

UPDATE

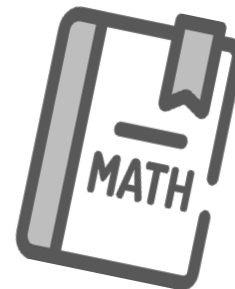
July 20, 2021

Lawson State Community College



MATH PATHWAYS

In Fall 2020, a sub-committee of AGSC members began to explore math pathways in the core curriculum. The group evaluated other states and noted that there was a need to continue exploration with more content experts. Thus, in Spring 2021, the MATH PATHWAYS sub-committee was created with 2-year and 4-year representatives who met bi-weekly throughout the spring semester.



The group made two decisions. First, that the Finite Mathematics course was a sound option for many non-STEM majors, but many students do not know what the course is about from the name. A subset of the committee worked with Dr. Bradley Fricks (ACCS) to create a marketing campaign for this course. This effort is ongoing. The second decision of the group was to model the approach Arkansas took and survey degree programs in Alabama to inquire about the math topics needed for their majors as opposed to the specific courses. This survey was developed and will be launched in late summer or early Fall 2021. The goal is to take the results and brainstorm new course offerings that best suit the different needs of majors. Currently, Gary Martin (AU) and Jim Gleason (UA) are leading the survey effort. The sub-committee's plan is to reconvene in the Fall after the survey results are collected.

AP CREDIT EXAM SCORES

The AGS formed an AP subcommittee to investigate the discrepancy that existed among the states' four-year institutions when awarding transfer credit for AP classes/testing. The AP Scores subcommittee concluded their work last summer and made the following recommendation to the full AGSC.



1. Disciplinary experts at each institution should assess the appropriate threshold scores for AP exams in the same way that they assess courses for articulation.
2. The AGSC recommends that all state institutions set AP score expectations at "3" for all courses as a means to smooth transfer between state institutions. State institutions should clearly report their AP credit awarding thresholds in their institutional materials (web/bulletin/etc.) and AGSC will link to these scores or provide a composite table for easy reference.

THIS PAST SEMESTER, THESE RECOMMENDATIONS WERE SENT TO THE ALABAMA COUNCIL OF CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICERS FOR THEIR RESPONSE AND RE-ACTION.



GENERAL EDUCATION & META-MAJORS

The Alabama General Studies Committee (AGSC) Subcommittee on General Education was charged to continue with the development of a proposal to the AGSC for restructuring the current STARS system of Areas I-V, informed by the meta-majors, guided pathways, and learning outcomes models. The subcommittee met a total of five times during the 2020-2022 academic year.



The goals established for the 2020-2021 subcommittee included one to provide education to subcommittee members about meta-majors, the Interstate Passport project with Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, and Career Pathways and discuss how one or more of these could be used to create a new model to replace STARS Area I-IV. This goal was achieved through presentations by WICHE on its Interstate Passport; Keith Sessions and his work with Robin McGill and ACHE on connecting general education to career clusters, preliminary work on a plan to organize current STARS templates into meta-majors, Dr. Linda Hagedorn about Guided Pathways and Meta-majors, and Catherine Preston and Eric Loomis from South Alabama about their development and use of meta-majors as an organizing/advising tool.

Two other goals for last year were to 1) establish guidelines/parameters for the new model to ensure it meets the legislative mandate and the intention to save students time, money, and credit with seamless transfer from two- to four-year institutions, and 2) submit a recommended model to the AGSC by its Spring meeting. The pros and cons of the current STARS Guides and Areas I-V were reviewed in detail, and the last meeting in February focused on the possibility of organizing the state's General Education requirements around a core of 30 hours, with the remaining 11 hours represented in a meta-major or broader learning outcomes context. Nevertheless, these two goals were not fully realized and will continue into 2021-2022.

To continue progress on these goals, the subcommittee will pursue either reviewing degree guides to find consistencies and differences in core requirements, or consider incorporating a learning outcomes approach for the core hours, along with the meta-major/learning outcomes concepts for the remaining credit hours. Again, the goal will be to submit a proposal for the AGSC to consider by year's end. Finally, additional consideration will be given to surveying how colleges and universities have redesigned their institutional core requirements; however, this highlights the need for a statewide communication strategy about suggested changes to the state core curriculum requirements and the intention to simplify student transfer.



ACHIEVE CONFERENCE

The 2021 ACHIEVE Conference was the first virtual conference due to COVID-19 and safety concerns. The theme of the March 3-4, 2021, conference was Charting the Path Ahead: Providing Opportunities for Transfer Student Success Amid a Pandemic. The agenda featured four renowned speakers: Dr. Janet L. Marling of the National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students, Dr. John N. Gardner of the Gardner Institute, Dr. Mark D’Amico, of the University of North Carolina Charlotte, and Dr. James E. Purcell, Executive Director of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education. For a modest fee, the University of Alabama Continuing Education Division managed the administration of all virtual platform coordination, registration, technical assistance, and evaluation surveys. In general, participants found the sessions informative and provided knowledge, skills, and recommendations that will aid them in their work on campus when working with transfer students. A summary evaluation report is available upon request. For the third year there were significantly more conference participants than there were in previous year. This year, over 360 people attended the virtual conference.



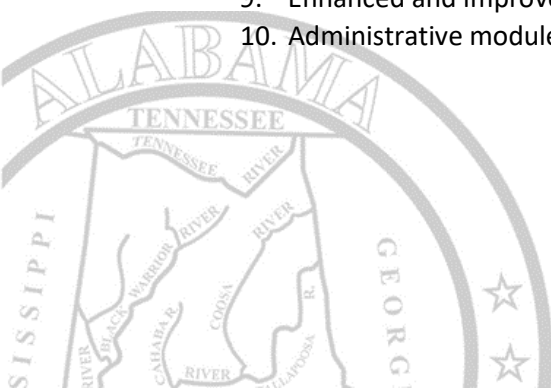
WEBSITE “RE-DESIGN” WITH STUDENTS IN MIND!

Over the past 24 months efforts have been on-going to re-design and improve the current AGSC/STARS website. The focus of this effort is to create a new website that caters to the needs of “transfer students” as they prepare to transfer to complete their bachelor’s degrees at institutions across Alabama. The launch of the new site is slated to take place later this year or early in 2022. The new site will provide end-users with numerous new features and tools (see list below):



1. Career Exploration / Major Selection Tools (aptitude testing)
2. Career insight and videos from experts in the chosen field or career
3. New Student Accounts (ability store information and transfer guides for future reference)
4. Transfer Guide Improvements (View, print, save, email, interactive, etc.)
5. Grouping Transfer Guides by major pathways or categories
6. Interactive Transfer Equivalency Database
7. Ability to do “What-if?” analysis in real-time (If I change majors how will that impact my time to degree?)
8. Information request forms - Students can quickly connect with prospective four-year institutions and ask questions and request information
9. Enhanced and improved usage reports for administrators, recruiters, and advisors.
10. Administrative modules (committee/group meeting and voting tools and resources)

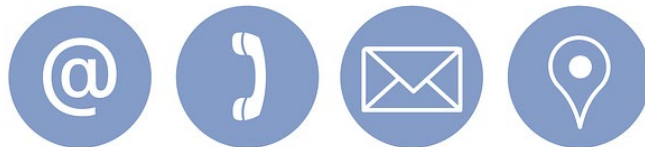
... AND MUCH MORE!



AGSC/STARS – Contact Information

AGSC/STARS Program
1101 South Brundidge Street – Suite 107
Troy University – ELC Building
Troy, Alabama 36081

ksessions1@troy.edu
334-670-3690 (office)
334-670-3695 (fax)



WEBSITE:

<http://stars.troy.edu> or <http://www.gettheguide.net>

