

Associate of Arts in General Studies

Undergraduate Academic Advising

March 2012

Degree Program Assessment Progress Report for 2011-2012

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 bachelor's.
 - 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.

A second outcome is that students will consider this degree as progress toward a higher degree. For the current cohort of students for the period of 2011-2012, 113 students out of 145 remain enrolled at UALR in the spring 2012 semester. One student has completed both the AA degree and a bachelor's degree.

Two groups of students were the current cohort. Students for 2011-2012 who filed AAGS degree plans and the previous year cohort of the students for 2010-2011 who's status is assessed over 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

- 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 websites each year.

5. *What are the assessment findings? How where 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 2011, 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 bachelor's. For the current cohort of students for the period of 2011-2012, 113 students out of 145 remain enrolled at UALR in the spring 2012 semester.

Eighty-seven (87) students or 60% of the total group (145) have indicated on the survey that they plan to continue in college towards the goal of completing a bachelor's degree.

One student indicated that they plan to transfer to UAMS to one of the health related professions degree programs.

Nine students indicated that they did not plan to continue for a bachelor's degree and an additional 9 indicated either that they were "moving" or "unknown" as reasons.

One hundred seventeen (117) or (99%) students graduated with the AAGS degree.

One student did not complete the AAGS.

Forty-five (45) of the students that graduated were not enrolled at UALR in the spring of 2011.

Fifteen(15) students seeking the AAGS graduated with both the AAGS degree and a bachelor's degree.

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. Seventy-five (75) students indicated personal satisfaction on the survey reflecting that this is a milestone of achievement and recognition for their persistence in completing course work.

The fourth outcome is to provide students with a means of professional advancement. Fifty-two (52) 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 52
- Personal satisfaction 75
- Intent to transfer 9
- Other (comments) 7
- Comments:

Use of additional credits earned

In case I don't make it in a Bachelor's degree program I don't want the time I spent here to be for naught.

Associates of Arts Professional Designation of FIDM (on-line)

PA Program

I also needed a couple of credits to receive it and I went ahead and currently am taking those.

Had the amount of hours to do so

To help myself and others

Comments from the survey:

1. 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)? Briefly describe.

Hopefully move into a better position

Yes, I have no degree so I cannot advance to mgmt position at all

No, but it could help me in advancement in a future job.

NA

No

No

Intended to transfer to school requiring this AAGS before continuing studies

No

NA

No

Yes

No, it may help me get a better job

No

No

Yes, education is the key at my job

Yes

NA

No

Yes, take an exam to become an administrator

Receive better job opportunities

By receiving an AA degree it will expand my opportunities in receiving a more professional job. By showing that I have completed some college experience.

Keep my current job

Not sure, but I understand that it will look good on a resume for future jobs

No

Most likely

Not currently b/c I'm not working right now

I plan to come back at a later time, but for now this degree will help me advance to a better degree

No

I plan to use for better job opportunities

Yes, better job

Yes, I plan to get a better job

Yes, applying for radiology tech school.

No

No, it will just be for me to actually complete a degree in something. I will then hopefully get a bachelors degree later on

No

No, but will help with future plans

N/A

N/A

Yes

Help get a job

Fun my rewards and help me to be able to continue my college degree and find a job with my other degree

For my rewards and help me to be able to continue my college degree an find a job with my other degree

No, still going to school. Stay at home mom

It will help me in the course of my career and getting it started

Hopefully move into a better job and transfer to another state's college perhaps without my grades or class lost

Yes, it will create better chance for me to start in my career field. Many employers require a degree of some type in order to start developing work experience.

Working towards BA for MCED

NA

Yes I am planning on substitute teaching this year

Doesn't matter

He will allow a pay raise for my job w/AHTD

Not at this time

I am hoping it will better my job opportunities but I am mainly striving for the bachelors degree

I am not sure if it will help me advance or not but I hope to be able to us it on my resume

No but it will give me the satisfaction of having on degree done

No

Yes, I work for UAMS and my degree will help me advance

Not necessarily. it will be nice to at least have an associate's degree while working towards my bachelor's degree, but I don't need it for a job at this point

It really don't help me much in today's world

NA

It should get me a good start in finding a reasonable job

No

Possibly

No

Improve job standing and resume

No

Not at this time, I am also working on getting my degree in Business management

Not presently, but will help in the future

This degree will allow me to receive a promotion and also give me the opportunity to qualify for more positions to advance my skills in the field I am in.

Yes, it will help me get a job I can keep because I am disabled and require a certain job

No my current job is part time, and I have no desire to move up

I have more advancement opportunities

No I wanted to receive the AA degree to utilize credit hours that I have accumulated

Yes, my employers would look more favorably at me when I apply for management positions

ROI (return at investment) has shown to increase pay and job title. This is just a small stepping stone to my ROI

Student Characteristics

Student characteristics are analyzed annually. One hundred forty-five students filed degree plans in 2011-2012, representing a 23% 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
2011-2012	145	+23%
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 2011-2012, sixty-one (61) were native UALR students and eighty-four (84) 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%
2011-2012	61	42%	84	58%
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
2011-2012	117	145
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 20 years of age, with an age range of 19-70, which is lower than last year's average age of 32. Sixty-five percent of the AAGS applicants are female, and 35% 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 23% this year. The characteristics of the students applying for the Associate of Arts degree remain consistent with prior years.

“Personal Satisfaction” 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 “Job Opportunity/Advancement” factor, appears to support the retention of students.

Legislative Impact and Curriculum Changes:

As of 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 currently meeting the designated degree requirement.

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.

The Undergraduate Council approved this change in September of 2012. Approval was also granted through the Provost's Office to apply the 60 hour requirement retroactively to all students seeking the degree beginning in fall 2012. The approval to apply the new 60 credit hour degree requirements retroactively will most likely result in more degrees awarded in the next assessment cycle.

Recommendations:

The University of Arkansas at Little Rock is currently discussing potential revisions to the core curriculum which may reduce the number of required core credit hours. Any such revisions would have to be incorporated into the Associate of Arts in General Studies degree.

Assessment results are posted on the following websites: the Provost's Assessment Central and Academic Advising.