

**Stephen F. Austin State University
2008 Timely Graduation Effort Report
October 29, 2008**



Degree Program Completion Data

**Stephen F. Austin State University
Baccalaureate Degree Recipients, Academic Year 2007
Average Credits Attempted and Mean Semesters by Program Areas**

General Program Area	Number	Average	
	Graduates	Credits Attempted	Semesters Completed
Science and Math	101	156	10
Agriculture	39	147	10
Arts and Architecture	474	153	10
Business	293	152	10
Health	133	152	10
Social Sciences and Service	282	156	10
SFA Overall	1,322	153	10

¹ Fall and spring semesters only

² Semester credit hours attempted during fall, spring and summer semesters

Note: The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board uses uniform methodology and data submitted by institutions to calculate the values presented.

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Highlights of Efforts Assisting Timely Graduation
(Categories specified by HB 1172 and THECB)

Ensure undergraduate students graduate in a timely manner

The freshmen success program, SFA 101, enhances student achievement by helping students understand the transition from high school to college. Students are introduced to the expectations and opportunities of university life through direct interactions and organized experiences. Activities in this program are designed to improve critical thinking skills and grade point averages while increasing the likelihood of continued enrollment and persistence to graduation.

The Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA) Academic Assistance and Resource Center (AARC) is designed to increase student retention and academic performance by offering peer tutoring for core courses and upper division high risk courses. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board recently recognized this excellence program by naming the AARC as a 2006 Texas Star Award winner. The AARC is the only learning center in the country that has advanced-level certification from the National Association for Developmental Education. Additionally, the AARC is one of only two universities in the country with tutor training programs certified at the master's level by the College Reading and Learning Association. The AARC serves approximately 4,000 students annually with 47,000 tutoring visits per year. More than eighty percent of first-time freshmen participate in AARC services. The AARC participants consistently demonstrate significantly higher 6-year graduation rates.

The Supplemental Instruction (SI) Program organizes study groups led by peer instructors for historically difficult courses such as chemistry, biology, mathematics and accounting. Participating students also acquire study skills which further increases their success with a variety of future courses. Commitment to quality transfer experiences and success is exemplified through numerous formal agreements with many higher education institutions in Texas and several international institutions.

Seamless transition for transfer students is assisted by online two-year college planning guides maintained for many two-year Texas colleges. These guides combine with attentive advising procedures create a successful and efficient transfer graduation experience. Orientation programs specifically designed for transfer students assist in the transition from community college to university life. Articulation agreements developed for many community colleges help to facilitate communication between administrators which ultimately help in the seamless transition for transfer students.

Freshmen convocation welcomes new students to the SFA community of learners through an upbeat, informal gathering intended to inspire new students and help them understand the transformational experience of attending SFA. Participating students interact and identify themselves as the 'Class of 2012' (for students entering in Fall 2008). Significant university connections are emphasized through other students, faculty and staff. The president, provost, vice presidents, and other university representatives mingle with new students and answer questions. Student organizations and community-based businesses also participate to provide new students with engaging resources both on and off campus.

Freshman convocation is held in the coliseum where students will also attend their graduation ceremonies. Connecting with freshmen through convocation symbolizes the exciting beginning of the undergraduate experience and serves as a reminder of their future graduation.

SFA students who participate in a unique training experience called Jack Camp are successfully engaged and demonstrate above average one-year retention rates and graduation rates. Jack Camp, established in 1999 by a group of freshmen leaders, strives to improve experiences each year. Incoming freshmen Lumberjacks choosing to attend Jack Camp establish friendships, interact with student leaders, learn SFA traditions, and discover SFA campus life in a very relaxed atmosphere. Participants cooperatively practice Lumberjack spirit through recreational activities, intramural sports, and social events.

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SFA regularly participates in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory to collect information directly from undergraduate students and determine necessary improvements for student learning and personal development. SFA uses these instruments to monitor progress and evaluate the supportive learning environment necessary for student success.

A campus-wide "first-year experience" team is currently studying activities and issues to ensure student success and persistence to graduation.

The SFA 'Strategic Plan 2013 – Preparing for the Future' highlights many initiatives that directly affect student retention and success. One particular initiative emphasizes student success through university-wide collaboration. Academia and student life areas are creating new active learning opportunities through additional interdisciplinary, international, service learning, and civic engagement experiences. The SFA dedication to teaching, research and service will increase student success and help students achieve graduation goals sooner.

Ensure undergraduate students do not attempt an excessive number of semester credit hours beyond the minimum number required to complete the students' degree programs.

Each academic program has recently completed a comprehensive review of degree program requirements and necessary courses. Core and major course requirements were carefully analyzed and adjustments have been proposed to the administration in order to maintain the most efficient and valuable academic experiences. Beginning this Fall 2008, most bachelor degree programs will require at least 10 fewer semester credit hours for degree completion.

Colleges have also further enhanced advising processes to increase awareness and facilitate progressive degree completion.

Provide academic counseling concerning timely graduation.

University Policy A-59 (Academic Advising for the Undergraduate Student) specifies that "Each academic unit will provide all its undergraduate students, both full-time and part-time, with a systematic, effective advising program. All students who are required and those who choose to be advised prior to every registration period are to be advised according to the following guidelines:

- all students with fewer than 60 earned hours of credit and all students on academic probation must be advised prior to each registration period;
- students with 60 or more earned hours of credit must be advised on an annual basis and may be advised more frequently if desired, and should have an official degree plan on file;
- individual academic units may specify additional requirements of students for mandatory advising."

Several colleges have also developed dedicated advising centers for declared majors and specific college undeclared majors. These centers enable professional advisors to deliver personalized, major-specific advice to maximize efficient educational success. Professional staff in these centers will facilitate appropriate referral to faculty members and assist with retention efforts for the college. Establishment of a campus-wide Advisory Council is beginning discussed in order to facilitate communication and training among all college advising centers.

The Academic Advising Center (AAC) serves as a campus-wide resource for advising information and supports undeclared majors to encourage successful academic experiences. AAC contacts undeclared majors and offers information, research and advice about SFA degree programs through knowledgeable, personalized and proactive interactions. AAC promotes student success and academic direction while encouraging responsible student decisions. This center also provides student specific advising on Texas Success (TSI) related requirements and issues.

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Develop an online student degree progress report which compares the courses taken and credit received by a student to the courses completed and needed for degree and graduation requirements for each academic term.

The 'On-Course' online degree audit system is used to help students achieve degree success. This degree audit system creates student-specific degree scenarios with proposed courses and actions needed to achieve graduation. The Registrar's Office facilitates continuous degree audit system training for students, faculty, advisors, administration and staff in order to ensure appropriate and proficient usage.

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Implement tuition policies that encourage timely graduation

SFA students may register for 17 or more semester credit hours and pay designated tuition at the 16 semester credit hour level. Since implementing this new tuition option, more students have enrolled in more credit hours per semester. In coming years, this tuition option should contribute to more timely graduation.

New tuition policies charging higher designated tuition rates for students exceeding degree program limitations and excessively repeating courses has recently begun. A wide variety of information has been distributed to the campus community through personal communication, electronic and paper mailings, and strategic kiosk postings in order to create an acute awareness of new tuition policies. The improved communication regarding tuition policies and the importance of efficient degree completion should contribute to increased timely graduation.

Students approaching undergraduates degree program limits are closely monitored and carefully counseled to ensure the most efficient route to graduation. Faculty, staff and administrators work together in order to effectively assist students.

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Degree Program Completion Data

**Baccalaureate Degree Recipients, Academic Year 2006
Average Credits Attempted and Mean Semesters by Program Areas**

General Program Area	Number	Average	
	Graduates	Credits Attempted	Semesters Completed
Science and Math	100	158	10
Agriculture	38	159	10
Arts and Architecture	482	153	10
Business	293	155	10
Health	117	152	10
Social Sciences and Service	290	157	10
SFA Overall	1,320	155	10

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Highlights of Efforts Assisting Timely Graduation
(Categories specified by HB 1172 and THECB)

Ensure undergraduate students graduate in a timely manner

The freshmen success program, SFA 101, enhances student achievement by helping students understand the transition from high school to college. Students are introduced to the expectations and opportunities of university life through direct interactions and organized experiences. Activities in this program are designed to improve critical thinking skills and grade point averages while increasing the likelihood of continued enrollment and persistence to graduation.

The Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA) Academic Assistance and Resource Center (AARC) is designed to increase student retention and academic performance by offering peer tutoring for core courses and upper division high risk courses. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board recently recognized this excellence program by naming the AARC as a 2006 Texas Star Award winner. The AARC is the only learning center in the country that has advanced-level certification from the National Association for Developmental Education. Additionally, the AARC is one of only two universities in the country with tutor training programs certified at the master's level by the College Reading and Learning Association. The AARC serves approximately 7,000 students annually with 41,000 tutoring visits per year; approximately one-half of first-time freshmen participate in AARC and achieve significantly higher 6-year graduation rates (usually 10 or more percentage points higher than the overall – overall for 2000-2006 was 39% per Legislative Budget definitions).

The Supplemental Instruction (SI) Program organizes study groups led by peer instructors for historically difficult courses such as chemistry, biology, mathematics and accounting. Participating students also acquire study skills which further increases their success with a variety of future courses. Commitment to quality transfer experiences and success is exemplified through numerous formal agreements with many higher education institutions in Texas and several international institutions.

Seamless transition for transfer students is assisted by online two-year college planning guides maintained for many two-year Texas colleges. These guides combine with attentive advising procedures create a successful and efficient transfer graduation experience.

Freshmen convocation welcomes new students to the SFA community of learners through an upbeat, informal gathering intended to inspire new students and help them understand the transformational experience of attending SFA. Participating students interact and identify themselves as the 'Class of 2011' (for students entering in Fall 2007). Significant university connections are emphasized through other students, faculty and staff. The president, provost, vice presidents, and other university representatives mingle with new students and answer questions.

Freshman convocation is held in the coliseum where students will also attend their graduation ceremonies. Connecting with freshmen through convocation symbolizes the exciting beginning of the undergraduate experience and serves as a reminder of their future graduation.

SFA students who participate in a unique training experience called Jack Camp are successfully engaged and demonstrate above average one-year retention rates and graduation rates. Jack Camp, established in 1999 by a group of freshmen leaders, strives to improve experiences each year. Incoming freshmen Lumberjacks choosing to attend Jack Camp establish friendships, interact with student leaders, learn SFA traditions, and discover SFA campus life in a very relaxed atmosphere. Participants cooperatively practice Lumberjack spirit through recreational activities, intramural sports, and social events.

SFA regularly participates in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory to collect information directly from undergraduate students and determine necessary improvements for student learning and personal development. SFA uses these instruments to monitor progress and evaluate the supportive learning environment necessary for student success.

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A campus-wide "first-year experience" team is currently studying activities and issues to ensure student success and persistence to graduation.

The current strategic plan, 'SFA 08 – Placing Student Achievement First', emphasizes student success through university-wide collaboration and efforts focused in areas such as academic achievement, recruitment and retention and campus community. Every campus office evaluates goals, objectives and progress towards the student success initiatives each year.

Ensure undergraduate students do not attempt an excessive number of semester credit hours beyond the minimum number required to complete the students' degree programs.

Each academic program has recently completed a comprehensive review of degree program requirements and necessary courses. Core and major course requirements were carefully analyzed and adjustments have been proposed to the administration in order to maintain the most efficient and valuable academic experiences. Beginning in Fall 2008, most bachelor degree programs will require at least 10 fewer semester credit hours for degree completion.

Colleges have also further enhanced advising processes to increase awareness and facilitate progressive degree completion.

Provide academic counseling concerning timely graduation.

University Policy A-59 (Academic Advising for the Undergraduate Student) specifies that "Each academic unit will provide all its undergraduate students, both full-time and part-time, with a systematic, effective advising program. All students who are required and those who choose to be advised prior to every registration period are to be advised according to the following guidelines:

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Several disciplines have also developed dedicated advising centers for declared majors. These centers enable experienced faculty to deliver personalized, field-specific advice to maximize efficient educational success.

The Academic Advising Center (AAC) serves as a campus-wide resource for advising information and supports undeclared majors to encourage successful academic experiences. AAC contacts undeclared majors and offers information, research and advice about SFA degree programs through knowledgeable, personalized and proactive interactions. AAC promotes student success and academic direction while encouraging responsible student decisions.

Develop an online student degree progress report which compares the courses taken and credit received by a student to the courses completed and needed for degree and graduation requirements for each academic term.

The 'On-Course' online degree audit system is used to help students achieve degree success. This degree audit system creates student-specific degree scenarios with proposed courses and actions needed to achieve graduation. The Registrar's Office facilitates continuous degree audit system training for students, faculty, advisors, administration and staff in order to ensure appropriate and proficient usage.

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Implement tuition policies that encourage timely graduation

SFA students may register for 17 or more semester credit hours and pay designated tuition at the 16 semester credit hour level. Since implementing this new tuition option, more students have enrolled in more credit hours per semester. In coming years, this tuition option should contribute to more timely graduation.

New tuition policies charging higher designated tuition rates for students exceeding degree program limitations and excessively repeating courses has recently begun. A wide variety of information has been distributed to the campus community through personal communication, electronic and paper mailings, and strategic kiosk postings in order to create an acute awareness of new tuition policies. The improved communication regarding tuition policies and the importance of efficient degree completion should contribute to increased timely graduation.

Students approaching undergraduates degree program limits are closely monitored and carefully counseled to ensure the most efficient route to graduation. Faculty, staff and administrators work together in order to effectively assist students.

**Stephen F. Austin State University
2006 Timely Graduation Effort Report
November 30, 2006**



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General Program Areas	Number	Average	
	Graduates	Credits Attempted	Semesters Completed
Science and Math	135	155	10
Agriculture	56	156	10
Arts and Architecture	510	156	10
Business	296	154	10
Health	111	154	10
Social Sciences and Service	289	159	10
SFA Overall	1,397	156	10

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Each college has recently completed a comprehensive review of degree program requirements and necessary courses. Core and major course requirements were carefully analyzed and adjustments have been proposed to the administration in order to maintain the most efficient and valuable academic experiences. Many programs were able to reduce the number of hours required for graduation.

Colleges have also further enhanced advising processes to increase awareness and facilitate progressive degree completion.

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