

**Associate of Arts in General Studies
University College
Office of Academic Advising
February 2010**

Degree Program Assessment Progress Report for 2009

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

The goal of the Associate of Arts in General Studies program is 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."

By 2009, 87% of AAGS degree seeking students are meeting the new degree requirements which includes the UALR core, and only 13% were eligible to graduate under the old program requirements.

- 2. Student learning outcomes addressed each 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 assessed by University College Academic Advising each year by a review of student responses on the Student Survey, Banner review of student status, and an analysis of worksheets and unofficial transcripts.

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. Students who did not receive a degree and who are no longer enrolled are considered to be no longer actively pursuing a degree at UALR. The Student Survey asks students to report their intent to continue for a higher degree.

The two groups of students were the current cohort of students for 2008-2009 who filed AAGS degree plans and the previous year cohort of students for 2007-2008 to assess their status one year later.

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 2005-2006, 90% of students applying for the AA satisfied the "old" program requirements. By 2008-2009, 87% of the AAGS applicants are satisfying the "new" program requirements and the UALR core. With the core complete, students are in a position to continue for a bachelor's degree. The completion of the UALR core, completion of the AAGS, and a sense of accomplishment support UALR's graduation and retention efforts.

A second outcome is that students will consider this degree as progress toward a higher degree. For the current 2008-2009 students, sixty-two students (53%) are still actively enrolled at UALR in the spring semester of 2010. 102 students (88%) indicated on the student survey that they plan to continue in school to get a bachelor's degree. Upon completion of the Associate of Arts, some students transfer to another school, such as to the UAMS College of Health Related Professions, to complete a bachelor's degree.

Students seeking the AAGS in 2007-2008 (N=97) were reviewed one year later to determine: 1) if the student is still enrolled at UALR in spring 2010 and 2) if the student has completed the Associate of Arts or a bachelor's degree at UALR. The status of each student was checked in BANNER.

Still working on or completed AA (N=77) – 79%

- Still working on AA (11) – 11%
- Completed the AA (not enrolled at UALR) (31) 32%
- Completed the AA and working for bachelors (25) 26%
- Completed the AA and a bachelor's degree (10) 10%

Not enrolled at UALR and did not complete the AA (N=20) 21%

- Did not complete the AAGS
- Not currently enrolled at UALR one year later (Spring 2010)

*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. They may check any that apply. Each year *personal satisfaction* is the most frequent reason checked for applying for the Associate of Arts, followed by *job opportunity/advancement*.*

• Job opportunity/advancement	54
• Personal satisfaction	78
• Intend to transfer	10
• Other (comments)	2

Other comments:

“Going to UAMS soon but would like something for all my work at UALR...”

“Just wanted it.”

The fourth goal is to provide students with a means of professional advancement. Forty-eight students checked job opportunity/advancement on the survey, reflecting that they expect this degree to help them with increased employment and/or advancement opportunities.

Following are answers students gave to the question, “Will the receipt of the AA degree help you receive a promotion or move into a better job, or keep a job (degree now required by employer)?

“It may help me to advance or move into a better paying job.”

“No. It will look good on my resume.”

“Possibly.”

“Yes. The completion of a degree qualifies me for more money.”

“I’m in hopes that having this degree will help me to obtain better employment opp”

“This degree will satisfy my family’s speedy desire of a degree. I am 1st generation and I believe in enjoying my time in college and taking my time while earning my B.A.”

“Possibly move into a better job. More professional.”

“May help me qualify for a better job since I will have a degree.”

“Yes. I can receive a raise in salary.”

“I feel that it will give me more of an advantage until my bachelor’s is completed.”

“Not at this time, but maybe later open doors.”

“No, you do not need an AA degree to advance at Wal Mart.”

“Yes, better job opportunities.”

“Maybe, I sure hope so!”

“Degree will allow me to work in my field with the opportunity for advancement when I graduate in the fall 09 with my bachelor’s.”

“Yes. I will be eligible for a promotion and a raise as well as better my chances for employment in the future once I obtain my RN license.’

“I’m not sure.”

“It will help me receive higher pay in my new position recently started.”

“Required for admission to transfer college.”

“Yes.”

“Better job.”

“Move into a better paying job with accompanying LPN certificate.”

“Yes, I can get a more logical job.”

“Yes, I work for UALR.”

“I’m using this degree to help me get to where I am going in life which is a career in the air force.”

“Promotion opportunities.”

“Yes, maybe help in getting a raise.”

“Plan to go to UAMS (radiology tech).”

“Yes – will help to have degree @ ABCBS.”

“It will help with pay increases at current employer and with job advancement with other employers if ever consider changing careers.”

“Yes, it gives me more opportunity for better job placements.”

“Yes, will help to receive a promotion.”

“This degree will help me move up one spot at my job.”

“It will help me get one in the 1st place.”

“It will help me to receive a promotion.”

“Help me get closer to my bachelor, and better pay.”

“It will help me on my resume with my bachelors degree that I’m also receiving in May of 2010.”

“It would have, but I was 4 hrs short.”

“Just a personal accomplishment achieved.”

“Yes. Work for Veterans Affairs Office. A degree will help w/pay scale.”

“My current job position usually requires a degree, however, I have the job based on experience. This degree will help me to advance to a higher pay scale.”

“Yes. My company is now setting degree quotas and require 20% of current managers to have degree.”

“Would not affect current job position.”

“The AA degree will help me achieve higher pay working as a library clerk. A bachelor’s degree will help toward my career advancement through promotion. The personal satisfaction of the AA degree boosts my confidence, and therefore, my overall job performance.”

“It looks better on an application that I have accomplished something. It could make or break on getting a job on a higher level.”

“Will help with current job as well as future promotions.”

“The receipt of the associate of arts degree would help me move into a better job and allow me to move forward with my professional career.”

“Not sure.”

“It can only help my resume. I’m excited.”

“It will help me gain a promotion at my current job. Yes.”

“It will allow me the chance to be admitted into medical school for a bachelor’s program.”

“It will help me to receive a better job.”

“It will help me change career paths.”

“Yes, Human Resource at my job ask me to earn my AA degree until I get a BA.”

Eighteen students simply answered “no,” and three answered “N/A” to this question. Some did not respond. Many students seem to believe that the AA will be helpful in getting a job or a promotion.

Student Characteristics

Student characteristics are analyzed annually. 116 students filed degree plans in 2009-2010, representing a 20% increase over the previous year. This follows a statewide trend as reported by Dr. Jim Purcell, Director of ADHE, that there was a 23% increase over 2008 in associate degrees awarded in Arkansas.

Year	Total # Students	% Change
2009-2010	116	+20%
2008-2009	97	+8%
2007-2008	90	+3%
2006-2007	87	+26%
2005-2006	69	-9%
2004-2005	76	-6%
2003-2004	81	+ 8%

The next table identifies the number of students who actually earn the Associate of Arts (regardless of when the degree plan is filed).

Year	# Earning a Degree	# Filed a Degree Plan
2009-2010	82	116
2008-2009	73	97
2007-2008	56	90

For 2009-2010, sixty-three (63) were native UALR students, and fifty-three (53) were transfer students. Native UALR students are defined as those who began in college at UALR as a “first semester freshman” or “freshman transfer” students, 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 %
2009-2010	63	54%	53	46%
2008-2009	45	46%	52	54%
2007-2008	48	53%	42	47%
2006-2007	53	61%	34	39%
2005-2006	32	46%	37	54%
2004-2005	37	49%	38	51%
2003-2004	44	54%	37	46%

The average age of students applying for the AAGS this year is 29 years of age, with an age range of 19 – 63, which is lower than last year’s average of 31. It is somewhat higher than the average age for all 2009 undergraduate students, 27. 80% of the AAGS applicants are female, and 20% are male. This characteristic remains the most stable from year to year.

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

Conclusions:

The number of students applying for the degree is up by 20% for 2009-2010, and this is consistent with the increase in associate degrees being awarded in Arkansas. The percentage of students satisfying the “new” (2003 and later catalog) requirements continues to increase each year, which means that these graduates have completed the UALR Core. This year 87% met new program requirements.

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 seems to represent a sense of accomplishment for many. Additionally, students also check “job opportunity/advancement” as a major reason, and the students’ comments support this. Given the current economic conditions, it is easy to understand that students want to put themselves in the

best position to get a job, a promotion, or a raise, and their comments support this.

Completing the Associate of Arts supports UALR retention and graduation efforts. Seventy-nine percent for 2007-2008 are either working to complete the AA, have completed the AA, or are still in school now working on bachelor's degree requirements.

Recommendations

There are no new recommendations for 2010-2011.

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

**A link at the Academic Advising website provides a brief description of the program and takes the reader to links to yearly assessment reports:
www.ualr.edu/aa/GSTU.**