

**Associate of Arts in General Studies
Degree Program Assessment Plan
Plan No. 3
Office of Academic Advising
March 2007**

2-27-07

- 1. What are your student learning goals for this degree program? Include which core competencies are addressed by these goals where applicable.**

To provide students with the UALR Core Curriculum as a base for continuing in school for a bachelor's degree. Beginning in the Fall of 2003, the Associate of Arts in General Studies requires the completion of the UALR 44 hour core and a total of 64 credit hours. All ten core competencies are satisfied by students who complete the AAGS. This fulfills the purpose of the core curriculum, "to establish a foundation for the undergraduate academic experience and to ensure that students develop fundamentals skills and a lifelong commitment and ability to learn."

- 2. What are your learning objectives or outcomes associated with each goal?**
 - a. To complete the UALR Core Curriculum and be prepared to continue studies for a bachelor's degree. The graduation checkout confirms that the core curriculum and all degree requirements have been completed. This puts the student in the position of being able to continue with the major and complete a bachelor's degree.**
 - b. To encourage students to consider this degree as progress toward a higher degree. This is demonstrated by students who continue in school, whether at UALR or at another school.**
 - c. To enable students to feel a sense of personal accomplishment upon receipt of the AAGS degree. Responses to the student survey reveal that completion of the degree provides a sense of achievement.**
 - d. To provide students with a means of professional advancement. The AAGS provides students with a diploma, a degree which represents a certain level and quality of achievement. It can be significant in terms of employment, salary, or advancement.**
- 3. Where will the objectives be addressed in your program? In which courses and through which activities will they be assessed?**

The assessment of UALR Core Curriculum courses occurs in the respective departments.

The assessment of the learning outcomes is outlined in the attached assessment map. The learning outcomes are measured yearly, and the assessment is not linked to a specific course due to the unique design of this degree. The Student Survey, Banner review and worksheets provide the information needed for assessment.

4. How will you assess each objective?

The population of students for the yearly assessment report comes from students who have applied for the AAGS. They are required to complete a Student Survey at the time they sign the degree plan.

- a) Methods: Outcome 1 and part of Outcome 2 are assessed by reviewing information in Banner. The “Degree Summary” form is reviewed to find the number of students who complete the AA, and the “Registration Query” form is used to determine how many are still enrolled at UALR. The information that is missing is the number of students who go on to another school, such as UAMS, to pursue a higher degree. The Student Survey asks students to report their intent to continue for a higher degree. Outcomes 3 and 4 are assessed by counting the respective responses from the Student Survey, indicating if they feel a sense of accomplishment and/or if the AAGS is a means of professional advancement. The information obtained from Banner is reliable and valid. The information obtained from the Student Survey is self-reported and is considered reliable. The Assistant Director of Academic Advising obtains the information from Banner and the Student Surveys each year and writes the assessment reports. The reports are reviewed by others in the department and by the Division Chief of University College to assure that data is treated, analyzed, and interpreted consistently.**
- b) Design: The AAGS applicant completes the Student Survey when signing the degree plan. Students can file a degree plan upon completion of 30 credit hours; however, it is most common that degree plans are filed near the end of completing degree requirements. A follow up survey, the ACT Alumni Survey, is sent out yearly from the Office of Counseling and Career Planning. This report is for the previous year graduates.**
- c) Assessment Cycle: The review and assessment of each outcome is conducted annually for the AAGS.**
- d) Stakeholder involvement: The annual Degree Program Assessment Plan and Progress Reports are posted to the Academic Advising, the Provost’s Assessment Central, and the Vice-Chancellor for Educational and Student Services websites each year.**

Goal: Complete UALR Core Curriculum as a base for continuing in school for a bachelor's degree.

	Outcome 1:	Outcome 2:	Outcome 3:	Outcome 4:
How Outcomes are Addressed & Assessed	Prepare students to continue for bachelor's degree.	Encourage students to consider this as progress toward higher degree.	Enable students to feel a sense of personal accomplishment.	To provide a means of professional advancement.
Emphasis:	Extensive	Extensive	Extensive	Extensive
Assessed:	Determine the # of students who complete the AAGS each year. (Banner: Degree Summary)	How many are still in school? (Banner: Registration Query)	Student survey responses will be counted.	Student survey responses will be counted.
Assessed:		How many indicate intent to continue for bachelor's? (Student Survey)		

**Associate of Arts in General Studies
University College
Office of Academic Advising
March 2007**

Degree Program Assessment Progress Report for 2006

- 1. What are your student learning goals for this degree program? Include which core competencies are addressed by these goals where applicable.**

To provide students with the UALR Core Curriculum as a base for continuing in school for a bachelor's degree. Beginning in the Fall of 2003, the Associate of Arts in General Studies requires the completion of the UALR 44 hour core and a total of 64 credit hours. All ten core competencies are satisfied by students who complete the AAGS. This fulfills the purpose of the core curriculum, "to establish a foundation for the undergraduate academic experience and to ensure that students develop fundamentals skills and a lifelong commitment and ability to learn."

Each year, more students are applying for the AAGS under the fall of 2003 and later catalog requirements. Eventually, all students getting the AAGS will satisfy the UALR core curriculum. This year, under the new requirements, two students have already been awarded the AAGS, three more have completed the requirements and are due to receive the degree, and four students are working to complete degree requirements.

- 2. Student learning outcomes addressed this year.**
 - a. To complete the UALR Core Curriculum and be prepared to continue studies for a bachelor's degree.**
 - b. To encourage students to consider this degree as progress toward a higher degree.**
 - c. To enable students to feel a sense of personal accomplishment upon receipt of the degree.**
 - d. To provide students with a means of professional advancement.**
- 3. Where will the outcomes be addressed in your program?**

All UALR courses are assessed in their respective departments.

The learning outcomes are measured each year. Students complete the Student Survey when they sign the degree plan. The Student Survey, Banner review, and worksheets provide the needed information.

4. How do you assess each objective?

- a) Methods: Outcome 1 and part of Outcome 2 are assessed by reviewing information in Banner. The “Degree Summary” form is reviewed to find the number of students who complete the AA, and the “Registration Query” form is used to determine how many are still enrolled at UALR. The information that is missing is the number of students who go on to another school, such as UAMS, to pursue a higher degree. The Student Survey asks students to report their intent to continue for a higher degree. Outcomes 3 and 4 are assessed by counting the respective responses from the Student Survey, indicating if they feel a sense of accomplishment and/or if the AAGS is a means of professional advancement. The information obtained from Banner is reliable and valid. The information obtained from the Student Survey is self-reported and is considered reliable. The Assistant Director of Academic Advising obtains the information from Banner and the Student Surveys each year and writes the assessment reports. The reports are reviewed by others in the department and by the Division Chief of University College to assure that data is treated, analyzed, and interpreted consistently.**
- b) Design: The AAGS applicant completes the Student Survey when signing the degree plan. A follow up survey, the ACT Alumni Survey, is sent out yearly from the Office of Counseling and Career Planning. This report is for the previous year graduates.**
- c) Assessment Cycle: The review and assessment of each outcome is conducted annually for the AAGS.**
- d) Stakeholder involvement: The annual Degree Program Assessment Plan and Progress Reports are posted to the Academic Advising, the Provost’s Assessment Central, and the Vice-Chancellor for Educational and Student Services websites each year.**

5. What are the assessment findings? How did you analyze them?

The first outcome is to provide students with the UALR Core Curriculum as a base for continuing in school for a bachelor’s degree. In 2003, the AAGS program requirements changed to include the completion of the entire UALR 44 hour core curriculum, as compared to a 15 hour core of courses in the prior program plan. As of this report for 2005-2006, 9 out of 87 students (10%) are required to complete the entire 44 hour core. As more students are required to complete the core as part of the AA, they are well

prepared to continue work toward a bachelor's degree either at UALR, UAMS, or at other colleges.

A second outcome is that students will consider this degree as progress toward a higher degree. Fifty-one students (59%) are still actively enrolled students at UALR as of the spring semester of 2007. Sixty-seven students (77%) indicated on the student survey that they plan to get the bachelor's degree. Since many students transfer from UALR to UAMS for a bachelor's degree, the additional 16 students may have gone on to another school, such as UAMS, to complete the bachelor's degree.

The sixty-nine (69) students seeking the AAGS in the 2006 report were reviewed this year, one year later, to determine: 1) if the student is still enrolled at UALR in spring 2007; and 2) if the student has completed a bachelor's degree at UALR. The status of each student was checked in BANNER. Of the 69 students, 32 are still enrolled in the spring of 2007, and 5 students have completed a bachelor's degree. These 37 students represent 53% of the 69 students.

The third outcome is to enable students to feel a sense of personal accomplishment upon receipt of the AAGS degree. On the student survey, students are asked to check reasons for applying for the degree. Two options are "personal satisfaction" and "half-way to a bachelor's degree." Forty-four students checked personal satisfaction, and 45 checked half-way to a bachelor's degree. Both categories reflect a sense of accomplishment.

The fourth goal is to provide students with a means of professional advancement. Thirty students checked this option on the survey, reflecting that this degree may help them with increased employment and/or advancement opportunities.

Student characteristics are analyzed annually. Eighty-seven (87) students filed degree plans in 2006-2007, which reflects an increase over the past two years.

Year	Total # Students	% Change
2006-2007	87	+26%
2005-2006	69	-9%
2004-2005	76	-6%
2003-2004	81	8%
2002-2003	75	7%

Fifty-three (53) were native UALR students (61%), and thirty-four (34) were transfer students (39%). Twenty (20) native UALR students presented transfer credits for the degree. Native UALR students are defined as those

who began in college at UALR, even if they transferred credits, such as for summer school, back to UALR. The following table illustrates the number of native UALR students and the number of transfer students.

Year	UALR #	UALR %	Transfer #	Transfer %
2006-2007	53	61%	34	39%
2005-2006	32	46%	37	54%
2004-2005	37	49%	38	51%
2003-2004	44	54%	37	46%
2002-2003	36	48%	39	52%

Students transferred credits from 30 different colleges, and the top two transfer institutions continue to be the University of Central Arkansas and Pulaski Technical College. The number of hours transferred ranged from 1 to 93 credit hours, and the average number of hours transferred was 27.

The average age of students applying for the AAGS this year decreased from 33 years of age to 30 years of age. This is still somewhat higher than the average age for UALR undergraduate students, 27. Eighty-three percent (83%) of the AAGS applicants are female, and seventeen percent (17%) are male.

One characteristic which may be related to “personal satisfaction” is the length of time it has taken some students to complete the Associate of Arts degree. The average number of years to complete the associate degree is 9, with a range of from 2 to 23 years. This supports the supposition that many acquiring the degree have either been in and out of school or enrolled part time over an extended period of time. They feel a sense of satisfaction to have reached a milestone such as the completion of the Associate of Arts in General Studies.

6. What conclusions were drawn and decisions made as a result?

Conclusions:

The characteristics of students applying for the Associate of Arts degree remain consistent with prior years. “Personal satisfaction” continues to be the most frequently checked response on the survey as a reason for applying for the degree. Students apply for the AAGS after having been in and out of school for several years, so that it represents a sense of accomplishment for many. Additionally, completing the associate degree can mean job advancement or job opportunity.

The number of students applying for the degree is up by 26% this year. In addition to the usual pool of AAGS students, the UALR Benton Center has contributed several students. Next year, the number of students will reflect those who were identified (by Data Central) as potentially eligible for the degree and were contacted by email and by telephone regarding the process to apply. At the time of writing this report, almost 30 students have responded to the email that they wish to apply for the AAGS. These students will be included in next year's report.

Transfer student policies may impact the number of transfer students applying for the AAGS. By means of partnership agreements with several Arkansas public schools and the policy which allows for an Associate of Arts or an Associate of Science from Arkansas public institutions to satisfy UALR Core requirements, many students transfer to UALR with an associate degree completed. Therefore, the majority of the pool of students may come from native UALR students, rather than from transfer students.

Changes:

One policy was approved at the March 2007 Undergraduate Council that "Students who have been awarded a baccalaureate degree are not eligible for the Associate of Arts in General Studies degree." The AAGS is broad in scope and is not considered a degree that would allow a graduate to take a licensure exam and/or enter a specific profession (such as the associate of science in nursing). The degree consists of 44 credit hours of core courses, and post-baccalaureate students are considered to have satisfied core requirements.

The Student Survey will be revised to reflect the outcomes and the information needed to report: 1) intent to continue for a bachelor's degree, 2) sense of personal accomplishment, and 3) means of professional advancement.

Assessment results are posted on the following websites: the Provost's Assessment Central, the Vice-Chancellor for Education and Student Services, and Academic Advising.

Two new avenues of providing information regarding the AAGS have been completed in 2006. The first, in the fall of 2006, a new informational bookmark about the Associate of Arts in General Studies was printed. It can be displayed for students to pick up and can be used as an insert in the new University College Academic Advising brochure. Second, there is a new link at the Academic Advising website which provides a brief description of the program: www.ualr.edu/aa/GSTU.