

## Associate of Arts in General Studies

### Undergraduate Academic Advising

April 2011

#### Degree Program Assessment Progress Report for 2010

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 University of Arkansas at Little Rock (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 core and a total of 64 credit hours. All 10 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 the students develop fundamental skills and a lifelong commitment and ability to learn."

All AAGS degree seeking students are required to meet the degree requirements which include the UALR core.

2. *Students 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 personal 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 annually by the Office of Undergraduate Academic Advising and begin with 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 Associates of Arts in General Studies, 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 the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), to pursue a higher education after completing the prerequisites of being accepted into professional programs. The Student Survey asks the students to report their intent to continue for a higher degree.

The two groups of students were the current cohort of students for 2009-2010 who filed AAGS degree plans and the previous year cohort of the students for 2008-2009 to access 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 Undergraduate 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 Undergraduate Academic Advising.

- b. Design: The AAGS applicant completes the Student Survey when signing the degree plan.
- 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 on the Academic Advising, the Provost's Assessment Central, and the Vice-Chancellor for Education and Student Services websites each year.

5. *What are the assessment findings? How were the findings analyzed?*

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 2010, all of the AAGS applicants have satisfied the 2003 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 2009-2010 students, fifty-nine students (66%) are still actively enrolled students at UALR in the spring semester of 2011. Three percent (3%) have already completed a bachelor's degree. Seventy-nine students (88%) indicated on the student survey that they plan to continue in school to get a bachelor's degree. Six of those students indicated they plan to transfer to UAMS to one of the health related professions degree programs. Of the remaining eleven students who indicated that they did not plan to continue for a bachelor's degree, one indicated "moving" and one indicated "unknown" as reasons.

Students seeking the AAGS in 2008-2009 (N) =120 were reviewed one year later to determine: 1) if the student is still enrolled at UALR in the Spring of 2011 and 2) if the student has completed the Associates of Arts or bachelor's degree at UALR. The status of each student was checked in BANNER.

Still working or completed the AA (N) =104 -- 86%

- Still working on AA (6) -- .5%
- Completed the AA (not enrolled at UALR) (70) -- 58%
- Completed the AA and working for bachelors (34) -- 28%
- Completed the AA and a bachelor's degree (19) -- 15%

Not enrolled at UALR and did not complete the AA (N=16) -- 13%

- 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 the reason for applying for the degree. They may check any that apply.

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

The following results are from this year's survey.

- Job opportunity/advancement 65
- Personal satisfaction 65
- Intent to transfer 5
- Other (comments) 6

Comments from the survey:

Will the receipt of the Associate of Arts degree help you receive a promotion or move into a better job (degree now required by the employer)? Briefly explain:

No, but it will give me the ability to further my education.

It is step towards a BA.

No

No, no advancement will be given.

no response provided

Not at this time.

Better job required (AAGS)

no response provided

no response provided

not applicable

It will help with future advancement for sure.

Yes, many jobs prefer any degree vs. no degree.

No

no response provided

Possible

No, I am and have been a Zookeeper for 14 years now. A degree seems to be a requirement for most applications in this field.

I want to be able to have a better job, but furthering my education is important.

no response provided

No, just wanting to have my AA degree in case I may have to apply for another degree.

Degree now required by employer. Personal satisfaction.

Yes, it may give me a competitive edge over students with less credentials.

Not at my current position, but might in the near future.

no response provided

No

not applicable

No, I'm going to Nursing School just wanted to finish this degree.

No

I have worked for a college for three years. My job is to help people realize the value of education. This degree will help me feel fulfilled and could help me receive a promotion in the future,

I will allow me to receive more money at my current job.  
 Possibly help me achieve a higher level in my job.  
 Open opportunities for employment with increases pay.  
 no response provided  
 no response provided  
 No. It is just a degree I am currently eligible.  
 no response provide  
 Possibly, but there's a good chance it will help me.  
 I believe it could help move into a better job.  
 no response provided  
 no response provided  
 Move into a better job.  
 No  
 Potentially, but want it so I can move.  
 Not necessarily. No degree required for line of work. Merely for personal satisfaction.  
 My current employer will reward me with a raise for this accomplishment.  
 Not necessarily. No degree required for line of work. Merely for personal satisfaction.  
 no response provided  
 Will not directly impact career but will in the future  
 I don't know at this moment but I am going to try.  
 Further my business venture in ultrasound and general business  
 Yes I work for the Arkansas State Insurance department and with this degree I can get a raise in pay.  
 Perhaps, won't hurt.  
 No  
 no response provided  
 Promotion  
 No  
 Move into a better job  
 To open a daycare you just need experience you wouldn't need a BA so I just wanted a finishing point before I opened my own  
 Yes, it will raise my hourly rate at work  
 Yes if I am to continue in my current career as a Respiratory Therapist. I am seeking a Master in Education as well  
 Yes, I have applied for a position that requires at minimum a 2 year degree  
 Not at the moment  
 I hope so  
 Yes. Continue education is always a plus when trying to move ahead in life  
 No  
 Yes, be able to go into a Co-manager position at my place of employment  
 no response provided  
 no response provided  
 possibly  
 I think an AA will be helpful with any job. But I wanted this to complete my expectation goals.  
 No  
 Personal satisfaction  
 No  
 no response provided

Moving to California. Wanted to get AAGS to pursue all my hours will be good if I decide to go back to any school

Not sure

no response provided

yes

no

no response provided

no

It will help to advance me at work

No, my job does not require a degree. I am just getting this degree in hopes of getting into pharmacy school.

The AAGS will help me move into a better job

It could. In my field a degree is almost always required, but always helps.

No, I am getting my bachelors for my career path

It will not help me further with my current employer but it can't hurt anything

Yes, it will help me in the workforce. Showing something completed is better than nothing

I believe that the AA degree will help in job search as well as pay until BSN is obtained

It will give me a sense of completion of another phase of life and help me get one step closer to advancement at work

I am retired

No response

No

Yes early childhood education

Not at my current job

Yes, it would, it will allow me to receive a promotion at my job

No

Yes I would be eligible for advancement in banking

No response

It will enhance my chance of promotion at my current job as well as open more opportunities

Unknown at this time

No response

No

No response

Yes, this degree will allow more job opportunities for me

Not really just wanting to see a light at the end of the tunnel

Underlined "move into a better job"

No

No

The degree is not required but will ensure my advance in the company

Further education; using this as a goal accomplishment

Yes, I work in retail and I am more likely to get the management position with the degree

Yes. The AAGS degree will help me to achieve a promotion at my current job

N/A

No

### Student Characteristics

Student characteristics are analyzed annually. One hundred eighteen students filed degree plans in 2010-2011, representing a .02% increase over the previous year. This is on target with the statewide trend as reported by Mr. Shane Broadway, Interim Director of Arkansas Department of Higher Education, that there was a 24% increase over the 2008-2009 (930) Academic Year to the 2009-2010 Academic Year (1161) in associate degrees awarded in General Studies in Arkansas.

Year	Total # Students	% Change
2010-2011	118	+.02%
2009-2010	116	+20%
2008-2009	97	+8%
2007-2008	90	+3%
2006-2007	87	+26%
2005-2004	69	-9%
2004-2005	76	-6%
2003-2004	81	+8%

For 2010-2011, forty (40) were native UALR students and seventy-eight (78) were transfer students. Native UALR students are defined as those who began in college as a “first year freshman” or “freshman transfer” student, 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%
2010-2011	40	34%	78	66%
2009-2010	63	54%	53	46%
2008-2009	45	45%	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 next table identifies the number of student who actually earned the Associate of Arts (regardless of when the degree plan was filed).

Year	# Earned a Degree	# Filed a Degree Plan
2010-2011	69	118
2009-2010	82	116
2008-2009	73	97
2007-2008	56	90

The average age of students applying for the AAGS this year is 32 years of age, with an age range of 19-64, which is higher than last year’s average age of 31. It is slightly higher than the average age of all 2010 undergraduate students, 77% of the AAGS applicants are female, and 23% are male. This characteristic remains the most stable from year to year as reported by the University of Arkansas at Little Rock Educational Student Services assessment website -student body defined.

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

Conclusions:

The number of students applying for the degree has increased by .02% this year. The characteristics of the student applying for the Associate of Arts degree remain consistent with prior years.

“Job opportunity/advancement” is 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. This, in addition to the “personal satisfaction” factor, appears to support the retention of students. This is supported by the findings that the 69% of the 2007 AAGS applicants are either still in school in Spring 2008 or have already graduated with a bachelor’s degree. The revised Student Survey appears to collect the information needed for feedback and assessment purposes.

Legislative Impact:

For 2010, the Associate of Arts in General Studies is the in-state associate degree designated for transfer under ACT 182 of 2009 effective Summer 2010. All students requesting AAGS degree plan are meeting the designated degree requirement.

Recommendations:

For 2011-2012, the expanded Rodgers-Phillips Act 747 allows for the Associates of Arts degree designated for transfer to be 60 credit hours which is halfway to the desired 120 credit hours for a bachelor’s degree. It’s recommended that a change be submitted to the Undergraduate Council to decrease the number of credit hours currently required from 64 to 60. This will be accomplished by reducing the number of elective courses from 20 credits to 16 credits.

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

For the 2008-2009 students, sixty-two students (53%) are still actively enrolled at UALR in the spring semester of 2010. One hundred and two students (88%) indicated on the Student Survey that they plan to continue in school to get a bachelor’s degree upon completion of the Associates of Arts.