



2014 - 2015 ANNUAL REPORT

GET THE GUIDE

Prepared by
Keith Sessions
Executive Director
AGSC/STARS

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Questions and/or comments regarding this report should be directed to:

AGSC/STARS Program
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334-670-3797

LETTER FROM 2014-2015 CHAIR

Dear Supporters of AGSC/STARS:

It is hard to believe that a year has gone by so quickly. We are grateful to you, members of the legislature, faculty and administrators who serve on the committee, Alabama Commission on Higher Education board members and staff and constituents at all two year and four year institutions, for your support of AGSC/STARS and for recognizing the value the program provides to students in the State of Alabama. I am grateful to Dr. Keith Sessions and staff for their faithfulness to the vision and mission of AGSC/STARS and support for each new chair. Their efforts have been exemplary and tireless.

We have been quite busy this year and are continuing on a positive trajectory. In order to focus on those matters that were deemed critical we set priorities for the year.

Accomplishments based on the priorities set included:

- Establishing a subcommittee to review the rules and procedures regarding Reverse Transfer. We believe that Reverse Transfer is going to have an impact on the retention and graduation rates at the two year colleges as well as four year universities. This review led to interest and discussion on the matter in the state legislature.
- It has been more than a decade since we have had an external review of the AGSC/STARS Program. The last external review report was submitted in 2002. We established a subcommittee to develop the guidelines for the review. We want to ensure that we are continuing to make progress and meeting our stated goals and objectives and the best way to do that is through a thorough assessment and evaluation. The committee voted to move forward with submitting an RFP for proposals from firms to conduct the external review. The process is still underway as the budget is being reviewed for AGSC/STARS. Some internal evaluations and assessments will be conducted prior to the start of the external evaluation process.
- 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.
- 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.
- The staff made visits to many university and college campuses who participate in the AGSC/STARS Program.
- A survey was conducted of the AGSC/STARS Four-Year Points of Contact to determine how they use the STARS monthly usage data.
- STARS staff members attended various professional conferences and meetings to make presentations and provide AGSC/STARS updates.

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LETTER FROM 2014-2015 CHAIR - CONTINUED

- The staff was able to upgrade equipment and software in the office in order to be able to work more effectively and efficiently.
- More features were added to the website to make it more student and administrator friendly.
- The Chair and the Executive Director presented an update of the progress of AGSC/STARS to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education and began a discussion with commission members about the completion agenda.
- The Chair and the Executive Director presented information about AGSC/STARS and the benefits of the program to Provosts and Deans from around the state and encouraged them to use the full capacity of the articulation process and the STARS system.
- A student satisfaction survey was developed in order to determine the effectiveness of STARS for students and find if they need additional assistance as they matriculate.
- Established relationships with the private four year institutions in the state and added a representative to the committee.

While we have had many successes, we know there is still much work to be done to get the budget stabilized and continue with external evaluation efforts. I have no doubt, the very capable staff and committee members who volunteer to serve will set more priorities that will keep the State of Alabama Articulation and General Studies Committee and STARS System as recognized programs of excellence to be modeled by other states.

You have my sincere thanks and appreciation for your support,



Sharron

Sharron Y. Herron-Williams, Ph.D.
Professor of Political Science
Alabama State University
AGSC Chair 2014-2015



AGSC VOTING MEMBERS & ALTERNATES AS OF JULY 24, 2015

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 Professor of Political Science	New appointment pending
Auburn University	Dr. Constance Relihan Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies	Dr. Charles Israel Associate Dean for Academic Affairs Associate Professor of History
University of Alabama System	Dr. Gregg Janowski Associate Provost for Assessment and Accreditation (Professor of Engineering) <i>University of Alabama at Birmingham</i>	Dr. Charles Nash Vice Chancellor University of Alabama System
University of South Alabama	Dr. Mary Angela Coleman Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness	Dr. Eric Loomis Associate Dean — College of Arts and Sciences
Regional Universities	Dr. Hal Fulmer Associate Provost and Dean of Undergraduate and First Year Studies <i>Troy University</i>	Dr. Thomas Calhoun Vice President for Enrollment Management <i>University of North Alabama</i>
Regional Universities	New appointment pending	Dr. Suzanne Ozment Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs <i>University of Montevallo</i>
*Alabama Community College System (2-Year Institutions)	Dr. Mark Heinrich Chancellor <i>Alabama Community College System</i>	Dr. James Mitchell President <i>Wallace Community College Selma</i>
*Alabama Community College System (2-Year Institutions)	Dr. Gary Branch President <i>Faulkner State Community College</i>	Dr. Amelia Pearson Provost and Dean of Instruction <i>Central Alabama Community College</i>
*Alabama Community College System (2-Year Institutions)	Dr. Herbert Riedel President <i>Lurleen B. Wallace Community College</i>	Dr. Bruce Crawford Interim Vice Chancellor for Instructional Services <i>Alabama Community College System</i>
EX-OFFICIO NON-VOTING MEMBERS		
Alabama Commission on Higher Education	Dr. Gregory G. Fitch <i>Executive Director</i>	Dr. Elizabeth C. French <i>Director, Institutional Effectiveness and Planning</i>
AGSC Secretary	Mrs. Deborah Nettles Administrative Assistant to the Executive Director <i>Alabama Commission on Higher Education</i>	
AGSC/STARS Program	Dr. Keith Sessions Executive Director	
<hr/> *Effective April 15, 2015		

A Look Back at 2014-2015: A Status Report

AGSC/STARS Accomplishments



- Generated over 84,000 transfer guides during the academic year. Since the fall of 1998, the STARS System has generated over 1.1 million transfer guides. Each transfer guide prevents the loss of course credit, saves money, and improves time to degree for thousands of students in our state each year.
- Established a sub-committee of AGSC members to begin the process of looking into the possibility of conducting an external review of the role, work, scope, and effectiveness of the AGSC and STARS program (last study similar to this was conducted in 2001). The group is still working and will continue to address this need in the upcoming year.
- Established a sub-committee of AGSC members to investigate and participate in the discussion of "reverse transfer" and how it could best be implemented across the state. At this point this process is being handled at an institutional level through signed "reverse transfer" agreements and the AGSC/STARS office is not directly involved in its implementation.
- Increased the visibility, communication, education, and training efforts across the state through campus visits, on-campus presentations, online training courses, and increased marketing/promotional efforts.
- Conducted campus visits/presentations to each two-year college campus in the state. Made campus visits/presentations at a number of the four year institutions (currently scheduled to make campus visits/presentations at three of the four-year institutions this fall).
- Hand delivered AGSC/STARS brochures, annual report, and update letter to all state legislators to inform them of the on-going work and success of the AGSC/STARS Program. Similar information packages will go out to all college and university presidents this fall.
- Sent out electronic survey to all four-year points of contact to determine how they use the STARS monthly usage reports to recruit and promote their institutions to prospective transfer students. We are still collecting data from this survey and will report the results at the Fall 2016 AGSC meeting.
- Purchased access to an online training system (Litmos), that will allow us to create online training courses and modules that can be used to train different constituents around the state who use STARS and/or who are directly or indirectly impacted by the program. These courses can be completed online at times which are convenient for the end-user. Follow-up face-to-face meetings will still be a regular part of the training and education process.
- Sent STARS staff members to various professional conferences to participate and/or make presentations to these groups.

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 — Director of Information Technology
- Anita Brown — Administrative Secretary (part-time)
- Four Student Workers (part-time)



In 2014-2015 we were able to hire four part-time student workers. These students work in our office an average of 15 hours per week (not including summer months). They assist us in the general day-to-day operations of the STARS office. We are grateful to have them and appreciate the assistance they provide our primary office staff.

STARS TECHNOLOGY UPDATE



During 2014-2015, we were able to convert the entire STARS web/data system over from our old server to our new server. The old server served our state for over 12 years and generated over 960,000 transfer guides for students, counselors, and advisors during this time period.

In addition, the STARS Web Server has been physically relocated from our office off campus to the Troy University IT Data Center. By moving the physical location of the server it is now in a more secure area and is protected from power outages through Troy's back-up power generators. Our staff has access to the server at any time from our personal desktop and laptop computers.

The new STARS Web Server has 960 GB of data storage space compared to 40 GB we had on our old server. The processing speed of the new server is approximately five times that of the old server.

This year we finished installing and implementing upgrades on the PROGRESS Software that we use to write the programs and manage the STARS student database. This upgrade will allow us to receive on-going customer support and to provide access to future software upgrades as they become available.

Finally, we also purchased two new laptop computers and five new desktop computers for our office staff (both full-time and part-time employees). These new machines replaced our old ones which were nearly five years old.

STARS MARKETING AND PROMOTION UPDATE



As a result of our increase in funding for 2014-2015, we were able, for the first time in six years, to purchase and disseminate STARS brochures, post-cards, bookmarks, pens, and highlighters across the state to both the two-year and four-year colleges and universities. This past year we printed and mailed out (or hand-delivered) over 100,000 postcards and 100,000 bookmarks to be given to all incoming two-year college students. These printed materials are often the primary avenue through which the importance of STARS is first introduced to prospective transfer students in our state. In addition, we also are re-vamping our GET THE GUIDE posters. These will be sent out this fall to all advising and counseling offices to post around campus and in their advising areas.

AGSC/STARS TRAINING UPDATE

AGSC/STARS recently set up an account with LITMOS that will allow us to create various learning modules/training courses that will be available online and can be taken and reviewed at any time by various constituents around our state and region. The following courses will be available for the following groups this fall or in early spring of 2015-2016:

- ◆ Transfer Students
- ◆ Advisors and Counselors
- ◆ University/College Administrators
- ◆ AGSC Members/Alternates
- ◆ AGSC/STARS Points of Contact
- ◆ Academic Committee Members
- ◆ Legislators and Public Policy Groups
- ◆ General Population (AGSC/STARS—The Basics)



We will continue to provide follow-up and on-sight training as needed throughout the state. This fall semester we already have three on-site presentations set up at various colleges/universities in Alabama. If you would like a STARS staff member to come and make a presentation or provide some type of AGSC/STARS training on your campus, the best way to set up this training is to complete our **ON-SITE PRESENTATION/TRAINING REQUEST FORM** located at the following web address:

http://stars.troy.edu/on_site_training.html.

REVERSE TRANSFER UPDATE



The Reverse Transfer Momentum in Alabama

A significant number of students who begin their studies at one of our Alabama Community College System institutions fail to earn an associate degree before transferring to a four-year college. Many of these same students subsequently earn the remaining credits necessary for an associate degree, but never transfer those credits back to the two-year institution to graduate. The benefits to be gained from the awarding of associate degrees through the process of “reverse transfer” include an increase in the number of workforce participants who hold postsecondary credentials, an increase in the two-year colleges’ completion rates, and an increase in the number of transfer students completing baccalaureate degrees.

Efforts to increase reverse transfer within the State of Alabama include the following:

1. ACCS and public/private institutions are continuing to establish individual reverse transfer initiatives. This is a shared process by the two- and four-year institutions through, usually, their admissions/enrollment units. As of July 15, 2015 there was a total of 36 formal reverse transfer agreements established between 13 community colleges and various four-year colleges and universities in Alabama. Each of these agreements includes commitments and processes for identifying eligible students, conducting degree audits, and transferring credits from the four-year institution back to the two-year for the awarding of associate degrees. Many of them also contain pledges for additional supports such as guaranteed admission for qualified transfer students, scholarships, and free pre-transfer student benefits such as career services and access to athletic events, libraries, and physical fitness facilities.
2. During the 2015 regular legislative session, Senator Gerald Dial and others sponsored Senate Bill 77 to formally mandate statewide participation in reverse transfer efforts. The bill went through multiple drafts and received input from an appointed committee of AGSC members, STARS staff, ACCS System Office personnel, and representatives from ACHE, Troy University, Auburn University, and the University of Alabama. The Committee discussed the inability of the AGSC and STARS to identify or contact students eligible for a reverse transfer transcript review. Committee members also expressed concern about the unsustainable increase in workload for registrars that would result from an unfunded reverse transfer mandate. It was generally agreed that a technology solution for the automation of student transcript review is what is needed to make a statewide system for reverse transfer feasible.

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3. The ACCS has reached out to the National Student Clearinghouse for a solution. The National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) received a grant from the Lumina Foundation to partner with several colleges and universities to develop a nationwide reverse transfer system that will be free to institutions that participate in certain Clearinghouse reporting services, including DegreeVerify and StudentTracker.

The Clearinghouse's Reverse Transfer Project is endorsed by the American Association of Community Colleges. According to Dr. Walter G. Bumphus, President and CEO of AACC, "The Clearinghouse Reverse Transfer project is a major step in improving higher education outcomes, which will benefit us as a nation. More students will get the degrees they deserve. Community colleges will be recognized for the value they add to education. And — by granting more degrees — states will be better positioned to attract new business."

The benefits of participating in the NSC Reverse Transfer Project are substantial. NSC will provide the technology platform to exchange course and grade data between 4-year and 2-year institutions and will provide high-level reports on course/grade data accessed and degrees awarded through reverse transfer. Most important, if an institution participates in the Clearinghouse's free DegreeVerify and EnrollmentVerify services and reports additional data elements, it receives StudentTracker at no cost and consequently can reap the benefits of NSC's Reverse Transfer Project for free.

Currently, the Alabama Community College System is in the process of finalizing all institutional memberships with NSC in order to participate in the NSC Reverse Transfer Project. In order for the System colleges to take advantage of this opportunity, all System institutions must be enrolled in DegreeVerify. In-state research showed that all but five of our colleges are active with DegreeVerify. ACCS is closing the loop on the total participation of ACCS colleges. A letter to non-participating colleges from the Chancellor and a follow-up by the Deputy Chancellor are in progress. Communication with NSC's executive director, Paul Taylor, is ongoing to track membership participation by ACCS institutions.

This document was prepared and submitted by Bruce Crawford, PhD and Vicky Ohlson, PhD of the Alabama Community College System, Division of Instructional and Student Services.

It has been more than a decade since we have had an external review of the AGSC/STARS Program. The last external review report was submitted in 2002. We established a subcommittee to develop the guidelines for the review. We want to ensure that we are continuing to make progress and meeting our stated goals and objectives and the best way to do that is through a thorough assessment and evaluation. The committee voted to move forward with submitting an RFP for proposals from firms to conduct the external review. The process is still underway as the budget is being reviewed for AGSC/STARS. Some internal evaluations and assessments will be conducted prior to the start of the external evaluation process.



AGSC/STARS FACTS

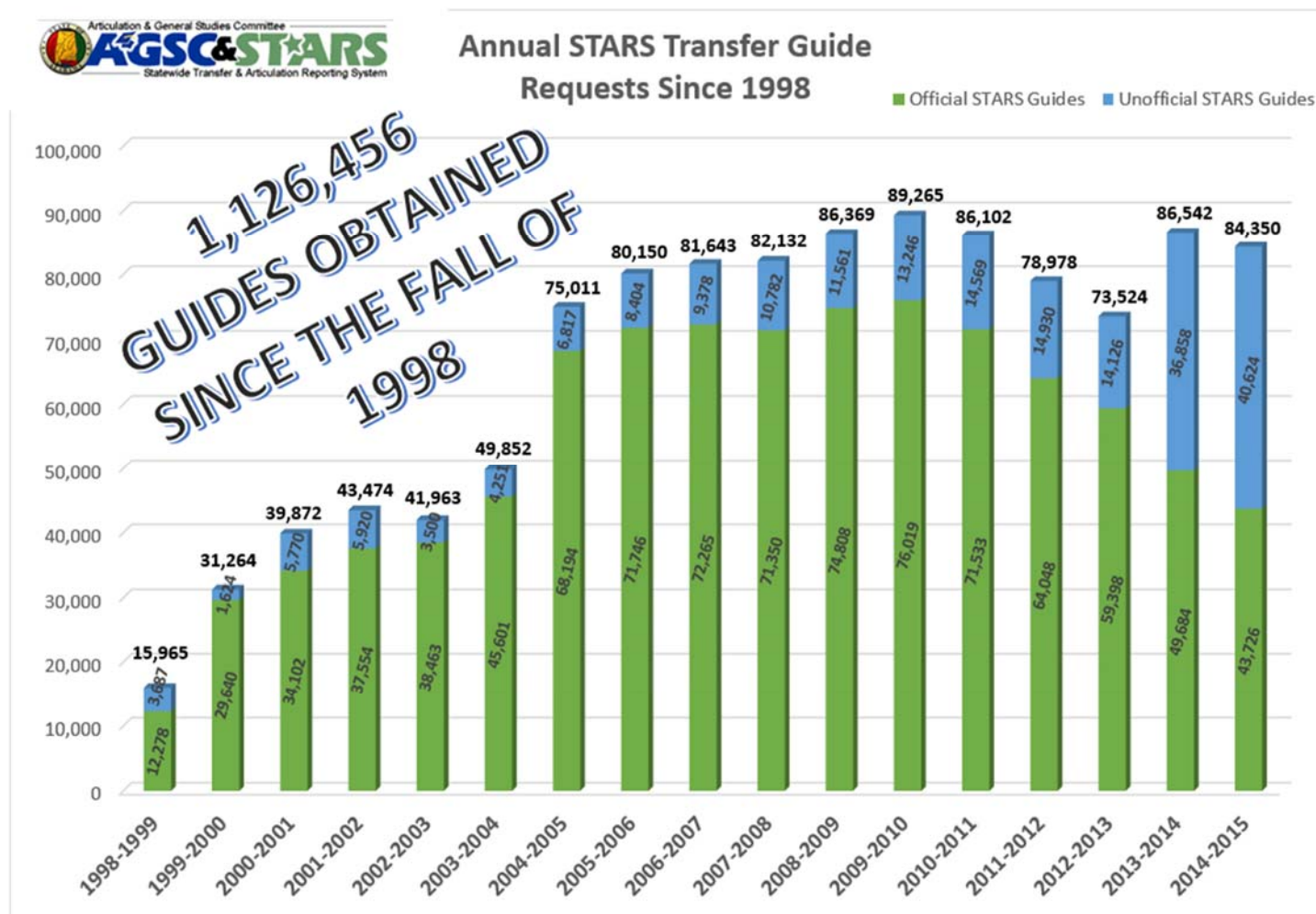
DID YOU
KNOW



- 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 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.
- Since 1998, the amount of money that the STARS Transfer Guide System has saved students and their parents (by preventing them from taking courses that would not transfer) is conservatively estimated to be in the BILLION dollar range.



STARS USAGE REPORTS



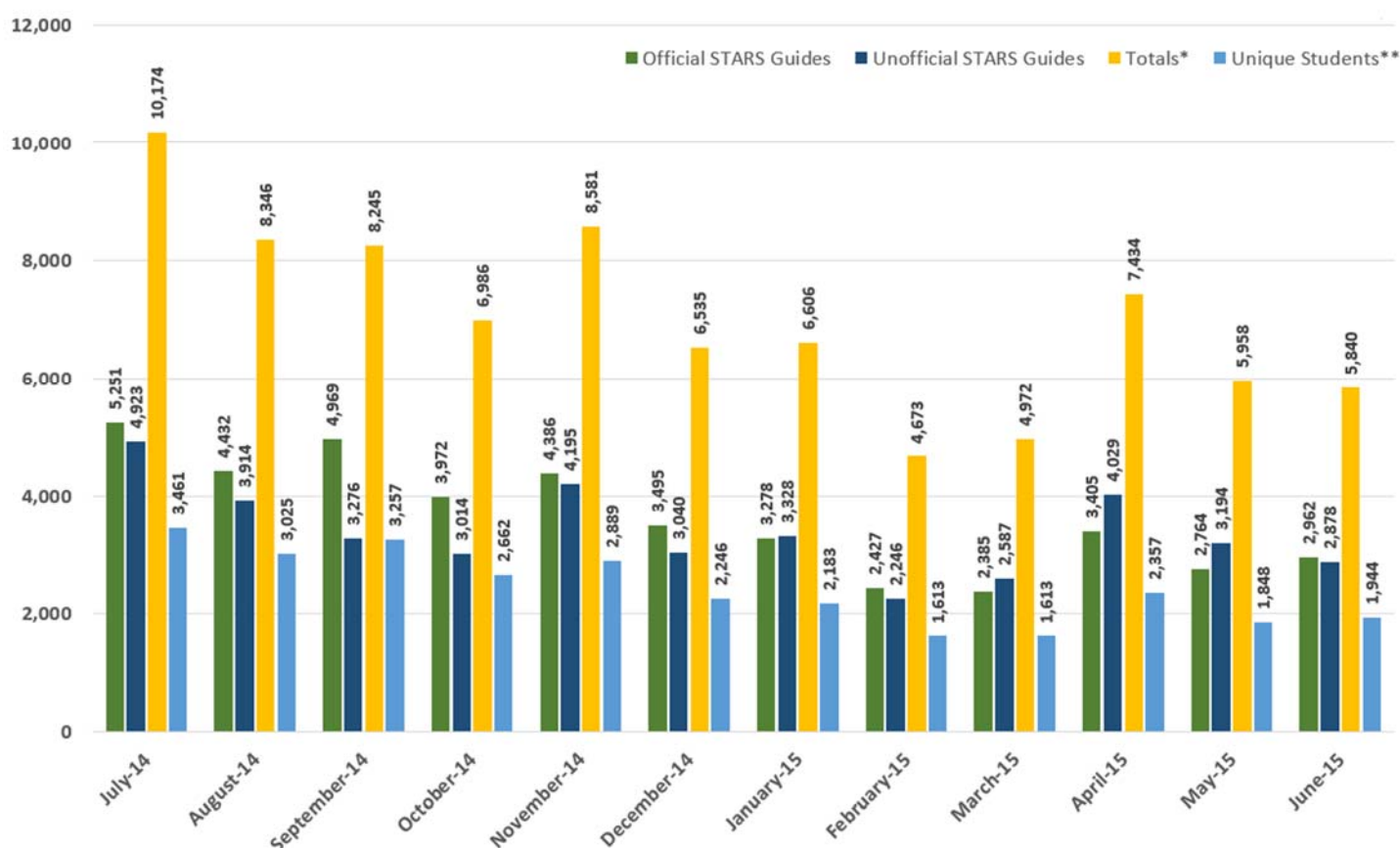
NOTE: For more detailed reports, please see the STARS website - <http://www.gettheguide.net>.

If you need a specific report for your institution, please contact Mr. Shannon Nichols at sgnichols@troy.edu

STARS USAGE REPORTS - CONTINUED



Annual STARS System Usage from July 2014 - June 2015



* **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.

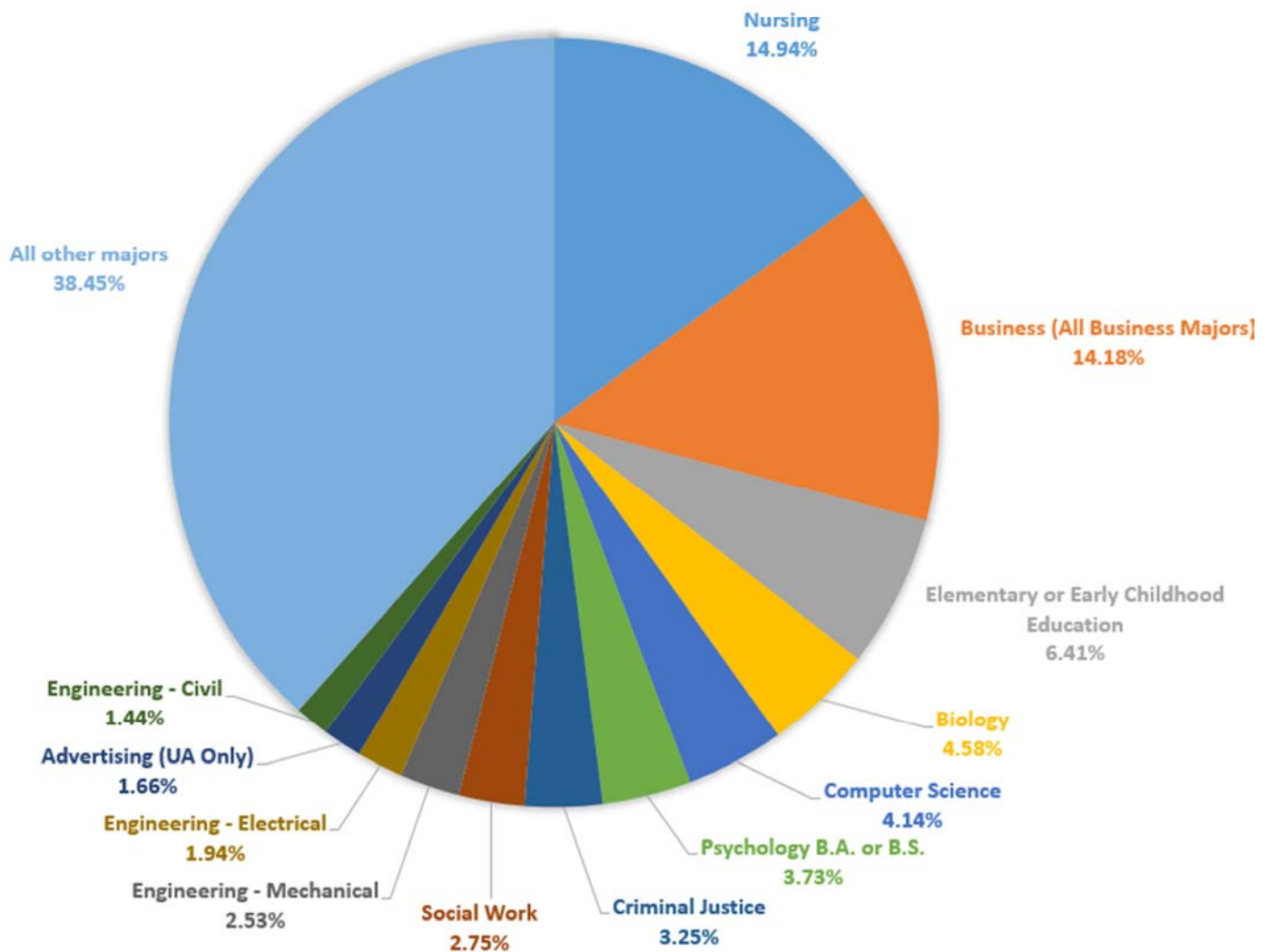
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STARS USAGE REPORTS - CONTINUED



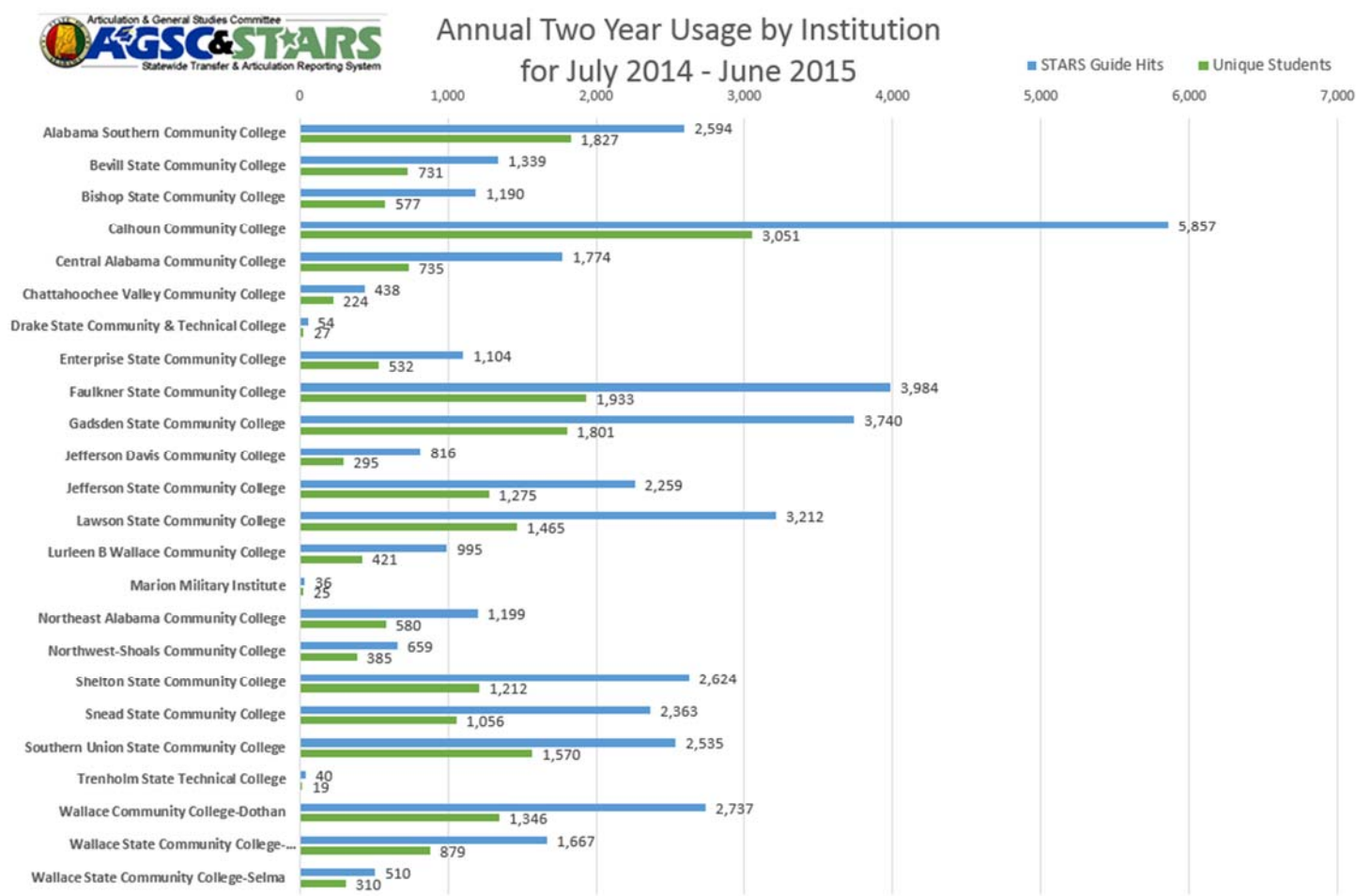
ANNUAL TWO YEAR USAGE BY MAJOR FOR JULY 2014 - JUNE 2015



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

STARS USAGE REPORTS - CONTINUED



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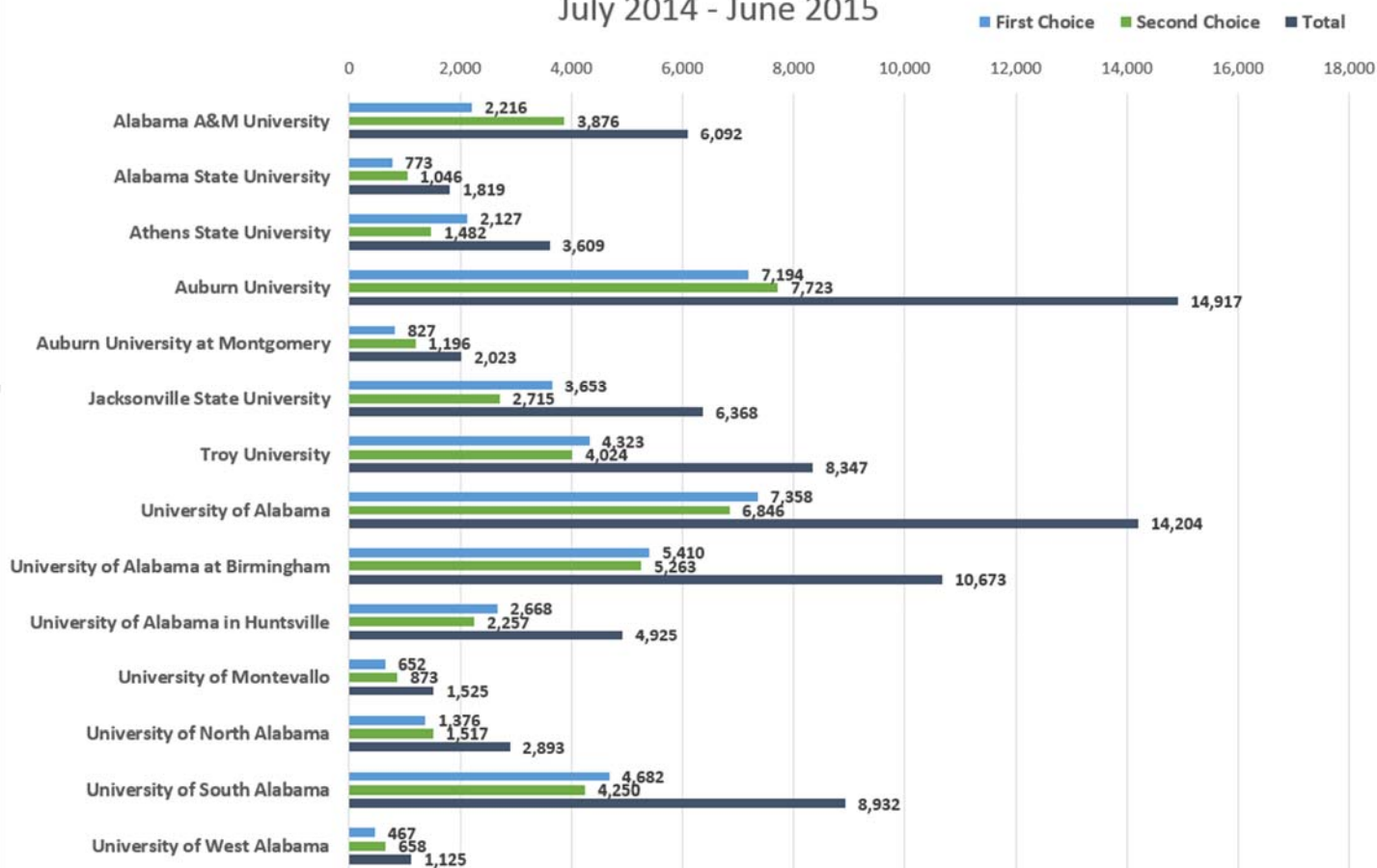
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STARS USAGE REPORTS - CONTINUED



Transfer Institution Choices by Two-Year Students for July 2014 - June 2015



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

A Look Ahead to 2015-2016: AGSC Priorities and Goals

1. Continue work to facilitate and an external review of the AGSC/STARS Program.
2. Establish an AGSC sub-committee ("Quick Response Team") to quickly and effectively address current and future budget issues.
3. Communicate with each member of the Alabama State Legislature and the Governor to provide to them pertinent information about the importance of the AGSC/STARS Program in an effort to ensure long-term support and adequate funding.
4. Complete and make available online training/education modules for various academic groups. Offer follow-up meetings with various academic groups around the state to provide a greater knowledge and understanding of the role and scope of both the AGSC and STARS.
5. Create an online student survey to randomly send out to students who obtained STARS transfer guides two-three years prior to gather positive/negative feedback on the success (or lack of success) in their use of the STARS Transfer Guide.
6. Establish an AGSC sub-committee to review the standard operating procedures for regular AGSC meetings and make any changes as needed.
7. Continue to monitor the various reverse transfer agreements that are established across the state.
8. Create ways to improve involvement and consistency among the various AGSC Academic Committees in order to promote a more effective and efficient programmatic review of current approved courses and ratified templates.



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.

Passed SENATE – March 10, 1994 | Passed HOUSE – March 10, 1994 | Signed by GOVERNOR Jim Folsom March 17, 1995

Questions and/or comments regarding this report should be directed to:



C/O Keith Sessions

Executive Director of the AGSC/STARS Program

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