Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2017
October 1, 2016 – September 30, 2017

FEATURES

♦ ATLI Inspirations
♦ Honoring a Champion in Transition
♦ New ATLI Staff Members
♦ Celebrating 27 Years of Transition in Alabama
♦ New Transition Initiatives
Auburn Transition Leadership Institute
Administrative Staff and Associate Graduate Assistant Staff 2016-2017

Top row (L-R):
Kat Cler and Leah Kartovicky

Bottom row (L-R):
Eva Wesche, Jian Fang, Courtney Dotson, Karen Rabren, Deborah Henthorne, Chad Evans

THIS IS TRANSITION.
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The Auburn Transition Leadership Institute, or ATLI, provides valuable services and support to Alabama’s transition stakeholders. The diagrams below depict ATLI’s engagement and impact during fiscal year 2017 in the areas of instruction, research, and outreach activities.

**INSTRUCTION**

- Graduate Associates n=4
- Undergraduate Associates n=2

**RESEARCH**

- Pre-Employment Transition Services Collaboration Survey n=771
- Pre-Assessment n=598
- Post-Assessment n=173

**OUTREACH**

- Alabama Transition Conference n=717
- Transition Unlimited Action Plan Meetings n=30
- Transition Unlimited Public Schools’ Engagement n=355
- Transition Unlimited Initiative Participants n=741
- Continuing Education Units for Educators n=188
- Continuing Education Units for Rehabilitation Counselors n=40
- Community-based Instruction n=7
- Directions Newsletter n=2
- Governor’s Proclamation: March is Transition Awareness Month n=1
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

War Eagle! It is definitely an exciting and unique time in the field of transition and for the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute.

The Auburn Transition Leadership Institute, or ATLI, established in 2000, serves as an instruction, research, and outreach center for Auburn University’s Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation, and Counseling. ATLI strives to help youth and young adults with disabilities live independently and realize their academic and employment potential.

Our vision is a society in which all individuals are valued as contributing members, each dignified by his or her strengths and abilities. ATLI’s mission is to help youth with disabilities achieve successful integration into community life by providing continuous improvement resources to the systems, practitioners, and citizens who assist these young people with their transition into adulthood.

ATLI’s mission is achieved through instruction, research, and outreach goals. Instruction goals focus on providing experiences in research, instruction, and service delivery; offering opportunities for internships; integrating research into publications or presentations; and providing pre-service experiences. Research goals involve designing, developing, and/or conducting research for local, state, and/or national transition stakeholders; sharing transition research results with local, state, and federal agencies; and disseminating transition research findings at state, national, and international forums. Outreach goals support engaging transition stakeholders in professional or personal development; providing resources to public school systems to improve their transition programs; providing personal development opportunities for youth and young adults in transition; supporting local, state and national interagency dialogue; and promoting transition awareness in local, state and national communities.

In the pursuit of these goals, ATLI fulfills its responsibility to the State of Alabama by improving the services for successful transitions to adult roles for young citizens with disabilities.

During fiscal year 2017 (October 1, 2016 - September 30, 2017), the Institute engaged in a number of activities and projects designed to improve and/or influence the quality of life of individuals with disabilities. We continue to be excited about new and innovative initiatives that were established during this fiscal year. It has also been humbling to continue a 27-year tradition of hosting the annual Alabama Transition Conference—one of Auburn University’s largest and most longstanding conferences.

This year the Institute facilitated the Transition Unlimited Initiative, in partnership with the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, or ADRS. The Transition Unlimited Initiative was supported, in part, by a contract through ADRS totaling $260,037. This initiative is a large step in continuing to ensure that individuals with disabilities are provided quality transition services. Because of this partnership, we had the pleasure of traveling across the state to meet with 360 public high schools and disseminate information regarding the implementation of pre-employment transition services as outlined within the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, or WIOA of 2014. Additionally, all transition stakeholders were provided a survey in order to collect baseline data about transition professionals’ perception about practices, as outlined within WIOA (2014).

We are also excited to announce a transition within our own office. The torch was handed from our longtime dedicated and accomplished director, Dr. Karen Rabren, into the determined and devoted hands of Dr. Courtney Dotson. With their many years of collaboration and service, the Institute has been able to confidently continue forward as our initiatives continue to grow and flourish.

We look forward to the continued success of the Institute and building brighter futures for youth and young adults with disabilities.
THIS IS INSPIRATION.
ZACKORY KING

Student ● Charles Henderson High School

Zackory King is an independent, hard-working young man with a bright future ahead of him. Currently, he is a senior at Charles Henderson High School and is enrolled in the welding program located at the high school. Zackory enjoys playing basketball with his friends and has a passion for music. Being well versed in many musical genres, Zackory has recently bought DJ and producing equipment and is pursuing his passion of music. Additionally, he has been employed with Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen since January of 2017. When talking to staff at the high school, it is clear that Zackory has a large support system behind him that believes in his ability to succeed.

While Zackory has always had support from the teachers and staff at Charles Henderson High School, his future has not always looked so bright. Before becoming employed at Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen, Zackory was getting into trouble at school and was not engaged in and of his school work. Concerned for his future, his “school mother,” Mrs. Lieb, suggested he talk to Kevin Jackson, the school’s pre-employment transition services specialist, about finding employment and becoming enrolled in the school to work program. Zackory notes that this was the turning point in his career, because he saw all that he is capable of accomplishing. After meeting with Mr. Jackson, Zackory was able to become employed as a cook at Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen and every aspect of his life began to change for the better. Zackory states, “After starting work, my grades have improved, I am more independent, and I get along much better with my mother.” He continues to explain that his job has not only given him financial independence and taught him the importance of responsibility, but also provided him with cooking skills. These new skills have allowed Zackory to take on more responsibility at home, allowing for his relationship with his mother to improve and grow. Everyone in his life, including Zackory himself, has noticed the positive change he has made since gaining employment.

For the future, Zackory envisions himself having a career in welding. In order to achieve this goal, he is planning on enrolling in a college welding program to obtain a certification in welding. However, in the meantime, Zackory plans to continue working at Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen and possibly gain a management position at the restaurant. Because of his hard work ethic and the positive improvements he has made in the past year, Zackory has been asked to become a mentor to high school students after he graduates. This is an opportunity Zackory feels very blessed to be offered. He states, “I want to thank Charles Henderson High School, Mr. Jackson, and Mrs. Lieb for all they have done for me, I could not have done this without them.”

—Story by ATLI graduate assistant, Leah Kartovicky
THIS IS DEDICATION.
KEVIN JACKSON
Pre-Employment Transition Services Specialist ● Troy City and Pike County Schools

A slim-framed man darts across a south Alabama high school campus, waving and greeting everyone. Students speak and wave back. After responding to his greeting, one student smiles and goads him by saying, “I bet I can beat you at the race next weekend [referring to the upcoming community Race for Life event].” The quick-witted man, flashes his contagious smile and replies, “Come on, I’ll take you on. Let’s see who can make it to the finish line first?” His brisk pace continues and I struggle to keep up. He is a man on a mission.

Who is this energetic man and what does he do? He is the beloved Kevin Jackson who serves students with disabilities in the Troy City and Pike County Schools. Mr. Jackson’s 23-year tenure with these school systems began as a job coach, but with the recent focus on pre-employment transition services his title has changed; however, his drive and motivation has remained steadfast.

When asked what he enjoys most about his job he answers without hesitation, “Seeing kids succeed seeing them blossom.” Kevin describes his commitment to each student and the scope of his work as, “If I failed him, I not only failed him, but his family and the community at large. So, I put the pressure on myself to make sure that when that kid walked across that stage, he had something positive to go in to.”

His role as a liaison with the schools and the community is described by Kevin as, “I’m a like a salesperson, making students as marketable as possible. You need a good relationship with the kids and the community.” His connection to his community and students is strong. It is not surprising then, to learn that Kevin stays in touch with many of his students and continues to be a source of encouragement, long after they leave high school. This connection is described by Kevin as he says, “I hear from kids that I worked with when we first started, still do.”

With an optimistic outlook and can-do spirit, Kevin stays focused on creating positive post-school outcomes for all his students. He believes in possibilities, regardless of the type of disability, or challenges different disabilities pose. For example, he describes how he and his school system addressed challenges faced by a student with autism, “We recognized his potential, we didn’t look at his disability, we looked at what he could do. I feel very confident that he will be a successful adult.” Kevin recognizes that the strength of a program should be continuously developed. He states, “I’m proud of all the kids. I’m also proud of a new program, Ready to Work, we are starting to help get students ready for work. Both administrations saw the value of it.” He also acknowledges the importance of professional development and the impact it can have on practitioners and the students with whom they work.

Reflecting on one of the first Alabama Transition Conferences, Kevin attributes one of the keys to his success to something he learned at that event years ago. He said he remembers that one of the best practices of transition is to empower students. He describes that he probably spends a lot of time, “empowering the student and his family. I work a lot getting students their jobs, but I have expanded my role. I tell them I help people move into successful adult living.” Explaining how he tries to explain this concept to students, he says he tells them, “This is your life. I am here to help you. You tell me what it is you want to do, where do you want to go, what do you want to be and we can help you. You take control, because this is your life, this is your future.”

Kevin words of advice are “Everybody has value, worth, and potential and it is up to us to see that they reach it.” Thank you, Kevin Jackson, for all you do for students with disabilities and their families.

–Story by Dr. Karen Rabren
THIS IS CONNECTION.
ERIC CRUMLEY, PH.D.

Special Educator ● Central High School ● Tuscaloosa City Schools
ATLI Graduate Associate 2010 – 2014

One can often find Eric Crumley greeting you with a kind smile and unwavering enthusiasm as you enter into his classroom or while engaging with him as he leads his students in community-based instruction. His kindness and passion for research and advocacy during his academic career at Auburn University has led him toward a career in special education and transition. As a student once studying clinical mental health, Eric began to explore his interest at the intersections of mental health, socioeconomics, and education. He fondly describes the opportunity he had to work as a graduate assistant with Auburn VOICES (an outreach initiative within the College of Education) and how the position ignited a passion to advocate for students from high-need schools. When Eric learned about the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute, herein referred to as ATLI or the Institute, he found the perfect opportunity to further explore and refine his research interests and to advocate for individuals with disabilities.

Throughout his time at the Institute, Eric was involved in a variety of projects at any given time. This broadened his experiences within the field of transition through instruction, research, and outreach. In building this foundation, Eric found his calling to be within the field of special education and shifted his academic focus to reflect this new calling, joining the Collaborative Approach to Training Transition Specialists program. With the support of Drs. Karen Rabren and Jamie Carney, he made the switch and continued assisting others in understanding the bridge between mental health counseling and special education. He recalls spending the majority of his time collaborating with other graduate assistants, professionals from the Alabama State Department of Education, and members of the State Interagency Transition Team to develop the Alabama Transition Standards. Due to the team approach, he refined his professional skills by balancing numerous projects, communicating with professionals at the state and national levels and engaging in research. Eric is grateful to ATLI for providing the opportunities to collaborate and network with the pioneers and leaders in the field of transition and disability research, which also supplemented his training and education. Without them, he says, he would not have developed into the successful professional he is today—a special educator and strong advocate for the students he serves.

During his time at ATLI, Eric took advantage of the unique opportunity to build upon his knowledge and training within the fields of counseling, special education, and transition. As a teacher, he currently interacts with students facing unique challenges that exist at the intersections of poverty, disability and mental health. Eric is familiar with transition in many ways, namely his academic and professional transitions, and is able to connect with students and staff regularly about these challenges. He states, “I continue to be mindful that we ALL transition constantly within our lives. One thing I tell the students I serve and administration is that we are impacted by transition daily.”

—Story by ATLI graduate assistant, Kat Cler
engaged • student-focused • committed

THIS IS LEADERSHIP.
JOSHUA LANEY
Senior Director of Workforce Development ● Alabama State Department of Education
Office of Career and Technical Education/Workforce Development/Counseling and Guidance

Joshua Laney is the senior director for workforce development at the Alabama State Department of Education, or ALSDE. At ALSDE, Mr. Laney works to connect industry partners who hire students, including students with disabilities, and training providers charged with preparing students for the workforce. Those providers include high school Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, college dual enrollment programs, apprenticeships, and internships. His primary role is to be a “conduit of information” between school systems and employers. He believes that, for students to be effectively prepared for careers, employers need to directly be engaged in every stage of their development for the workforce. In addition, he believes students receiving special education services and those receiving a general education should both be provided with transition services. At multiple points throughout the educational career of every student, educators should be teaching them about different options for career pathways. Mr. Laney also works with teachers and service providers to help them better understand what options are available for students, both with and without disabilities, to ensure these individuals will be able to act on every opportunity presented to them.

Mr. Laney says he values what the insights gained by his participation in different ATLI events and how they have clarified his outlook on transition practices. He is reminded there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach when it comes to the different transition needs of students. Laney has a strong belief that educational and career planning for all students must be personalized to be effective. All types of students need some form of an Individualized Education Program or IEP, whether they have a disability or not. Learning styles, interests, aptitudes, and abilities vary from student to student, and therefore, education must take to a more individualized approach. Service providers and teachers need to customize what they are recommending for students so that they can be successful.

Additionally, Mr. Laney described what active participation in career and IEP planning within the local school systems has taught him. By participating fully in the production of the plan, teachers and rehabilitation professionals can form a more well-rounded strategy that focuses on all the student’s areas of need. Parent involvement in this planning process is also crucial, so the family can fully understand what the transition process entails and what happens to the student’s IEP when they leave the school environment. The move into either work or further education is a major hurdle for many students because the entire focus has simply been on graduating high school, as if that were the “finish line.” Mr. Laney feels that those involved in the planning process need to educate the parents that an IEP is just for the school system. Students and parents need to be fully informed about what levels of support services they can realistically expect when they transition to the next level of education or career. Students must be prepared to thrive in their chosen career path.

Mr. Laney emphasizes there will always be a need for collaboration between career and technical education programs, teachers, and IEP coordinators. All rehabilitation services should participate in discussion and teamwork so the students they serve will receive the best possible services. The continued engagement of the business and industry partners who will eventually employ the students is critical. He would like to see continued integration between the career and transition planning sides because, “career planning is transition planning if we are doing it right.”

—Story by ATLI student associate, Becca Brann
THIS IS DISTINCTION.
Karen Rabren has been one of the most influential people for the advocacy and support of transition services for youth with disabilities. She became a faculty member at Auburn University in 2000, and worked to spread transition services across the state with her assistance in the establishment of the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute, or ATLI. Her work at the Institute initially started off as a supporting role and she later became the director in 2006. Karen worked with local and state agencies to support them in providing transition services in their local areas, as well as across the state of Alabama. She was an advocate for community-based instruction, bringing students into the Institute and to teach them valuable life and job readiness skills. She felt it was important to not only assist rehabilitation and special education professionals, but also to provide direct instruction for students. Karen passion for transition and rehabilitation is demonstrated through her hard work and dedication to students all around Alabama. Karen states, “Transition is about life. It is very broad and encompasses everything you do.” She believes that transition is not necessarily something that can be learned from a textbook, but rather students must be taught experientially to develop and achieve their goals. She affirms that individuals with disabilities just want to live the same lives as everyone else, and they should be given the opportunity to thrive within the community.

Over the next few decades, Karen hopes to see the field of transition gain more evidence-based practices to provide advanced knowledge on the effectiveness of different types of transition programs. She envisions transition continuing to grow and develop with the assistance of research and new ideas. She believes that transition is still improving and expanding, but new individuals entering into the field bring with them the opportunity for growth and development. She is excited to see all levels of pre-service professionals becoming a part of ATLI to learn by doing and become invested in transition and contribute to the mission of ATLI.

From her years of work at ATLI, Karen has many fond memories. She loved hearing from fellow professionals that the information provided by ATLI helped them better their students’ transition experiences and their community. Hearing from previous students about how ATLI’s programs assisted them in acquiring jobs and furthering their education made Karen proud of the work she has accomplished. She has always enjoyed the annual Alabama Transition Conference and the opportunity to help other professionals develop new skills and ways of practice. Through the conference, Karen was able to learn the needs of the community and what had to be done in order to best serve the youth in transition. Karen, over the years, worked with many professionals, graduate assistants, and interns, but they all had the common interest of helping others, which is what she believes is the mission of ATLI. There have been many projects at ATLI that focus on assisting the community, and there will be many more in the future that will help to accomplish the overall goal of improving transition services. Karen believes the overall goal of the field of transition is to work until these services become obsolete because everyone has gained the independence and recognition they deserve. She hopes that one day we will live in a world in which disability does not matter because there will be no barriers or restrictions left to conquer.

As she transitions from ATLI, she trusts that the new generation will take her place and continue these services, as of right now, there will always be a need for transition services.

We honor and Salute You.
ATLI WELCOMES NEW STAFF MEMBERS

RAQUITTA MENIFEE
CLERICAL SUPPORT STAFF
Auburn, Alabama
Since August 2017

ANNE CATHERINE CAMPBELL
STUDENT ASSOCIATE
Brewton, Alabama
Mathematics Education
Since May 2017

ERIKA HANLEY
GRADUATE ASSOCIATE
Ocala, Florida
Counseling Psychology
Since August 2017

AUBURN TRANSITION LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
WE ARE CELEBRATING SEVENTEEN YEARS of building brighter futures for youth and young adults with disabilities and their families—since 2000 at Auburn University. We are delighted to share with you our accomplishments during fiscal year 2017. ATLI works closely with administrators and professionals in education, rehabilitation, mental health, and other related agencies to provide intensive coordinated services as well as leadership in the areas of instruction, research, and outreach. ATLI facilitates transition services by providing continuous improvement resources to systems, practitioners, and local programs. In this report, you will discover all the many things we were engaged in during fiscal year 2017 as we,

▪ celebrated 27 years of transition in Alabama through the Alabama Transition Conference;
▪ honored a transition pioneer’s 17 years of dedication to ATLI, Dr. Karen Rabren;
▪ continued our ongoing contributions to university engagement while offering pre-service students from diverse majors opportunities in instruction, research, and outreach; and
▪ sustained our commitment to providing professional development opportunities to transition professionals.

It is our goal to ensure that our services are rendered in a manner in which they offer unique experiences for all. We are a team that is full of transition spirit. We believe that we work with the best transition professionals and aim to provide those professionals with the highest quality of assistance. Because we all share the same passion for individuals with disabilities, our work this year has proven our commitment to high quality outcomes.

We have uniquely qualified staff members at the Institute, who are committed to building brighter futures. Although we were challenged with a few transitions during the year, our staff remained steadfast and goal-oriented, keeping our mission and those we serve as inspiration to do our best. We appreciate the ongoing support from our partners, near and far. We are proud of our accomplishments and look forward to serving transition stakeholders for years to come.

WE BELIEVE IN TRANSITION.
THIS IS UNIVERSITY STUDENT ENGAGEMENT.
Instruction

Guided Leadership Experiences for Professionals-in-Training

STUDENT STAFF MEMBERS GAIN PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

ATLI is committed to contributing to university engagement while offering opportunities to pre-service students from diverse majors to engage in instruction, research, and outreach activities. Our student associate staff members are also essential to the Institute’s operations.

During fiscal year 2017, our administrative staff guided ATLI’s associate staff as we engaged in a number of activities, providing them with experiences that extend beyond what is traditionally available in university classrooms. These experiences ranged in the following areas:

♦ developing and implementing research-based community-based instruction to local high school students with disabilities;
♦ planning and delivering university teaching;
♦ engaging in research design development;
♦ preparing human subjects review protocols;
♦ collecting, preparing, and analyzing data;
♦ preparing and submitting research-based manuscripts and/or professional presentations;
♦ planning and coordinating ATLI’s outreach events—the Alabama Transition Conference, and the Transition Unlimited Initiative (e.g., Action Plan Meetings);
♦ providing technical assistance and feedback to local transition teams;
♦ assisting with writing project reports; and
♦ working closely with local, state, and national leaders as transition practices and policies are formulated.
THIS IS RESEARCH.
Research

Explorations and Findings in Service to Decision-makers & Policymakers

TRANSITION RESEARCH USED TO IMPROVE PROGRAMS

During fiscal year 2017, ATLI staff conducted and disseminated research at the local, state, and national level. ATLI administrative staff presented at one national, two state, and 31 local conferences or meetings through various methods: presentations and a panel. At the national level, staff presented at the Southeastern Employment and Training Association (SETA) Workforce Development Excellence 2017 Spring Conference, while attending the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition’s Capacity Building Institute and the Southeastern Postsecondary Education Alliance for professional development. At the state level, staff presented two concurrent sessions during the Alabama Transition Conference. At the local level, staff were on a panel presenting and answering questions at the Jefferson County Community Transition Team meeting about transition hot topics and providing training at 30 meetings across the State of Alabama, as part of the ongoing Transition Unlimited Initiative. Additionally, two proposals were submitted and accepted for two international conferences (i.e., Division of International Special Education and Service International Conference and the Division on Career Development and Transition Conference) that will take place during fiscal year 2018.

Across the year, staff members conducted research throughout the Transition Unlimited Initiative. The purpose was to learn more about the local transition stakeholders’ perception about pre-employment transition services as outlined by WIOA of 2014. By administering a pre- and post-survey, greater knowledge was obtained about professionals understanding of the implementation of pre-employment transition services across the State of Alabama.

771 SURVEY RESPONDENTS • PERCEPTIONS ABOUT PRACTICES • 83% LEVEL OF CHANGE IN KNOWLEDGE
NEW INITIATIVE! PRE-ETS COLLABORATION SURVEY

An Alabama Pre-Employment Transition Services Initiative

The passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, or WIOA of 2014 made specific changes to requirements in the delivery of transition services for youth and students with disabilities. The Act requires five specific pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) which include: (a) job exploration counseling, (b) work-based learning experiences, (c) counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary educational programs at institutions of higher education, (d) workplace readiness training, and (e) instruction in self-advocacy (29 U.S.C 733§ 113 (b)). The importance that the Federal government has placed on the delivery of Pre-ETS is evident by the fact that WIOA of 2014 requires that at least 15 percent of State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) allotments from the federal government be used for these services (29 U.S.C 730 §419 (d)(I)).

Although many of these five Pre-ETS were provided for decades, the WIOA of 2014 mandates that the five specific Pre-ETS be delivered as part of each state’s VR agency service options in collaboration with local education agencies (LEAs) (29 U.S.C 730 § 422 (a)). The provision of Pre-ETS provides an opportunity for LEAs and VR personnel to work together to provide seamless service delivery for young people with disabilities. In fact, the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, through a contract with the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute, or ATLI, for the Transition Unlimited Initiative, is taking proactive measures to plan, implement, and evaluate the delivery of Pre-ETS. More specifically, through this project every high school in the state has an opportunity to work with VR personnel to establish an action plan and monitor the implementation of Pre-ETS.

As part of the Transition Unlimited Initiative, a Pre-ETS Collaboration Survey was administered at the (1) beginning of each local planning session (pre-survey) and then (2) before the close of that fiscal year in September 2017 (post-survey). The purpose for administering the Pre-ETS Collaboration Survey (pre- and post-) was to gather information regarding transition professionals’ knowledge of the five Pre-ETS areas and to determine the degree in which the Pre-ETS are being delivered to students from local high schools throughout the state of Alabama.

Respondents. Participants included those who attended a Transition Unlimited (TU) Action Plan meeting held during the months of January and February of 2017. Potential participants were invited to be a part of these meetings if the VR counselor assigned to each Alabama public high school selected them as a team member responsible for the delivery of pre-employment transition services. More specifically, the VR counselors were asked to build a team of local high school personnel who they worked with in the delivery of transition services.

Instrumentation. A 30-item Pre-ETS Collaboration Survey was developed after a review of the literature. Six items were developed to represent activities for each of the five Pre-ETS areas. In addition, there were demographic items specifically designed to address the various roles of the transition professional who might complete the survey (i.e., rehabilitation professional, high school representative, Pre-ETS Specialist, school job coach). There were two versions of the Pre-ETS Collaboration Survey developed. The pre-version of the survey was administered before participants (n=598) attended a local TU meeting and a post-version of the survey was sent to all those who attended TU Action Plan meetings and who complete the pre-version of the survey, approximately 6-8 months after the TU meeting (n=173).

Results. A more comprehensive summary of the development of methods and results of the survey has been shared with ADRS.
Research (continued)

Explorations and Findings in Service to Decision-makers & Policymakers

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<td>1. Students engage in year mentoring programs to develop self-awareness.</td>
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<td>2. Students complete personal assets with requirements of specific jobs or careers.</td>
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<td>3. Labor market information is used to identify the skills necessary for students’ career goals.</td>
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<td>4. Career assessments are administered in order to identify further training and/or educational needs to meet students’ career goals.</td>
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<td>5. Students are provided guidance as they compare requirements for specific careers.</td>
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<td>6. Assistance with college applications, admissions process, and financial aid options are provided.</td>
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<td>7. Students are involved in career exploration activities (e.g., online career research, career days, career fairs).</td>
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<td>8. Students are provided opportunities to develop independent living skills (e.g., personal hygiene, clothing care, cooking, housekeeping, time management, community/peer relationships).</td>
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<td>9. Workplace simulation is used to provide students with introduction to job skills.</td>
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<td>10. Students are provided opportunities to develop self-determination skills (e.g., seeking accommodations and modifications).</td>
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<td>11. School-based employment options are discussed with students.</td>
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<td>12. Students participate in extracurricular activities to learn about different occupations.</td>
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<td>13. Engagement of family members and/or professionals in a supportive group setting is used to provide an awareness of self.</td>
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<td>14. Ethical workplace training is provided to students for integration into the workforce.</td>
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<td>15. Students are provided the opportunity to develop job skills (e.g., transportation, driver's permit training, personal work adjustment).</td>
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<td>17. Students are provided opportunities to visit postsecondary educational settings they may consider attending.</td>
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<td>18. Students are engaged in job shadowing experiences.</td>
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<td>19. Training is appropriate for work habits are provided to students.</td>
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<td>20. School-based work training sites are used to develop students’ vocational skills.</td>
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<td>21. Training and future education options are discussed with students as they progress toward their career choice.</td>
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<td>22. Students are provided communication and social skills training.</td>
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<td>23. Positive work attitudes are taught and reinforced.</td>
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<td>24. Opportunities to make choices are presented by professionals in order to foster independence.</td>
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<td>25. Students are in paid or unpaid apprenticeships.</td>
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<td>26. Students are provided guidance on how to access college or university disability support services.</td>
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<td>27. Students are assessed to determine employment interests.</td>
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<td>28. Students are in paid or unpaid internships.</td>
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<tr>
<td>29. Opportunities are presented to students to develop skills in self-promotion of needs and rights.</td>
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THIS IS OUTREACH.
Outreach
Projects and Activities in Service to the Transition Community

OUTREACH PROGRAMS SERVE TRANSITION STAKEHOLDERS
Contributing to the mission of Auburn University, the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute’s (ATLI) fiscal year 2017 outreach initiatives were delivered through five projects and/or activities. These initiatives include...

2017 Alabama Transition Conference • The Alabama Transition Conference is one of ATLI’s most expansive outreach continuing education events and one of the largest conferences held at Auburn University. This professional and personal development event regularly attracts over 700 participants each year.

March is Transition Awareness Month • As proclaimed by Alabama governors since 1999, March is Transition Awareness Month. Youth and young adults are invited to the proclamation signing ceremony held at the Old House Chamber in the State Capitol. Corresponding with the Alabama Transition Conference, this time is set aside to recognize all transition service providers and stakeholders.

Transition Unlimited Initiative • The Transition Unlimited Initiative includes the coordination of local action plan meetings designed to build capacity and connect services across the State of Alabama. Transition professionals are afforded the opportunity to keep abreast of the latest policies and practices in transition so they can develop local action plans for implementing pre-employment transition services and programs. Because of these plans, appropriate funding can be allocated to schools to make certain that professionals are able to attain the goals outlined for their students we serve.

Directions Newsletter • This bi-annual publication serves as an avenue to meet transition stakeholders and learn about new programs designed to assist in-service and pre-service professionals in improving transition in the state of Alabama.

Community-based Instruction • ATLI provides clinical services in the form of community-based instruction for local high school students with disabilities throughout the school year.
Outreach (continued)

Projects and Activities in Service to the Transition Community

THE 2017 ALABAMA TRANSITION CONFERENCE • CROSSING TOGETHER

This year commensurated 27 years of the Alabama Transition Conference, furthering
the tradition of one of the largest and most longstanding conferences hosted by Au-
burn University.

Representing the interest in the field of transition, we had 649 professionals travel
from 108 different local education agencies within Alabama. Transition—Crossing
Together, this year’s theme, illustrated the path young adults in transition take as
they step into the next stage of their lives, with assistance from all stakeholders in-
volved in transition. Our featured region was Wetumpka in Elmore County.

The conference began with a heartfelt welcome and call to action for transition
stakeholders by Dr. Karen Rabren, director of the Institute. Her devotion to the area
of transition and her encouraging welcome message set the tone for the conference
before she introduced the Auburn High School Color Guard for the presentation of
the colors. Dr. Rabren also welcomed Ike Kamalu, a student in the EXCEL Program at the Georgia Institute of
Technology, to sing the national anthem, as well as Cathleen Demouey and Kristen Latham, both seniors at the
Alabama School for the Deaf, or ASD, as student interpreters.

Ike continued to inspire the attendees with the song *Don’t Stop Believing* by Journey, before Jason Chandler, a
student at the Excel High School, introduced the keynote speakers, HK Derryberry and his mentor Jim Bradford,
for this year’s inspiring message. HK and Jim captivated the audience with a mixture of humor, an amazing true
story, and the message, *the only disability any of us have in life is a negative attitude*. To conclude the key-
note address, Bruce Pearl, Auburn University’s men’s basketball coach surprised HK, his biggest Auburn fan. No
words can describe how excited HK was to meet Coach Pearl. When Jim asked him what day was the happiest
day in his life, his answer was without hesitation, “Today!”

After some of the attendees were moved to tears by the inspirational keynote address, the conference then pro-
ceeded with two days of education through 43 concurrent sessions and two workshops presented by 71 in-
state and seven out-of-state professionals, from Florida, Kansas, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, and Utah.

Dr. Courtney Dotson, assistant director of the Institute welcomed everyone back to the second day of the con-
ference. Attendees were anticipating the latest transition update from four distinguished panel members that
were introduced by students from ASD. Representing ADRS was Commissioner Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw. The
Alabama State Department of Education, or ALSDE, was represented by Cindy Augustine and Curtis Gage, both
education specialists with Special Education Services, and Joshua Laney, senior director of workforce develop-
ment. Following their presentations was an engaging question and answer session.

Before the conclusion of the conference, the well-liked speed conferencing session was reintroduced. Partici-
pants were able to listen and learn from three presentations provided by the following state leaders: Bedarius
Bell, Jr., state coordinator of deaf/hard of hearing services and Karen Jenkins, rehabilitation specialist, both from
ADRS; Joshua Laney from the ALSDE; and Jewell Pitts, coordinator of children and adolescent developmental
disabilities services from the Alabama Department of Mental Health.

Finally, Dr. Dotson closed the conference by providing information about continuing education units for eligible
professionals and conducted the anticipated raffle of the sponsors’ prizes. Her final words encouraged partici-
pants to continue providing exceptional services for youth in transition.
Outreach (continued)
Projects and Activities in Service to the Transition Community

MARCH IS TRANSITION AWARENESS MONTH IN ALABAMA

The Alabama Transition Conference is one way in which we celebrate transition in Alabama. Also, during this time students in transition are invited to visit the governor’s office and attend the proclamation signing ceremony, proclaiming March as Transition Awareness Month in Alabama. For the past 18 years, Alabama governors have supported this initiative by “urging all residents—leaders in government, business, labor, education, rehabilitation, and the private citizenry—to work together to meet the challenges of ensuring employment and full community inclusion for young people with disabilities who exit our schools.”

This year, three students in transition (Jason Chandler, Cathleen Demouey, and Kristen Latham) from Excel High School and the Alabama School for the Deaf attended the ceremony, alongside state leaders from Alabama’s Department of Rehabilitation Services, the Alabama State Department of Education, and Auburn University.

YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS IN TRANSITION

Ten youth and/or young adults in transition helped celebrate 27 years of the Alabama Transition Conference. These young people showcased their leadership abilities by not only attending the conference, but rather by taking on active program roles. For example, students engaged in ATLI’s community-based instruction program assisted with conference check-in by greeting conference attendees and providing everyone with an Alabama Transition Conference welcome bag. **We Appreciate The Transition Spirit Displayed By These Young Adults!**
Outreach (continued)
Projects and Activities in Service to the Transition Community

NEW INITIATIVE! TRANSITION UNLIMITED ACTION PLAN MEETINGS
An Alabama Pre-Employment Transition Services Initiative

THIS IS COLLABORATION. THIS IS TRANSITION PLANNING. THIS IS TRANSITION UNLIMITED.

Transition Unlimited is an Alabama pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) initiative designed to build capacity and connect services to appropriately implement pre-employment transition services throughout the state. It is a new collaborative project sponsored by the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, or ADRS, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Service, in partnership with ATLI. This partnership offers guidance to transition stakeholders and local education agencies during the development of action plans for the delivery of Pre-ETS that best meet the needs of students with disabilities who are eligible or potentially eligible for VR services. The goal is to build awareness of Pre-ETS throughout Alabama.

This initiative is a response to WIOA (2014), which mandates Pre-ETS be provided to students with disabilities, allowing those students with an opportunity to gain the skills necessary to compete in today’s workforce.

Alabama has set the tone for this mandate and starting in January of 2017, ADRS and ATLI staff members traveled throughout the state working with local multidisciplinary teams as they learned together and collaborated to develop action plans for the delivery of Pre-ETS for 360 high schools in Alabama. The Transition Unlimited Action Plan meetings offered specific Pre-ETS planning to each local high school. For each meeting, VR counselors served as team leaders as they partnered with up to five other teams members who represented a certain high school. Teams consisted of up to six members who represented an array of transition roles, who were committed to and knowledgeable about improving transition services for students with disabilities, and could make decisions about the delivery of Pre-ETS provided at the local level.
Outreach (continued)
Projects and Activities in Service to the Transition Community

NEW INITIATIVE! TRANSITION UNLIMITED ACTION PLAN MEETINGS

This collaborative team effort generated stronger partnerships among dedicated professionals who represented diverse transition roles (e.g., VR counselors, special educators, Pre-ETS specialists, school job coaches, special education coordinators, 504 coordinators, career and technical educators, school administrators). These team members engaged in action plan development by evaluating their current programs and making a plan for improvement and expansion. The action plans developed this year included the five required Pre-ETS: (a) job exploration counseling; (b) work-based learning experiences, (c) counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education; (d) workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living; and (e) instruction in self-advocacy.

The time during each meeting that we [ATLI staff members] looked forward to the most was teams’ networking during the highlights portion of the agenda. This provided teams with a time to share resources, learn from one another, and introduce new ideas. The entire agenda provided a big picture view of the state’s implementation of Pre-ETS.

A participant’s feedback from one of the thirty Transition Unlimited Action Plan meetings, described his or her experience as a short workshop that was packed with valuable information which excluded the fluff (school representative, Tuscaloosa). This is one example of many positive statements provided by participants, recognizing the ongoing need and appreciation for this type of training.

Additionally, all teams will be provided ongoing technical assistance throughout the process of this initiative. Overall, Transition Unlimited underscores our commitment to keep a focus on transition services at the local level.

30 MEETINGS • 360 HIGH SCHOOLS • 741 PARTICIPANTS

DOTHAN • UNIT 4-4

MOBILE • UNIT 6-3

AUBURN • UNIT 4-3
Outreach (continued)
Projects and Activities in Service to the Transition Community

COMMUNITY-BASED INSTRUCTION
Throughout the year, ATLI continued their longstanding partnership with Auburn High School to implement community-based instruction, or CBI, to seven high school students. ATLI staff and graduate associates provided vocational instruction to high school students, ages 18-21, teaching the students diverse and transferable clerical skills, including sorting office supplies, shredding, count materials, preparing folders for outreach events, appropriately clocking in and out of the simulated vocational experience and making buttons for the Alabama Transition Conference. CBI offers these students an opportunity to gain vocational skills and work in a simulated office environment among their peers and other professionals, while also learning social and professional behavior skills. As the year progressed, students were able to identify their work stations and began working on their assigned tasks with little to no prompting. Student productivity was monitored independently (e.g., data collection sheet tallying the quantity of their work) as well as by staff, then displayed in the office to highlight each student's achievements. By the end of the year, all students' productivity increased on projects they completed. Graduate associates also benefitted from engaging in CBI, by gaining experience in providing employment training as well as incorporating and applying knowledge from the fields of development, transition and instruction. Furthermore, the graduate associates learned how to design and conduct a single-subject research study.

THIS IS INSTRUCTION.

THIS IS TEAMWORK.

THIS IS OPPORTUNITY.
Outreach (continued)
Projects and Activities in Service to the Transition Community

DIRECTIONS NEWSLETTER

DIRECTIONS is a bi-annual newsletter created to spotlight transition stakeholders, their stories, and their contribution to transition services. The newsletter is also intended to highlight students in transition, as well as, statewide programs that support their journey through transition. Directions is distributed to the individuals included within the newsletter, local high schools, transition-related agency offices, conferences, offices within Auburn University’s College of Education, and the Office of Accessibility. The newsletter is accessible online and can be found on ATLI’s website.

Each issue of the newsletter provides opportunities for ATLI student associates to assume the role of guest editor. The following list contains the publication schedule and features the stories induced within the 2016-2017 issues of Directions.

Auburn Transition Leadership Institute. (2017, Winter/Spring). Directions Newsletter. Volume 8, Issue 1 features Jason Chandler, an eighth grade student preparing for his transition to high school and exploring his vocational and educational interests, and his teacher, Morgan Andrews; Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw, Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services; the Transition Unlimited Initiative, a statewide Pre-ETS initiative designed in increase and improve services provided to students with disabilities; Eva Wesche, the new ATLI staff member; and a tribute to Linda Hames, former state transition coordinator of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services. **Guest editors: Kat Cler and Leah Kartovicky**

Auburn Transition Leadership Institute. (2017, Summer/Fall). Directions Newsletter. Volume 8, Issue 2 features Ashely Moates, Miss Auburn 2017-2018, whose platform advocates for assisting students with disabilities in reaching their dreams; and a tribute to Dr. Karen Rabren’s bitter-sweet transition from her directorship at ATLI. **Guest editors: Becca Brann, Kat Cler, and Leah Kartovicky**

I remember Linda’s gentle manner and reflective thought. I cherish many times that I shared with her, but one that stands out is the summer that she, Dan Roth, and I wrote a grant to begin a youth self-advocacy project entitled My Voice. We worked hard and had a lot of fun. Linda was a champion for youth and young adults with disabilities and is greatly missed.

—Karen Rabren, Auburn University
Building Brighter Futures

Annual Goals
2016 - 2017

INSTRUCTION
I-Goal 1: Provide experiences in instruction, research, and service delivery to Auburn University students
I-Goal 2: Integrate ATLI research into publications and presentations
I-Goal 3: Provide university students with pre-service experiences using research-based methods

RESEARCH
R-Goal 1: Involve local, state, and national transition stakeholders with designing, developing, and/or conducting of research
R-Goal 2: Share transition research results with local, state, and federal agencies
R-Goal 3: Disseminate transition research findings at state, national, and international forums

OUTREACH
O-Goal 1: Engage transition stakeholders in professional or personal development
O-Goal 2: Provide resources to public school systems to improve their transition programs
O-Goal 3: Provide personal development opportunities for youth and young adults in transition
O-Goal 4: Engage in interagency dialogue and leadership on local, state and national levels
O-Goal 5: Promote transition awareness in local, state and national communities