

# Assessment of the Associate of Arts in General Studies Degree 2002-2003

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## Brief Description of degree program

The Associate of Arts in General Studies (AAGS) degree was designed with the idea in mind that all students are unique individuals with unique educational goals and interests.

Students' responses on the AAGS survey-which all students obtaining the degree must complete-have shown us that our students have very personal, very different reasons for seeking the degree. We understand that some students wish to obtain the degree for professional advancement within a company, while others may want to use it as a stepping stone to a bachelor's degree.

The AAGS program consists of a fifteen-hour core curriculum that is a foundation for and requirement of most UALR bachelor's degrees. The remaining 49 hours (for a total of 64) may be taken in any area(s) of study chosen by the student, provided that at least 20 hours of all course work are above the freshman level. For students graduating under the **Fall 2003 Undergraduate Catalog or later, 44 hours of core curriculum are required.** See the Associate of Arts in General Studies Degree Plan - Fall 2003 in the Download Forms section. The UALR core curriculum may vary by academic program requirements.

## Goals and objectives of assessment plan

The AAGS degree program centers on the following four goals:

1. Providing students with the opportunity to complete a non-specialized curriculum based on individual choice or needs.
2. Helping students to view this degree as progress toward educational goals.
3. Enabling transfer students to maximize the number of credit hours applicable toward the degree.
4. Providing students with a means of professional advancement and development of specific career related skills

The Associate of Arts in General Studies degree program focuses on two student learning objectives:

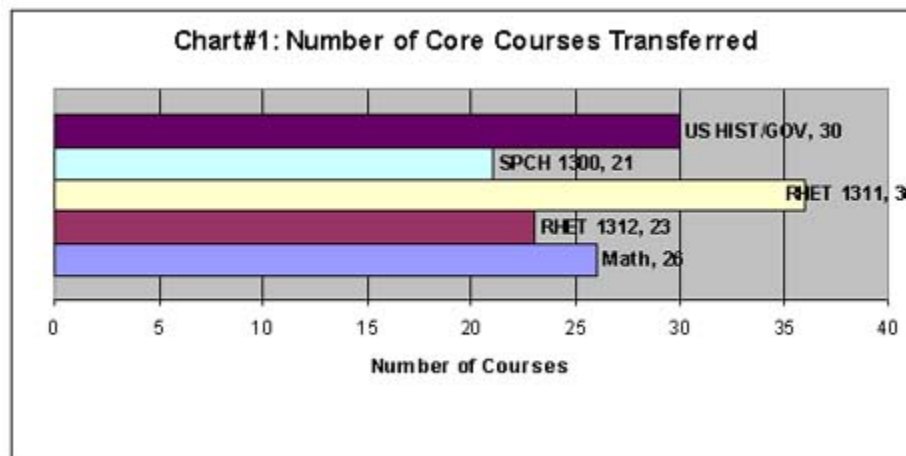
1. To provide students with the knowledge of a common fifteen-hour or 44 core curriculum, with the remainder of the program chosen by the student. Increasingly throughout the program, students will gain a better understanding of their strengths and interests.
2. To acquire a level of written competency, as measured by the WPE.

### Measures used for assessment

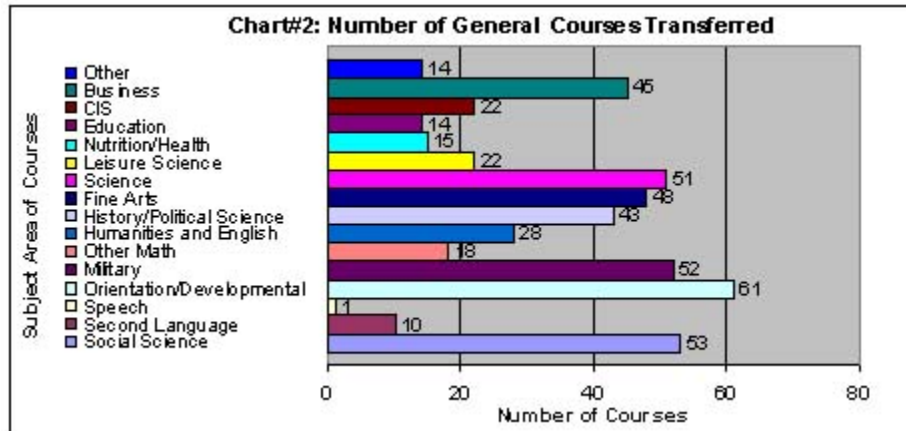
Objective 1: To provide students with the knowledge of a common fifteen-hour or 44 core curriculum with the remainder of the program chosen by the student.

For native UALR students, the 15 hour core consists of courses from five academic departments: Rhetoric and Writing, Math, History or Political Science, and Speech. These core courses are assessed as a part of their respective department assessment plans.

For transfer students, a count is made of the number of core courses transferred. (see Chart#1) Composition I continues to be the core course which is transferred most often.



To assess "the remainder of the program chosen by the student", courses are counted and grouped by general categories for both native UALR and transfer students. Native UALR students tend to work toward completion of the general 44 hour core curriculum and toward their chosen major requirements. The goal of maximizing transfer students' credit hours is realized in the diversity of courses transferred. An example is that military credits count toward the 64 credit hours of the AAGS. (see Chart#2)



### Objective 2: Written Competency.

This objective is measured by the WPE exam. Beginning with the 1998-1999 catalog, the WPE has been required. For the 2002-2003 year, all 46 students who took the WPE have passed it.

### **Results, Latest findings and Feedback loop**

#### **Results**

Changes have been approved to make the Associate of Arts in General Studies comparable to similar associate degree programs in the state. It was proposed that the 64 hour program would include UALR's 44 credit hour core curriculum. A maximum of two Leisure Science or Physical Education activity credit hours may be used towards this degree. The change is effective for students eligible to graduate with the 2003-2004 catalog year.

Assessment efforts this year have again focused on understanding the characteristics of the students seeking this degree. This information assists in informing students about this degree.

The program is assessed by reviewing:

1. Results of the WPE
2. The Student Surveys
3. Demographic data obtained from BANNER
4. Worksheet (transcript) analysis
5. The annual Alumni Outcome Survey (ACT)

Seventy-five (75) students have filed degree plans this past year and were included in this year's report. Thirty-nine (39) were transfer students (52%), and thirty-six were native UALR students (48%). Fourteen (14) native UALR students also presented transfer credits for the degree. Students submitted 82 transcripts from 37 different colleges. The top two transfer institutions, for the third year, continue to be Pulaski Technical College and the University of Central Arkansas, which are also the top two transfer feeder colleges to UALR.

## **Latest findings**

WPE. Of the 75 students, 29 were required to take the WPE, as determined by their catalog year. However, 46 students have taken and passed the WPE. This suggests that many students intend to continue studies for a bachelor's degree for which the WPE was currently a graduation requirement in 2002 - July 1, 2003.

Student Survey. The student survey addresses the question of why students apply for the AAGS. Students can check as many responses as apply. The results are:

- **Job opportunity and advancement - 35**
- **Personal satisfaction - 36**
- **Half way to a bachelor's degree - 27**
- **Intend to transfer - 5**
- **Meet AAGS degree requirements - 14**

Demographics. The average age of this sample is 31. The average age of the general UALR undergraduate population reported in spring 2003 was 27. Several students seeking the AAGS either have returned to school after a lengthy absence or have been in and out of school several times. As a result, it is easy to see that the average age of students seeking the AAGS could be higher than for UALR in general.

The gender analysis reveals that 75% (n=56) of the AAGS sample is female and 25% (n=19) is male. In spring 2003, the general UALR undergraduates were 63% female and 37% male.

The ethnicity of this sample is similar to the general UALR ethnic distribution. Caucasians make up 48% (n=36), African Americans make up 45% (n=34), and the remaining 7% include 1 Asian, 1 Hispanic, and 3 unknown.

## **Feedback**

### *Faculty and Student involvement in the assessment process*

Since the nature of this degree is different from any other degree offered by UALR in that the degree is not offered by an academic college, faculty are not directly involved in the assessment of the AAGS. However, faculty are involved in core and program assessment in each of the academic disciplines.

Academic departments often refer students to this associate degree when circumstances prevent an individual from completing their original educational goal. Examples include inability to successfully complete a program of studies, job transfers, and other life or career circumstances.

The involvement of students in the assessment process is accomplished by completing the AAGS student survey and the ACT Alumni Survey.

### *Impact of findings on stakeholders*

The Office of Academic Advising of University College shares information obtained from the annual ACT Alumni Outcome Survey with other students who are considering this degree. The ACT Alumni Outcome Survey contains information about students' current position and salaries. This survey was sent to all UALR graduates including those who obtained the AAGS degree in Spring, Summer 1 and 2, and Fall of each preceding year can be viewed at [http://www.ualr.edu/ccps\\_dept/alumni\\_survey.pdf](http://www.ualr.edu/ccps_dept/alumni_survey.pdf).

### **Assessment contact person**

Dr. Thea Zidonowitz Hoeft  
Division Chief for University College and  
Director of Department of Academic Advising  
University of Arkansas at Little Rock  
Ross Hall, Room 406  
2801 South University  
Little Rock, AR 72204  
Tel (501) 569 8688 or (501) 569-3386  
Fax (501) 569-8732  
email: [tmhoeft@ualr.edu](mailto:tmhoeft@ualr.edu)