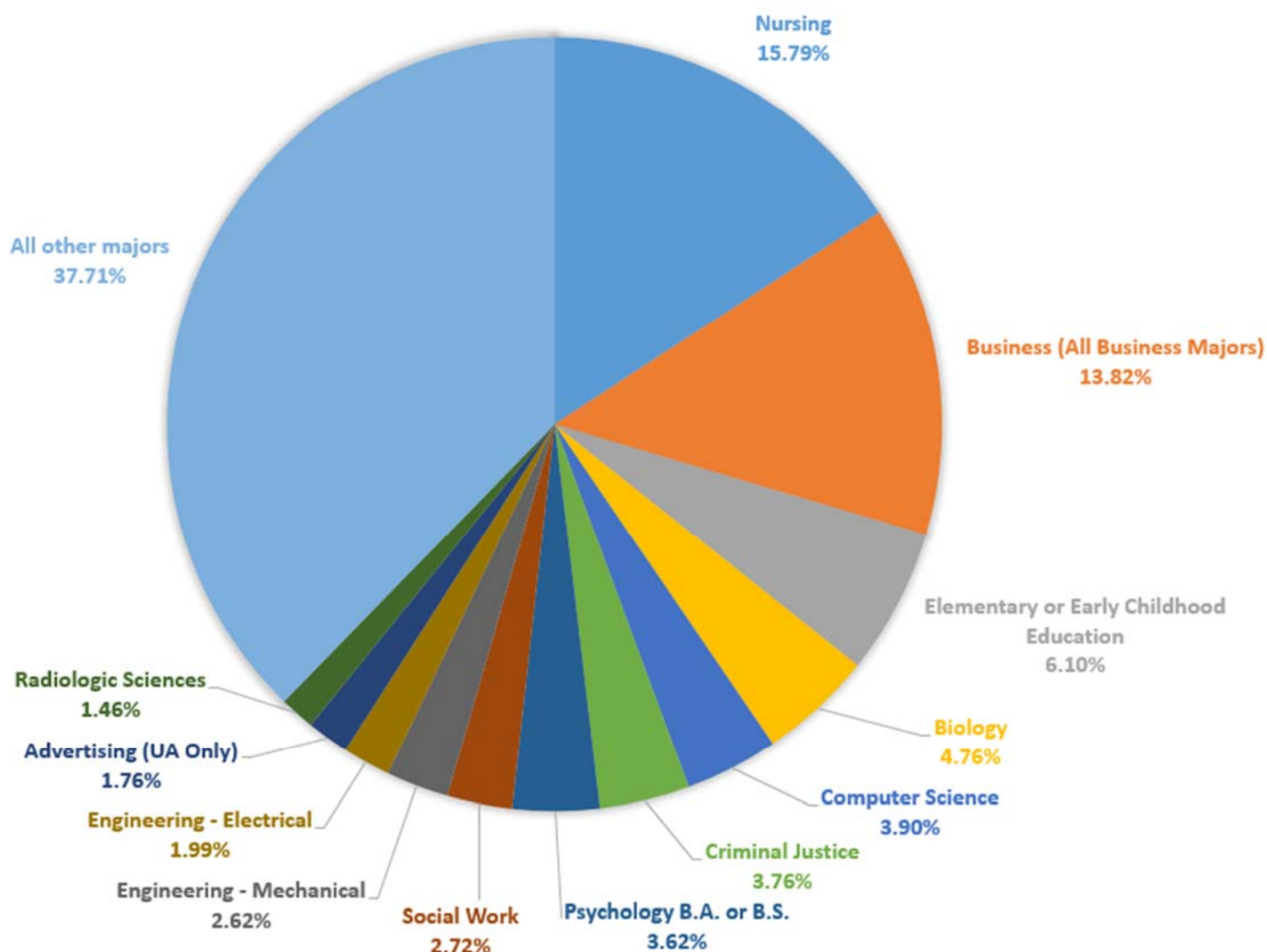




## STARS USAGE REPORTS

[continued]

### ANNUAL TWO-YEAR USAGE BY MAJOR FOR JULY 2013 - JUNE 2014

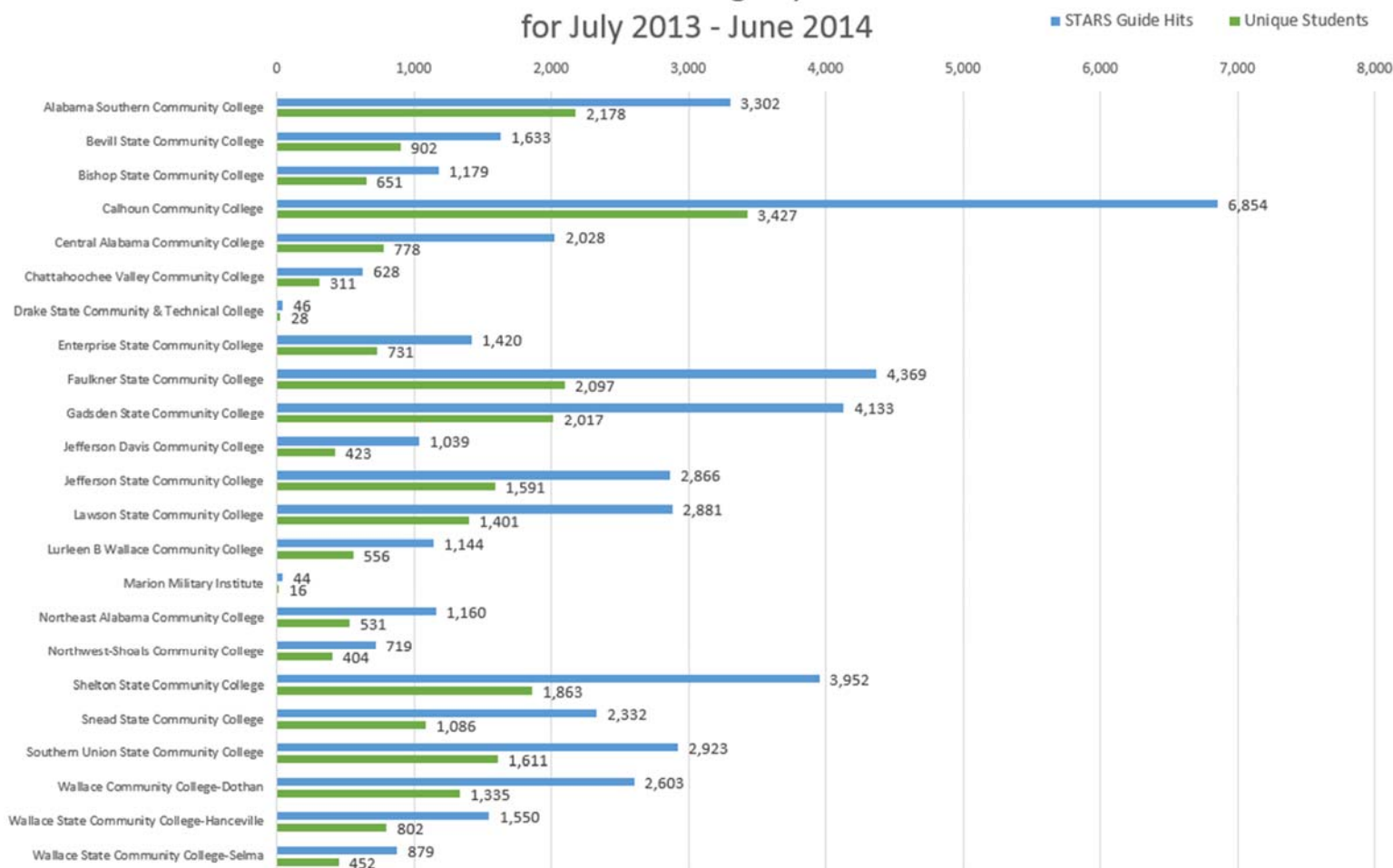


NOTE: For more detailed reports, please see the STARS website - <http://www.gettheguide.net>.  
If you need a specific report for your institution, please contact Mr. Shannon Nichols at [sgnichols@troy.edu](mailto:sgnichols@troy.edu)

## STARS USAGE REPORTS

[ continued ]

### Annual Two Year Usage by Institution for July 2013 - June 2014



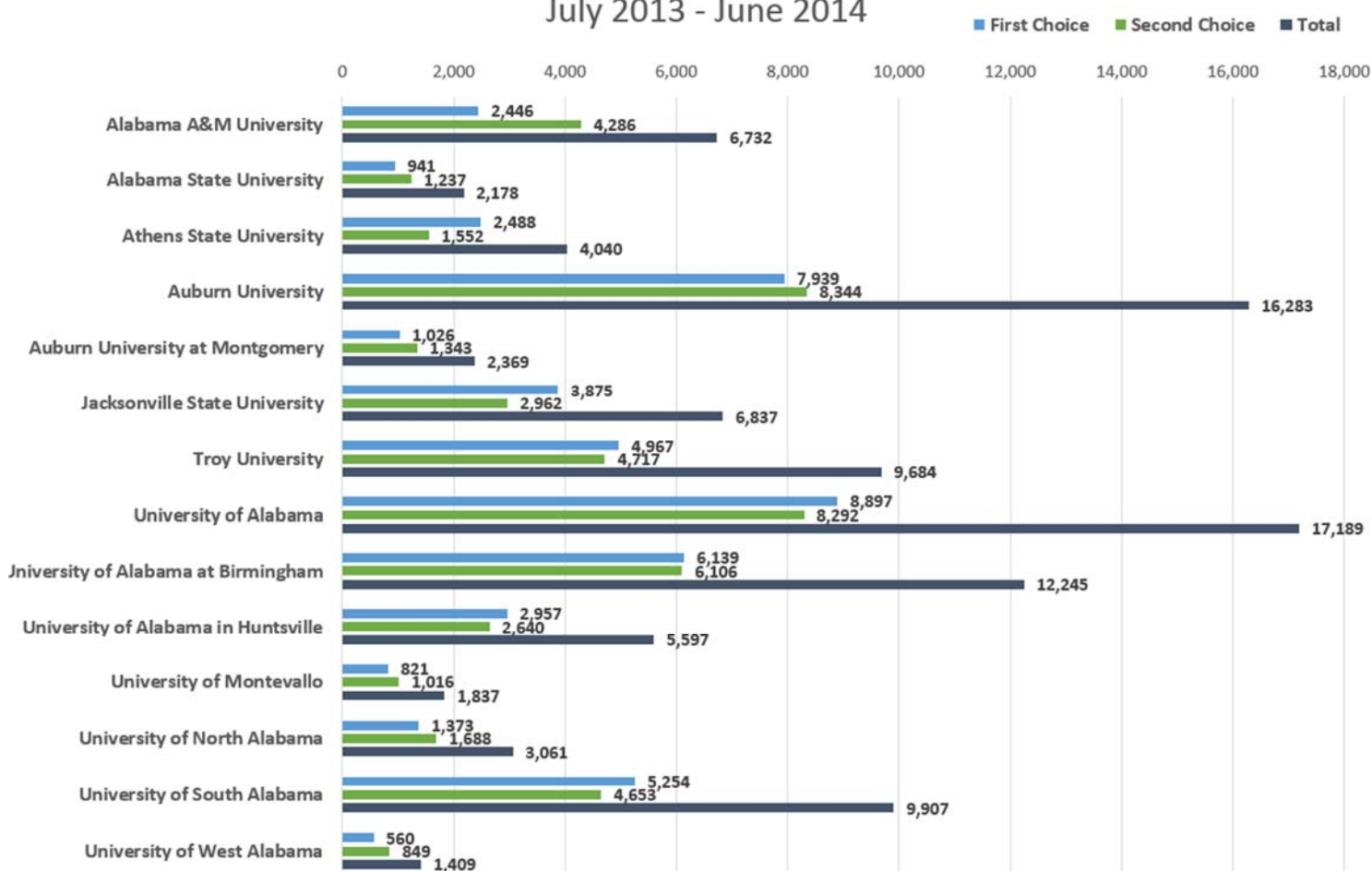
**UNIQUE STUDENTS** - The unique student totals take into account that many students who use STARS print multiple guides. This number takes out students who print multiple guides in a given major and only counts them one time. This number should provide a more accurate picture of how many individual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

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## STARS USAGE REPORTS

[ continued ]

### Transfer Institution Choices by Two-Year Students for July 2013 - June 2014



NOTE: For more detailed reports, please see the STARS website - <http://www.gettheguide.net>.  
If you need a specific report for your institution, please contact Mr. Shannon Nichols at [sgnichols@troy.edu](mailto:sgnichols@troy.edu)

## LOOKING AHEAD TO 2014-2015: AGSC PRIORITIES

1. Create an information packet that can be mailed annually to each member of the state legislature, the university and college presidents, and other supporters to keep them informed of the on-going work and successes of the AGSC/STARS Program.
2. Increase visibility, communication, education, and training efforts across the state at all levels. Provide additional training opportunities that can be conducted online using the current AGSC/STARS website.
3. Begin to lay groundwork and hire consulting group to conduct another external review of AGSC/STARS Program similar to the 2000-2001 study conducted by Dr. Don Crump.
4. Continue to investigate the impact of new "reverse transfer" initiatives in our state. Make sure institutions are not creating individual articulation agreements that would ultimately undermine and negatively impact the effectiveness of the AGSC/STARS Program.
5. Attempt to make staff visits to all university and college campuses who participate in the AGSC/STARS Program.
6. Survey the AGSC/STARS Four-Year Points of Contact to determine how they use the STARS monthly usage data. Find out who all on their campuses receive the reports (admissions, colleges, deans, etc.)
7. Conduct an annual meeting with all the AGSC/STARS Points of Contact in order to re-educate, train, and gain insight from them on important transfer issues across the state.
8. Send STARS Staff members to various professional conferences and request to make presentations and provide AGSC/STARS updates at these events (ALACRAO, NSPA, etc.)
9. Hire part-time workers (students/interns) to help off-set daily work loads. Make decisions on permanent staffing needs for the future.

## 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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