



AGSC&STARS

Alabama Articulation & General Studies Committee
Statewide Transfer & Articulation Reporting System

2015-2016 Annual Report

SAVING TIME, MONEY, & CREDITS

State of Alabama
Articulation and General Studies Committee
Statewide Transfer and Articulation Reporting System
ANNUAL REPORT
2015-2016

Prepared by Keith Sessions, Executive Director



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LETTER FROM 2015-2016 CHAIR



Colleagues:

Serving as the chair for the Articulation and General Studies Committee (AGSC/STARS) has been an extraordinary experience for me working with colleagues from our colleges and universities in the State of Alabama. I have witnessed the dedication and commitment of the AGSC/STARS Committee members working together to maintain the mission and focus of the program in support of our students. I want to personally thank each one of you for performing your responsibilities on this Committee.

The AGSC/STARS Program has been in existence since 1994 as a system based upon collaboration and cohesiveness among Alabama's two-year colleges and public universities. The Committee's focus has been on providing a seamless process for the transference of academic credits and avoidance of course duplication for transfer students. The AGSC/STARS Program represents a model system of cost efficiency, responsiveness, and transparency.

Over the past year we have also focused on an evaluative process designed to improve all facets of the AGSC/STARS System. The results are being prepared to be presented to the Committee for its use in providing continuous improvement in our service to the citizens of Alabama. Additionally, we have approved new course offerings to support the curriculum for today's students and we have taken an active role in developing a System-wide reverse transfer process to create a "win-win" situation for students, their home institutions as well as their transfer institutions.

The new academic year is upon us, so let us look forward to a more productive 2016-2017 Academic Year serving the students in our colleges and universities. Again, thank you AGSC/STARS Committee for your service!!!

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Bruce Crawford".

Sincerely,
Bruce Crawford, PhD
2015-2016 AGSC/STARS Chairperson
Lawson State Community College



AGSC VOTING MEMBERS & ALTERNATES (as of July 25, 2016)

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	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. Marsha Adams Dean and Professor of Nursing <i>University of Alabama in Huntsville</i>	Dr. Charles Nash Vice Chancellor <i>University of Alabama System</i>
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. Ken Tucker President UWA <i>University of West Alabama</i>
Regional Universities	Dr. Patricia Sims Dean of the College of Education <i>Athens State University</i>	Dr. Suzanne Ozment Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs <i>University of Montevallo</i>
Alabama Community College System (2-Year Institutions)	Dr. Bruce Crawford Vice President <i>Lawson State Community College</i>	Dr. Mark Heinrich Chancellor <i>Alabama Community College System</i>
Alabama Community College System (2-Year Institutions)	Dr. Gary Branch President <i>Faulkner State Community College</i>	Dr. James Mitchell President <i>Wallace Community College Selma</i>
Alabama Community College System (2-Year Institutions)	Dr. Herbert Riedel President <i>Lurleen B. Wallace Community College</i>	Dr. Amelia Pearson Provost and Dean of Instruction <i>Central Alabama Community College</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 <i>Executive Director</i>	

A LOOK BACK AT 2015-2016: A STATUS REPORT

AGSC/STARS Accomplishments Based on 2014-15 Priorities

1. Continue work to facilitate an external review of the AGSC/STARS Program.

External Evaluation Conducted

In the fall of 2015, the AGSC hired a consulting team from the Education Policy Center at The University of Alabama. The AGSC's charge to the consulting team was to conduct an intensive external review of the role, work, scope, and effectiveness of the AGSC and STARS program (the last study similar to this was conducted in 2001). The consulting group completed this review in September 2016 and presented a final report and set of recommendations to the AGSC. The AGSC will work to address and implement the recommendations put forth. In addition, as appropriate, these recommendations will become the foundation for annual review and strategic planning in the years to follow.

2. Establish an AGSC sub-committee ("Quick Response Team") to quickly and effectively address current and future budget issues.

Created "Quick Response" AGSC Sub-Committee

Established an AGSC Quick Response Team to assist the Executive Director in an effort to quickly and effectively address current and future budget issues. This team was made up of the current chair, the current vice-chair, the past chair, and an ACHE representative.

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.

Updates Provided to the Governor and All State Legislators

The STARS Office hand delivered an AGSC/STARS brochure, the annual report, and an update letter to all state legislators to inform them of the on-going work and success of the AGSC/STARS Program. This effort will continue annually.

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.

We have created multiple power-point presentations for various academic groups that are available for download or can be presented through on-site presentations by the STARS staff. As usual, the STARS staff conducted campus visits and/or made presentations to each two-year college campus in the state. We hand-delivered or mailed out over 100,000 STARS post cards and bookmarks to be handed out to all incoming freshmen enrolled at the community colleges across the state. We also made campus visits and presentations to the University of South Alabama, Auburn University at Montgomery, Troy University, The University of Alabama and Jacksonville State University.

Training is on-going. We continue to look for better ways to train and educate groups and constituents from across the state. We are currently working to develop short 5-10 minute online videos that end-users can access through our website. In addition, we have an online form where institutions or organizations can request on-site campus visits. This form is provided at http://stars.troy.edu/on_site_training.html.

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.

This has been discussed by the STARS staff, but we decided to wait on implementing this student survey project in 2016-2017 after completion of the external program evaluation discussed earlier.

A LOOK BACK AT 2015-2016: A STATUS REPORT *(Continued)*

AGSC/STARS Accomplishments Based on 2014-15 Priorities

6. Establish an AGSC sub-committee to review the standard operating procedures for regular AGSC meetings and make any changes as needed.

A sub-committee was established to look into standard operating procedures for AGSC meetings. The following was created and approved:

There are ten voting members of the AGSC/STARS Committee based on the categories defined by the legislation, ACT 94-202. In addition, each appointing authority may appoint alternates equal in number to the number of votes that authority has (i.e., two alternates for regional universities, three alternates for ACCS, and one alternate for each of the others). Those entitled to vote at meetings are as follows:

1. *The voting member when present.*
2. *If a voting member is absent, the alternate member from the absent member's category (e.g., regional universities or ACCS) votes in place of the voting member.*

For regionals and two-year college representatives, when the number of voting members absent is less than the number of alternate voting members present, the alternate member(s) who will cast votes will be identified at the time of roll call such that there will be only three votes cast among the two-year institutions and only two votes cast among the regional universities.

7. Continue to monitor the various reverse transfer agreements that are established across the state.

On November 10, 2016, officials of the Alabama Community College System announced a new agreement with public universities and Huntingdon College that will allow students to transfer credits from four-year institutions back to a two-year institution in order to complete a degree. The new agreement was reached with the support of the National Student Clearinghouse so that transfer credits can be

verified automatically, and two-year schools can notify students that they are eligible to receive an associate degree.

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.

This is an on-going priority of the AGSC and the STARS staff. A sub-committee of the AGSC has been created to work with the STARS staff to try to find a way to simplify and improve the size and work of each of the academic committees. Much of this work is to be done in the 2016-2017 academic year.



From July 2015 through June 2016, the STARS Transfer Guide System generated over 82,599 transfer guides for prospective transfer students in Alabama. Since the fall of 1998, the STARS System has generated over 1.2 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.

STARS OFFICE UPDATE

Staffing

In 2015-2016, there were no changes in the staffing of the STARS office. We continue to run the program with a limited staff. Currently we have two full-time staff members and one part-time staff member. In addition, we try to maintain four student workers. Currently there is no succession plan in place for our full-time staff members. Our current staff accounts for over 70 combined years of experience in state transfer and articulation.

Computers and Software

During the last two years, we were able to upgrade both our web server and database system. In addition we were able to purchase new desktop and laptop computers for our staff members. Our printing capabilities were also updated. Currently we are up-to-date in terms of physical equipment. In terms of updating the software that run the STARS system, we were able to bring our software versions and our maintenance back to acceptable levels. We will have an on-going annual software maintenance cost of \$3,500.

Marketing and Promotion

We continue to look for inexpensive ways to market and promote the STARS program throughout the state using printed materials (brochures, bookmarks, and post cards),

online resources, and face-to-face contact. We are constantly sending out marketing materials to two-year colleges, four-year universities, and high-school advising offices. Many of the two-year colleges do an excellent job of assisting us in the marketing and promotion of this program to their students.

Changes to Actual Transfer Guides

We are currently in the process of adding a few new features to the actual transfer guide process. Right now, end-users can only print STARS transfer guides. We are working to add buttons at the top and bottom of each guide that will allow the end-user to choose from one of three options. They will be able to (1) print, (2) save, or (3) email a copy to the end-user's address.

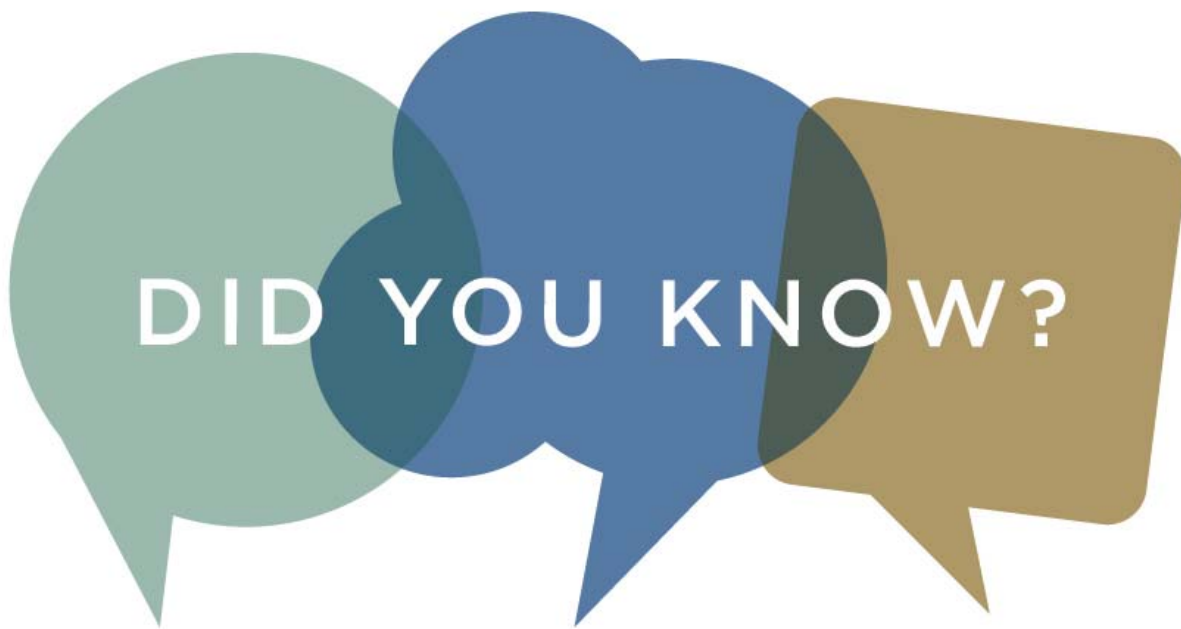
Aware of Need to Make Website More Mobile Friendly

Our website contains over 1000 pages of information. We are aware of the need to make the website work more easily and become more user friendly on mobile devices. This is a time-consuming and expensive project. Our goal is to first make the transfer guide easier to use on a hand-held device. This will be something that we focus on in 2016-2017.

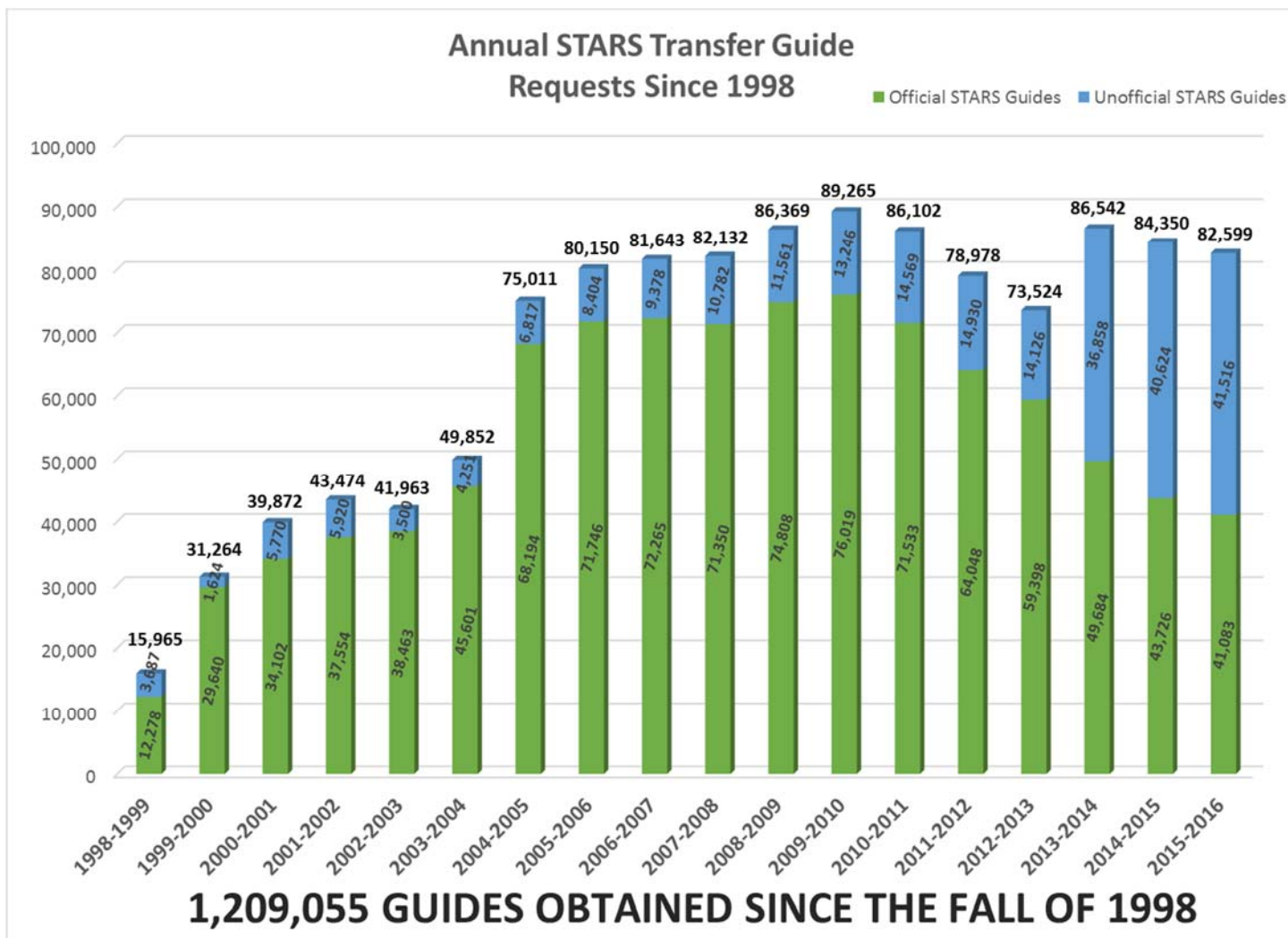


DID YOU KNOW?

- The STARS Office maintains over **160 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 **37 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 **70 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 **over ONE BILLION DOLLARS**.



ANNUAL STARS STUDENT USAGE BY YEAR



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

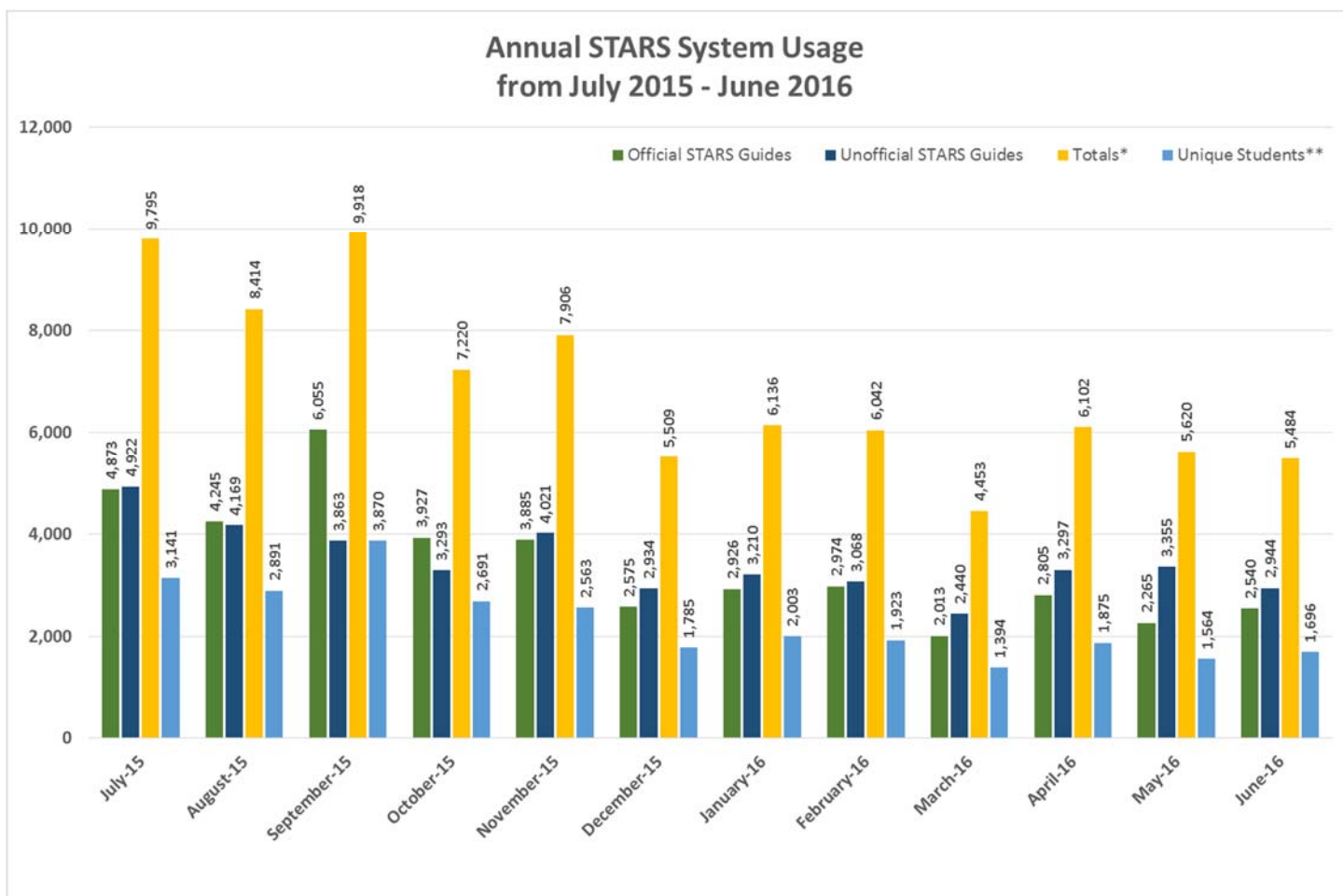
OFFICIAL GUIDES are obtained by transfer students who actually provide their name, address, phone, email, institution attending, and their major. The official guide also includes the Transfer Agreement Contract.

UNOFFICIAL GUIDES are obtained by various individuals for reference and comparison purposes only. These guides do not contain student information nor do they include the Transfer Agreement Contract.

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 STUDENT USAGE REPORT BY MONTH - 2015-2016 (Continued)



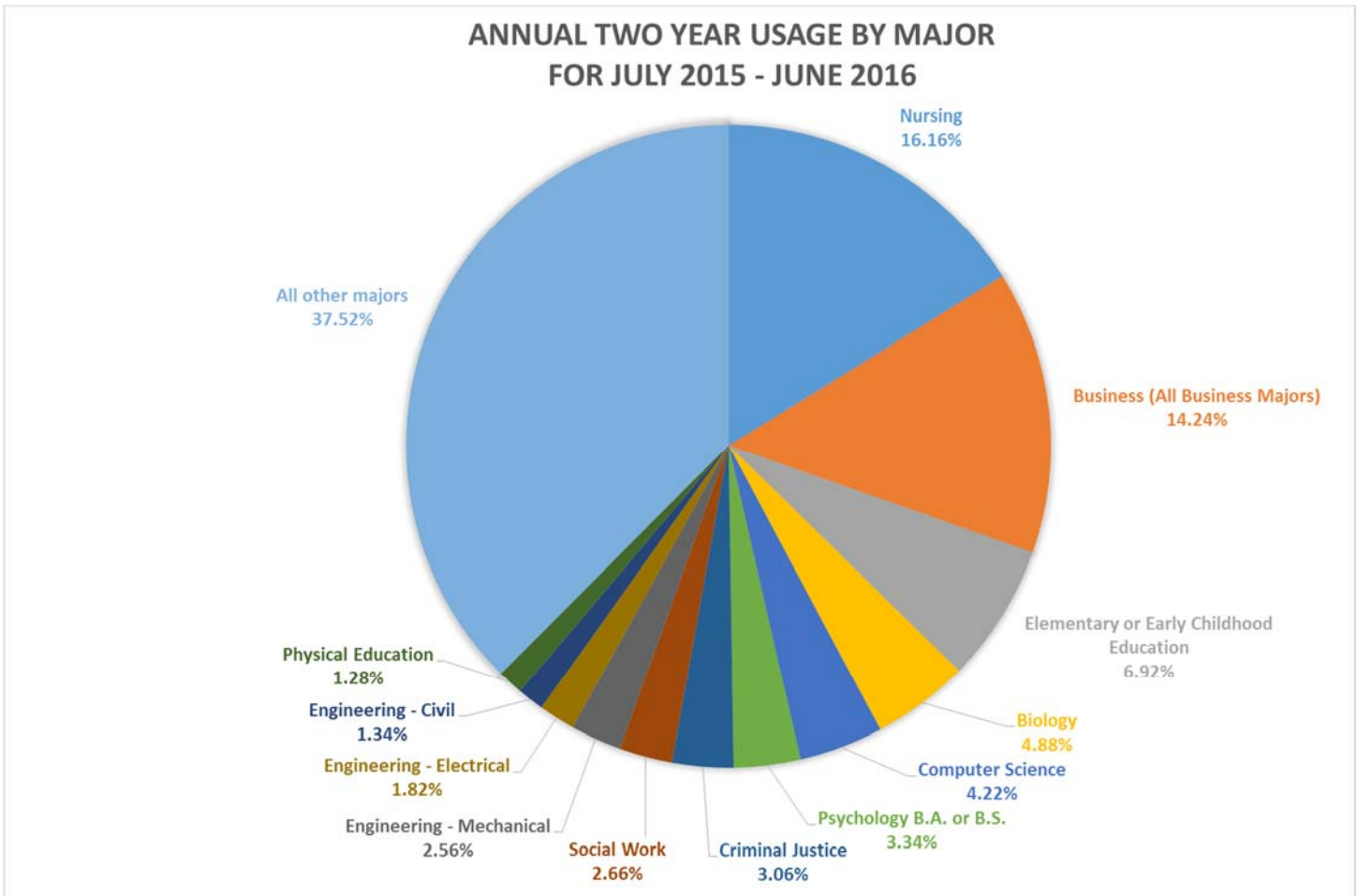
* TOTAL AMOUNTS include the number of official guides obtained plus the number of unofficial guides obtained.

** UNIQUE STUDENTS – The unique student totals take into account that many students who use STARS print multiple guides. Students who print multiple guides in a given major are only counted 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

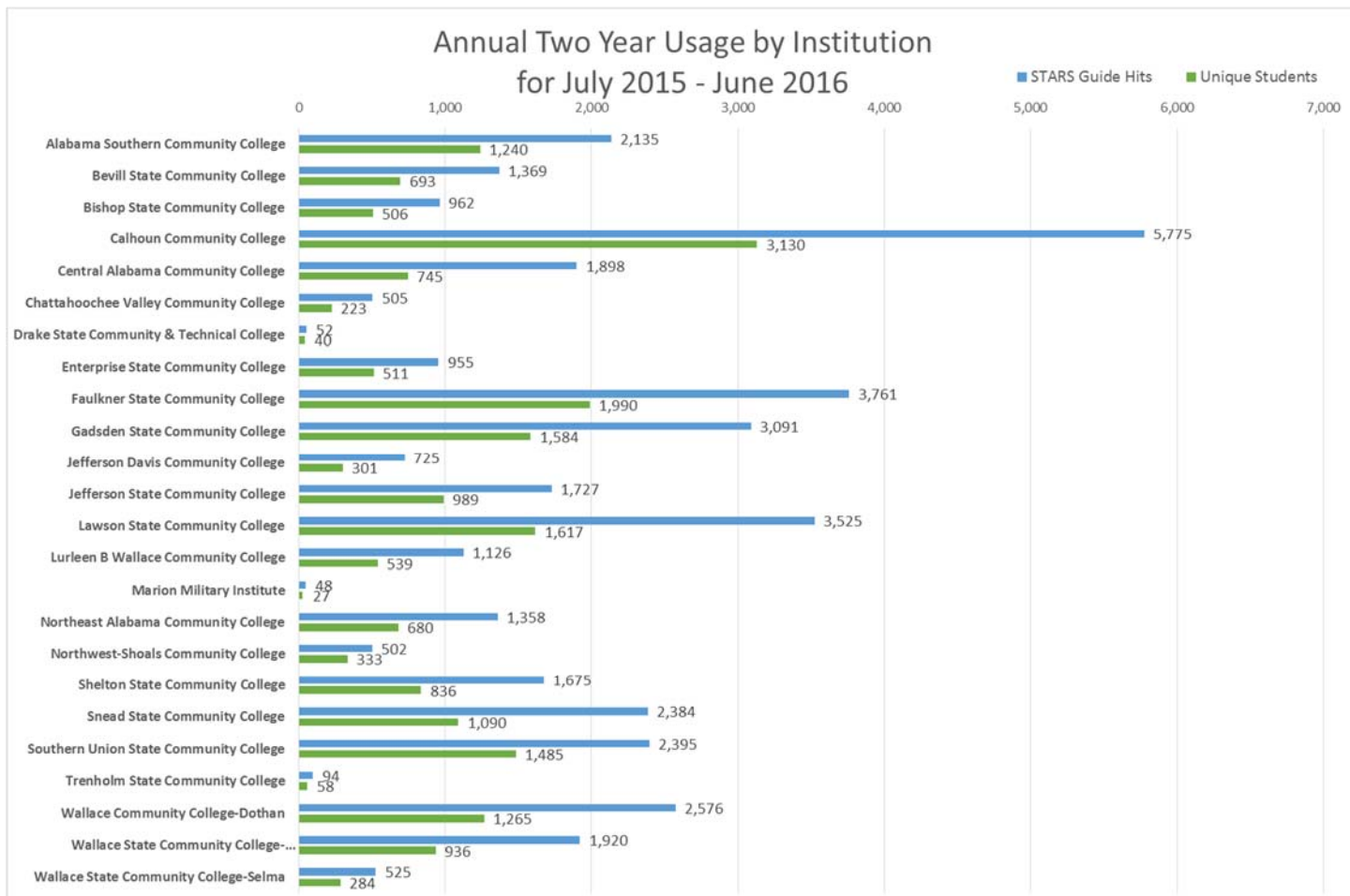
STARS STUDENT USAGE REPORT BY MAJOR - 2015-2016 (Continued)



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 STUDENT USAGE REPORTS BY TWO-YEAR INSTITUTION (Continued)



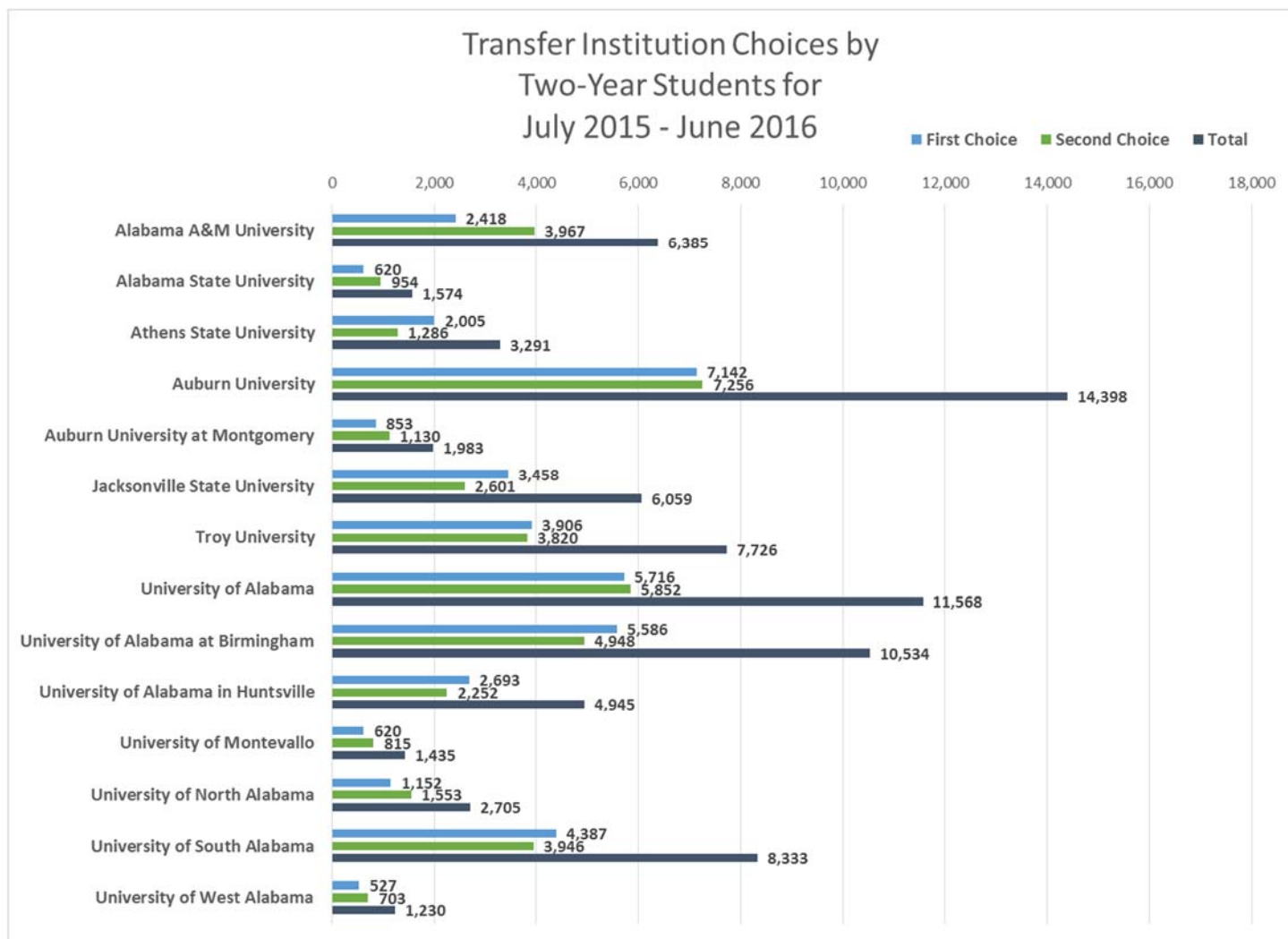
* TOTAL AMOUNTS include the number of official guides obtained plus the number of unofficial guides obtained.

** UNIQUE STUDENTS – The unique student totals take into account that many students who use STARS print multiple guides. Students who print multiple guides in a given major are only counted 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>.

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STARS STUDENT USAGE REPORTS BY FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONAL CHOICE (Continued)



* 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. Students who print multiple guides in a given major are only counted 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

A LOOK AHEAD TO 2016-2017

AGSC/STARS Priorities and Goals

1. Refine the protocols for resolution of Student Complaints and develop a process for presenting findings to the AGSC periodically as information items;
2. Implement opportunities for student engagement;
3. Improve STARS web-based services on mobile platforms;
4. Address Area V concerns; and
5. Evaluate the current structure of the General Studies Academic Committees and the Pre-Professional Academic Committees to make recommendations for improvement.





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 report should be directed to:



C/O Keith Sessions

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1101 South Brundidge Street – Suite 107

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WEBSITE:

<http://stars.troy.edu>

or

<http://www.gettheguide.net>

