Annual Report
FY 2013
Fiscal Year: October 1, 2012 - September 30, 2013

Of special interest:

- Over 10,000 persons served this year
- 13% increase in numbers served or engaged since FY 2012
- Record-breaking attendance at the Alabama Transition Conference
- A new look for local transition planning
- Focus on transition and the family
Our Vision

The vision of the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute is a society in which all individuals are valued as contributing members, each dignified by his or her strengths and abilities.

Our Mission

Our 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 to adulthood.
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Auburn Transition Leadership Institute
Administrative Staff and 2012-2013 Associate Graduate Assistant Staff

Front row:
Jonathan Carpenter, Serey Bright, Yuyun Zhan, Courtney Dotson, Karen Rabren, Deborah Henthorne, Pavan Bura, Christina Adams, Joshua Turchan, and Kasey Kaschak,

Back row:
Eric Crumley, Myra Girard, Sadi Fox, and George Hall
Executive Summary

The establishment of the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute in the year 2000 defined Alabama’s commitment to enable its youth with disabilities to achieve satisfying lives as contributing citizens. Thirteen years later, the Institute continues to realize this commitment by producing and sustaining nationally recognized services, products, and activities to inform and support young people with disabilities, their families, and the professionals and agencies who serve them.

Associated with Auburn University’s College of Education and its Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation, and Counseling, the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute (herein referred to as the “Institute” or “ATLI”) endeavors to improve employment, academic, and independence outcomes for youth and young adults with disabilities by:

- influencing national transition policies and practices through research-based data and discourse
- providing outreach and research services to state agencies
- offering transition-related technical support and training to practitioners in local communities, and
- providing research opportunities and work experience to graduate students in special education and rehabilitation.

In alignment with the mission strategies of Auburn University, the Institute has organized its projects and activities into three areas: instruction, research, and outreach. Through its instruction and outreach activities, the Institute serves Auburn’s intent to prepare young people for the challenges of responding to a global economy. Through its research and outreach activities, the Institute aligns with the university to forge solutions to problems and to benefit the quality of life for Alabama citizens, as well as others throughout the country. The Institute also integrates with the College of Education, offering graduate and undergraduate students opportunities to work for pay or for practicum or internship credits.

During fiscal year 2012-2013, the Institute’s reach and influence extended to include 10,017 individuals, over 1,100 more than last year, as shown in our quantitative summaries on pages 14-30. Twelve Auburn University graduate students and one undergraduate student engaged, as associate staff, in direct instructional activities for the Institute. The Institute’s research activities engaged over 8,000 Alabamians in studies conducted to investigate effective transition services and program delivery methods for youth with disabilities. The Alabama Transition Conference, the largest outreach event hosted by the Institute, attracted 833 participants to its 24th annual offering. And the Institute’s many other outreach activities—its transition training series, community transition expo, planning summit, state interagency team, and community based instruction—engaged 1,137 persons, serving practitioners and consumers in Alabama and beyond.

In summary, the Institute delivers a significant number of quality services and products to assist professionals, families, and youth and young adults during the transition process. During FY 2013, over 10,000 persons were engaged in Institute activities, with the goal of producing avenues to success for young people with disabilities.
Joshua’s Story

As a young mother living in England, Allison Ware questioned whether her toddler son’s developmental milestones were occurring within the expected timeframe. Her desire to provide her son Joshua with every advantage possible during his developmental years led her on a quest to identify the source and solution for her son’s apparent delays in communication and social interaction. Repeatedly she was told all was fine, but her instincts suggested otherwise. As a result of Allison’s persistence, Joshua received a diagnosis of severe receptive and expressive language delays and selective mutism at age three, while still living in England.

Fortunately, Allison’s efforts resulted in a diagnosis, which then led to early intervention. The family returned to the United States and an assignment in Virginia, where Joshua underwent multiple doctor visits and ongoing speech therapy. As Allison recalls her “one step forward, two steps backward” adventure in identifying and managing Joshua’s disability, her passion for knowledge and understanding is apparent; a mother insisting on fully addressing her son’s needs. At age 12, Joshua was finally diagnosed with Asperger syndrome.

Following the family’s 2007 move from Virginia to Alabama, Joshua attended Opelika High School (OHS) and became a member of Youth and Young Adults in Transition (YAiT). Joshua explains that as a 15-year-old ninth grader, he began to comprehend his disability when fellow YAiT members shared details of their disabilities and the ways in which they could advocate for themselves. After discussing his challenges with
his mother, Joshua could identify with certain characteristics of Asperger syndrome. He began to recognize his anxiety issues and limited understanding of social cues as manifestations of his disability, which could, in fact, be managed along the way to achieving his personal goals.

Allison continued to advocate for her son, as when he was switched from his offensive position to a defensive one on the high school football team. The coach, not aware of Joshua’s diagnosis of Asperger syndrome or his related communication issues, didn’t realize he probably couldn’t pick up on the nonverbal cues required for successful defensive play. Joshua feared making mistakes, too, because of his inexperience playing defense. Allison shared all this information with the coach, helping him understand. Because of instances like this, Joshua deems advocacy as “the greatest thing.” He learned to be his own advocate first from his mom, with supplemental instruction from YAIT “disability family members” and from instruction designed for students with disabilities during events such as the Alabama Transition Conference.

In high school, Joshua not only took part in the Alabama Transition Conference and its sessions for youth, he also participated in the Community Transition Expo, sponsored by the Collaborative Approach to Training Transition Specialists (CATTs). The expo provided an overview of services available to students with disabilities after high school. In addition, Joshua was an active member of the Opelika High School YAIT group, and participated in the production of an online Training iN Transition module, My Plan for Transition. In the spring of 2013, Joshua was featured in the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute’s newsletter, Directions.

Obviously a young man with goals, Joshua describes himself as having been a serious high school student, perhaps more so than many others his age. He worked hard to realize his dream to become a full-time student at Auburn University at Montgomery (AUM). He emphasizes that many of the students at AUM are serious, and are diligently working toward making their goals happen, just as he is. Most significantly, Joshua has had the opportunity to hone his self-advocacy skills at college, as he lives on campus and doesn’t have parents there to advocate for him. He has become familiar with AUM’s Center for Students with Disabilities as a resource for assistance, and has found help with school work through several assistive educational sites that his mother was introduced to during the most recent Alabama Transition Conference.

Joshua is no stranger to hard work, and consequently no stranger to success. His impressive student resume shows participation in multiple high school sports, including soccer, football and basketball; completion of Youth Leadership Academy I and II of the Greater Peace Community Development Corporation; certification in CPR; and volunteer work at the Community Market of East Alabama, where he maintained and restocked inventory.

Joshua’s freshman year achievements at AUM suggest he is maintaining his strong work ethic. These include being the basketball score keeper, a member of the Student Government Association Freshman 50, an AUM Learning Comes First Freshman Forum Annual Scholarship Recipient, a scholarship award recipient from the Alabama Council for Affordable & Rural Housing, and receiving a gubernatorial appointment to the Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council from Governor Bentley. Given Joshua’s impressive list of accomplishments, one would understand if his focus never strayed from his own path to success. But he chooses to inspire others: Joshua explains that if the story of his achievements inspires any student with a disability to work hard, knowing he or she can realize their dreams, then the publicity has served a good purpose. He shares these thoughts for students with disabilities who are in transition:

“Do your best, believe in yourself, don’t ever give up, be confident, and always, always keep your head up with what you are doing.”
Brandi’s Story

Brandi was born when Joshua was 18 months old. Close in age, the siblings were frequently in the same place at the same time, and Brandi often supplemented Joshua’s limited verbal skills by speaking for him. Also, Brandi wisely kept her mother aware of any school “bullying” to which Joshua had been subjected.

Ever the watchful mother, Allison was suspicious of dyslexia when Brandi was 7 years old. Assured that Brandi’s struggles were typical for her age, Allison, once again, persisted and pushed to meet Brandi’s needs—a path which did indeed lead to a diagnosis of dyslexia. By age fifteen, Brandi was diagnosed with fibromyalgia, arthritis, and asthma, in addition to dyslexia. Finding herself in the familiar role of parent advocate, Allison was able to teach Brandi also to become her own advocate. Allison smiles while sharing that Brandi caught on to the concept of self-advocacy quickly, and not only understands the importance of having appropriate accommodations identified for her educational setting, but can also explain those accommodations to a teacher, if necessary. Brandi attributes this understanding to her active participation in her Individual Education Program (IEP) meetings.

As a student in transition at Opelika High School, Brandi was very active in school and community activities such as Art Club, Delta Gems, volleyball, Community Market volunteering, Greater Peace Community Development Corporation Youth Leadership Academy I and II, and Health Occupations Students of America. Brandi also participated in many of the same transition activities in which Joshua engaged. She attended the CATTS sponsored Community Transition Expo, an experience that she says was beneficial, introducing her to professionals who understood her goals and the impact of her symptoms in day-to-day navigation toward her goals. One of Brandi’s most distinctive accomplishments is her two-year participation in Bridge Builders, a program designed to help youths find their voices, experience their power, and build positive relationships to accomplish the extraordinary. Brandi is the first student from Lee County to graduate from the program. She was present and photographed with Governor Bentley as he signed the 2013 Governor’s Proclamation declaring March Is Transition Awareness Month in Alabama. Brandi also won the Alabama Alliance for Students with Disabilities in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (AASD-STEM) award.

While Joshua benefited from his sister’s watchfulness through their younger years, Brandi in turn benefited from following the examples Joshua had set for the transition years. Brandi explained she took much of her inspiration from her brother, seeing what he did, and then saying, “I can do that!” Allison navigated the extensive testing appointments required for Brandi’s admission to college, and in August of 2013 Brandi followed her older brother’s lead and became a student at Auburn University Montgomery. Move-in day was another family event, with Joshua helping lift boxes under Brandi’s direction and Allison taking care of dorm life details. Again following in her brother’s footsteps, Brandi has been the recipient of a scholarship from the Alabama Council for Affordable & Rural Housing. When asked if she is excited about starting college, Brandi acknowledges her excitement, admits to a bit of nervousness, and expresses thanks for the fact that her mother has prepared her for this transition. Undoubtedly Brandi’s transition experience has been a family affair, as she offers her advice for students in transition:

“Pray, and look to your parents for support!”

Allison’s Story

Allison describes the process of raising two children with very different special needs as separate journeys relative to their abilities. She set different goals for each child, celebrating each accomplishment as it occurred, and then presented the next goal. Joshua, for example, would not look anyone in the eye, so Allison developed a staring contest. Joshua’s competitive spirit prevailed, and he was able to master an important social skill. Taking medication on time is very important in managing Brandi’s health needs, so Allison showed her how to set alerts on her phone as a medication reminder. Brandi and Joshua met goal after goal on their way to successful transitions from high school to college, and now set their own.
Allison does not disregard her own goals and dreams, and this year earned a Master of Science degree in Counseling & Psychology; she has already begun work on her second master’s degree from Troy University, this time in Strategic Communication. “I like to stay busy,” she says with a smile. Allison believes the studies in communication will help her convey information to the public about Lee County Autism Resource and Advocacy (LCARA), an autism advocacy nonprofit organization that Allison recently helped establish. After talking with three other mothers and a grandmother of children with autism, Allison realized that many county resources available for these children were unknown to families. The five women established LCARA, which “bridges the gap” with resources, workshops, and support for families who have relatives with autism spectrum disorders in Lee County, Alabama. Since April of 2013, LCARA has published an article, distributed brochures, established officers and an advisory board, hosted booths at venues; joined the local Chambers of Commerce; arranged speakers for their monthly meetings; and accepted an invitation to present at the 2014 Alabama Transition Conference. They are now planning a fund raiser and exploring options for a suitable location to accommodate LCARA’s resources and meetings.

Allison followed three guidelines in advocating for her children from the moment she suspected a disability, and shares them here for other parents of children with disabilities. That both of her children successfully transitioned to their post-school dreams suggests her advice is worth considering.

- Do not give up because giving up is an easy thing to do.
- You are your child’s best advocate.
- Remember unconditional love and dedication are the cure for anything.

“All preparing your child for transition to post-secondary education is a gradual process and should begin in middle school,” Allison advises. “Here’s a list of things that I did to provide a smooth transition for my children into college.”

1. Do your own research about your child’s disability and teach him or her about it.
2. Attend the IEP meetings and contribute to the list of accommodations that are set—because, as a parent, you know your child’s capabilities.
3. Know the rights your child has and invite to the IEP meetings the appropriate school and state agency personnel who will be involved with your child’s transition.
4. Get your child involved in the IEP meetings and encourage her or him in self-advocacy skills.
5. Give your child a copy of accommodations provided and make sure the child understands them.
6. Research assistive technology that can help your child in the classroom.
7. Have your child take a career inventory test.
8. Ask for ACT testing accommodations.
9. Encourage your child to participate in school-related activities, such as sports, clubs, and music.
10. Encourage your child to get involved in community activities, local support groups, church ministries, or a leadership program.
11. Research the curriculum of junior colleges and/or universities, and also the disability services department. When you visit, always ask for a card as you may want to contact them later.
12. If not provided, ask for a copy of any testing that has been performed on your child.

The inspiring Ware-Heard stories of support, persistence, encouragement and success demonstrate the positive impact family involvement brings to a student’s transition years. Now Allison will be sharing her transition-related experiences and knowledge with other families through Lee County Autism Resource and Advocacy. As she says, she likes to stay busy. For young persons in transition in Lee County, that is a good thing, a very good thing.

--Interviewed by ATLI Graduate Assistant, Joshua Turchan, & Outreach Coordinator, Myra Girard
On Transition and ATLI:

“I am passionate about every student, that they are college AND career-ready. We need to help them transition to their chosen future. Equalize the playing field to provide better opportunities for students to find school rewarding in leading to their chosen lifestyle.”

“The [Alabama Transition] Conference was powerful—having all stakeholders in one place, resolving issues, sharing best practices. ATLI provides networking opportunities for different stakeholders.”
As Director of Career and Technical Education (CTE) for the Alabama State Department of Education, Dr. Philip Cleveland is still “a teacher at heart.” His commitment to helping students prepare for a lifetime of success has been strengthened by his personal experiences, in both teaching high school and serving as principal. As a principal, Dr. Cleveland worked to ensure that highly qualified educators were included in the individualized education program (IEP) teams of students with disabilities. He values the concept of having a knowledgeable and diverse team to assist students and parents as they work to plan the student’s future goals. He believes this should be done through a proven process, rather than spontaneous decisions. The Alabama Career Planning System (at http://www.al.kuder.com/) is a research-based process for planning the career paths of all students, including those receiving transition services.

Dr. Cleveland believes that CTE can be very beneficial for transition students, helping them understand the true importance of gaining good educations, motivating them to stay in school earn their high school diplomas. For students who struggle academically, CTE programs can offer opportunities for hands-on learning experiences, which have been proven to make learning more relevant and interesting. Dr. Cleveland is ardent about every student becoming both college AND career-ready, so that every student exits high school with industry-recognized credentials. He believes that this can be done by making school rewarding. Consistent with this idea is the nationally respected academy concept, an innovative method of educating students currently being implemented in several high schools in Birmingham and Mobile. Academies are career pathways (a system of career-related courses) which students complete to earn their high school diploma. Depending on the pathway selected (e.g., engineering, medical sciences, manufacturing), the course content is adapted to reflect the activities that are unique to that particular career area. For example, students in a medical sciences pathway might calculate medication dosages in the math classroom, write medical assessments in English, focus on human physiology in science, and study the evolution of modern medicine in history.

A similar initiative, which is also focused on helping students prepare for success, is transforming CTE classrooms into real-world professional experiences for students. For example, many student handbooks in CTE classes are now being designed like employee manuals; student desks have become work stations; and classroom tests have now become performance appraisals. Furthermore, as an important part of Alabama’s efforts to recruit new business and industry to our state, CTE provides data from its ten Workforce Development Councils to local school systems statewide, to help keep them informed of important workplace skills currently required of employees (by top local employers and international businesses). This information helps local school systems adjust their course offerings to help students prepare for anticipated career trends.

Dr. Cleveland saw participating in the 2013 Alabama Transition Conference as a great opportunity to have key experts from different professions all in one place, sharing their expertise and best practices. As a member of the Statewide Interagency Transition Team, he values the opportunity for service agencies to collaborate on finding new solutions to old problems. He advises the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute to continue forming strong partnerships that focus on developing the educational skills of students and further motivating teachers to continue their professional growth. Further revealing his “teacher at heart” qualities, Dr. Cleveland says he hopes to see CTE teachers participating in the Institute’s online training sessions in the future, so that they can become more aware of changes that may directly impact their students.

--Interviewed by ATLI Research Coordinator, George Hall
“I believe that I gained much of my motivation to truly ensure better lives and opportunities for individuals with disabilities from the advocates at the Institute.”

Mr. Kaschak’s message to his students:

To never quit. To set goals and exceed them.
To know your limitations and excel beyond those limitations regardless of disability.
To advocate for yourself and your community.
To know right from wrong.

If we can give these students the tools to excel (and a nudge in the right direction never hurts), then we can hope that what we give them allows them to achieve the goals that they set for themselves.
Kasey Kaschak

9th Grade Special Education Teacher, Smiths Station Freshmen Center, Lee County Schools
ATLI Graduate Associate 2012-2013, ATLI Undergraduate Employee 2011-2012

I arrived in Auburn in the fall of 2008 as a social studies education major, with aspirations to become a high school history teacher. After my first history class, I knew I had chosen a field that did not truly represent my interests. After a conversation with my former high school assistant principal, I decided to change my major to special education. Having no prior experience working with individuals with disabilities, I went into my new adventure with no idea what to expect, hoping for something that would stimulate my interests enough to become a career path. At first, I had a preconceived notion of working in special education—the same erroneous notion that many people still have—that limitations would prevail. Little did I understand how my experience at Auburn University would inspire my career goal to work toward the betterment of individuals with disabilities.

I contacted the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute at the advice of my undergraduate advisor, who had noticed one of the videos I produced; she knew that ATLI was looking for a student worker with video production skills. Although I dismissed the idea at the time, I met several times with Courtney Dotson, and was hired in January 2011. Walking into ATLI that first day, I quickly realized what a daunting task I had laid before myself. I was in an office with accomplished doctoral students who were conducting research in a number of different fields, and a full-time staff who were leaders in the field of transition in the state of Alabama. My first few months were spent working on smaller projects and really getting a feel for my environment. I have always had a decent amount of “drive” when it comes to work, but I quickly became inspired by the staff at ATLI. It was comforting to be in the same office as people who were truly making a difference in their community and their state. I had never seen the behind-the-scenes work that people in our state were doing for the betterment of individuals with disabilities. I believe that I gained much of my motivation to truly ensure better lives and opportunities for individuals with disabilities from the advocates at the Institute.

I considered teaching as soon as I graduated with my bachelor’s degree in special education in 2012, but I realized that I wanted to stay, to give back to this community, and hone my skills as a special education teacher. Luckily, Dr. Rabren suggested a graduate program, the Collaborative Approach to Training Transition Specialists (CATTS), designed to train special educators in the field of transition to post-secondary outcomes for students with disabilities. Realizing that I would be able to work with Dr. Rabren, Courtney, and the rest of the staff at ATLI for another year while earning my master’s degree was too good an opportunity to pass up. I was able to strengthen my own skills, teach transition skills in local secondary schools, and be part of the actual creating process at ATLI. I helped organize the 2nd annual Community Transition Expo, an event serving over 300 students from surrounding counties, where they gained firsthand knowledge about transition and current practices, enabling them to form transition goals for their own exits from high school, planning for careers and a rewarding life in community with others.

I am currently a special education teacher at Smiths Station Freshmen Center in Smiths Station, Alabama. We provide students a unique environment that stresses responsibility, accountability, and pride. I’ve found it’s important to begin transition planning early, at a time when students are still impressionable. I stress the importance of realistic goals to my students almost daily, and devise strategies to assist them in creating a plan that is unique to their own strengths and interests. To summarize, the message I hope to give my students is to never quit. To set goals and exceed them. To know your limitations and excel beyond those limitations regardless of disability. To advocate for yourself and your community, and to know right from wrong. If we can give these students the tools to excel (and a nudge in the right direction never hurts) then we can hope that what we give them allows them to achieve the goals that they set for themselves.

--Interviewed by ATLI Instruction Coordinator, Courtney Dotson
On ATLI Initiatives:

**Collaborative Approach to Training Transition Specialist (CATTS)**
This initiative is something my school system has directly benefitted from. I serve on the CATTS advisory board and a recent graduate of CATTS serves as one of our teachers for students with severe and profound disabilities. She has helped bring more awareness to transition in our community.

**The TNT on-line series** is a mode of professional development that I require of all of my special education teachers. The modules provide my teachers with working knowledge on transition. All teachers are able to receive a certificate of completion at the end of each module and are granted credit for professional development.

**Alabama Transition Conference**
I attended *My Story: A mother-daughter journey with depression and bi-polar disorder* session at the ATC this past March. I really found the mother and daughter’s presentation very eye-opening. The presentation changed my thinking about mental illness. I became more aware of the stigma that surrounds mental illness and recognized that there is treatment available. Both the mother and daughter inspired me.

Overall, I know that *making a difference in our students’ lives is the main reason for this career path.*
* - Diane Sherriff
I enjoy being a special education coordinator for Chambers County. I believe my educational background helped prepare me for this role; I have a bachelor's degree in Mental Retardation and a master's degree in Specific Learning Disabilities and School Psychology. I also hold the administration add-on certification. I have served as the special education coordinator for nineteen years. Prior to moving into the coordinator position, I was a special education teacher and then a school psychometrist. My primary focus as a special education coordinator is to provide my teachers with the necessary support and resources that will help enhance our academic and transition instruction at all grade levels.

A high point of my job is when I am able to sit in on the individual education program (IEP) meetings of our high school students preparing for transition. Typically, by a student's junior year, I have had the opportunity to sit in on a meeting and be an active participant of the transition planning team. Being a team member allows me to have the face-to-face interaction with students that you lose when moving from the classroom to a coordinator position. I really enjoy when we have a full team present at the IEP meetings and are able to collaboratively create meaningful post-secondary transition plans.

Parts of my job are difficult in regard to providing the best transition services for our students. The majority of our special education populations have been identified as at risk students in high need areas. Because of our rural location, a challenge in transition is providing our students with meaningful paid work experiences. One side of our county has more job sites available for our students to gain community-based instruction than the other. We are fortunate to have a transition paraprofessional who holds a commercial driver’s license; she is able to provide transportation for our students in special education and help enhance their real work experiences. Several opportunities exist for community-based instruction so that our students can acquire specific working skills; these include work instruction in fast food restaurants, local stores, a feed and seed store, the courthouse, and nursing homes.

The Alabama Transition Conference is a great event that fosters collaboration among stakeholders in transition and has served as a resource for our community. This year was the first time I was able to attend in several years. I also was able to send most of my special education teachers. This conference was particularly important to us this year, because of the upcoming changes with the Alabama high school diploma. Moving to a one diploma option with different pathways to reach that goal was an area in which our teachers needed professional development. We all gleaned a lot of valuable information from attending. I also enjoy attending because of all the practitioners who come to share what they are doing in their school systems and classrooms! This collaboration allows us to bring those strategies home to implement with our students.

Working in special education is the highlight of my career. While I do not have as many opportunities to work face-to-face with students, knowing that I am responsible for providing our special education teachers with the supports and tools they need to be successful allows me to feel successful. Overall, I know that making a difference in our students’ lives is the main reason for this career path.

—Interviewed by ATLI Graduate Assistant, Betty Schiffer
ATLI Welcomes New Staff Members

Part-time Associate Staff (Graduate Assistants)

Jonathan Carpenter is from Gainesville, Georgia, and is a fourth year doctoral student in Educational Research Methods and Analysis, while completing a master of probability and statistics. He received a bachelor of science in Psychology from The University of Georgia and a master of science in Human Development and Family Studies from Auburn University. He works primarily as a data analyst and is interested in researching growth models in diverse educational and familial settings.

James Hammond is from Austin, Texas. He is currently completing undergraduate degrees in Economics and Finance and will be starting on a master’s in economics next fall. At ATLI, he is responsible for developing and maintaining web-based applications.

Mary “Reenie” Laginess is a scholar in the Collaborative Approach to Training Transition Specialists (CATTS) program. She is from Niceville, Florida and earned her bachelor’s degree from Auburn University in the area of collaborative special education during Spring 2013. Her primary research interests are in transition outreach and parental involvement during transition planning for youth and young adults with disabilities.

And Says Goodbye to ATLI Associate Staff

Christina Adams
Married & relocated, Spring 2012

Kasey Kaschak
Graduated, Spring 2013

Yuyun Zhan
Internship Fall 2013

Pavan Bura
Graduated, Spring 2012

Addie Littrell
Graduated, Fall 2012

Farewell gathering for Kasey, Christina, and Pavan, with Dr. Karen Rabren
Introduction to ATLI Accomplishments

Making the transition from being a teenager to an adult can be challenging, but for those with disabilities this time can be filled with additional obstacles and barriers. These challenges, unfortunately, may result in unfavorable post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities. The United States government requires school systems to provide specialized programs and services to assist these youth during their transition years, from age 16 to 21. These young people and their unique transition needs are the main focus of the projects and activities of the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute. Since transitions occur throughout a person’s life span, ATLI may also focus on other time periods, and currently engages in activities that address early transitions from preschool to elementary school. In general, the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute has chosen as its mission “to provide continuous improvement resources to the systems, practitioners, and citizens” who assist young people with their plans for transition into adulthood.

During fiscal year 2013, ATLI rendered services for six contracts with the Alabama State Department of Education and specific support services for one federal grant with the United States Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs. Through these funding sources, and a base budget provided by Auburn University, the Institute engages in projects and activities to improve and/or impact the quality of life for persons with disabilities. ATLI’s activities are organized and implemented under the three main mission areas of the university, instruction, research, and outreach.

**Instruction.** As part of its instructional mission, ATLI involves the Auburn University students who are its associate staff in all aspects of its projects. As they engage in instructional, research, outreach activities, these students are gaining invaluable experience that enriches their academic programs. Furthermore, these students are actively involved in activities that shape the future of transition services and programs for persons with disabilities.

**Research.** ATLI has contracted with the Alabama State Department of Education to collect and/or analyze several federal program performance data indicators as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. More specifically, the Institute collects and analyses data for Indicator 7, which measures the general improvement of preschoolers ages 3-5 who participate in early childhood special education programs; Indicator 8, which measures the involvement of parents whose children receive special education services; and Indicator 14, which measures the post-school outcomes of youth with disabilities one year after leaving high school. In addition to these projects, ATLI staff members generate individual research projects that contribute to the body of literature focusing on transition for persons with disabilities.

**Outreach.** The Alabama Transition Conference is held in March each year and the 2013 conference attracted the largest crowd ever over the 23 year history of this event. ATLI sponsors and coordinates this event, and plays host to the vibrant and enthusiastic crowd of stakeholders who are always eager to expand their knowledge of transition. ATLI also continues to coordinate the Alabama State Interagency Transition Team (SITT), an advisory group of select statewide leaders and transition stakeholders representing rehabilitation and disability services, secondary and higher education, advocacy, mental health, workforce and independent living organizations, students with disabilities, and parents. ATLI also works to support the development of youth and young adults throughout the state by coordinating the Community Transition Expo and providing projects for the statewide advocacy group for young people with disabilities, Youth and Young Adults in Transition (YAIT).

The Auburn Transition Leadership Institute is pleased to have had the opportunity to engage in these and other projects and activities during the FY 2013. It has been an honor and a privilege to work with so many dedicated professionals, families, and youth who are committed to improving transition services and programs. The annual accomplishments of ATLI reflect our commitment to all of those dedicated to **building brighter futures** for all children, youth, and young adults with disabilities.
Instruction

ATLI Instruction: Guided Leadership Experiences for Professionals-in-Training

STUDENT STAFF MEMBERS GAIN PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

ATLI student workers and graduate assistants, as associate staff members at the Institute, ably shoulder the responsibilities of producing valuable work for the university and the state, and adding work experience to their own professional vitae.

Conference preparation and organization — The success of the 2013 Alabama Transition Conference relied upon the work of all associate staff at every level of planning, implementation, and follow-up.

Engagement in pre-service experiences using research-based methods — Christina Adams, Eric Crumley, Sadi Fox, Kasey Kaschak, and Joshua Turchan learned to apply community-based instruction principles as they supervised local high school students who engaged in various work projects on the Auburn University campus and in the community.

Integration of ATLI research into publication and presentations — Jonathan Carpenter, along with university faculty, submitted an article for publication looking at the impact of goal-setting and career technical education on the employment status of former students with disabilities. Eric Crumley, Sadi Fox, Kasey Kaschak, and Joshua Turchan presented their research findings at the 2013 Alabama Transition Conference in March. Fox also presented at the 2013 Children’s Creative Learning Auburn University Summer Camp and, with Serey Bright, at the annual Alabama Disability Conference in Orange Beach, Alabama.

Networking and interaction with state and national leaders in transition — Associate staff members engaged in planning and dialogue with transition leaders at the Alabama State Interagency Transition Team meetings, the Alabama Transition Conference, and the Transition Leadership Academy.

Interdisciplinary collaboration — ATLI associate staff members engaged in co-hosting the 2012 Community Transition Expo, which was collaboratively sponsored by Auburn University’s Collaborative Approach to Training Transition Specialists (CATTS) Scholars and the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute. Over 300 middle- and high-school-age students with disabilities, their family members, and school personnel filled the fellowship hall and two meeting rooms of the Trinity United Methodist Church. Representatives from state and local community agencies and programs disseminated information about services available to assist youth in making successful transitions and assuming young adult roles. The theme of the 2012 expo was Collaboration in Transition—Let’s work together to ensure the success of our community and our students’ futures!
Instruction Goal 1

WORK EXPERIENCES IN RESEARCH, INSTRUCTION, AND SERVICE DELIVERY

In FY 2013, ATLI exceeded its goals in providing pre-service professional opportunities to Auburn University student staff members, offering them experience and supervision in research, instruction, and outreach practices, as well as product development and service delivery. The projects and activities covered under this goal for this year’s 14 student workers included submitting an article on employment outcomes; assisting with the Alabama Parent Survey data; updating the Training IN Transition series; participating in community-based instruction; engaging in the State Interagency Transition Team; and preparing for the 2012 Community Transition Expo sponsored by CATTS and ATLI, the youth conference held in conjunction with the annual Alabama Transition Conference, and the 2013 Transition Leadership Academy.

INSTRUCTION GOAL 1 ACHIEVEMENT FY 2013

Goal 1a: 3 AU students will gain research experience
Actual: 6 students gained research experience

Goal 1b: 2 AU students will gain instruction experience
Actual: 6 students gained instruction experience

Goal 1c: 4 AU students will assist with product development/service delivery
Actual: 5 students assisted with product development/service delivery

Instruction Goal 2

INTEGRATION OF RESEARCH INTO PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Seven Auburn University students, in their capacity as ATLI associate staff members, conducted original research; one was submitted for publication during this fiscal year, and two are in progress. Topics include the impact of goal setting and career technical education on the employment status of former students with disabilities (Jonathan Carpenter); parent perspectives (Eric Crumley), and community-based instruction (Sadi Fox, Serey Bright, Joshua Turchan, and Eric Crumley).

In addition, four students presented at two state conferences (Alabama Transition Conference and Alabama Disability Conference) and one local summer camp (Children’s Creative Learning Summer Camp).

INSTRUCTION GOAL 2 ACHIEVEMENT FY 2013

Goal 2a: 3 AU students will conduct research leading to publication
Actual: 7 students conducted research submitted for publication

Goal 2b: 4 AU students deliver presentations at state conferences or meetings
Actual: 4 students delivered presentations

Goal 2c: 1 AU student will present at a national meeting or conference
Actual: 0 students presented at a national conference

“The annual Transition Conference and the Community Transition Expo give transition stakeholders the opportunity to connect and gain awareness, knowledge, and skills related to all areas of transition.”

— Curtis Gage, Education Specialist, Alabama State Department of Education
Instruction Goal 3

APPLICATION OF RESEARCH-BASED TRANSITION METHODS IN SERVICE PROVISION TO INDIVIDUALS AND PROGRAMS

ATLI provides opportunities for Auburn University students to apply research-based methods in service provision directly for youth and young adults with disabilities or by working with their transition programs.

In FY 2013, fourteen such experiences were provided. The youth conference held in conjunction with the annual Alabama Transition Conference, the 2012 Community Transition Expo, and various instances of community-based instruction (CBI) allowed university students to provide direct services to youth and to work with them on self-empowerment issues. The program development experiences included the youth conference, the Expo, and CBI; and extended to ongoing development of the Training in Transition Series, the State Interagency Transition Team, and the 2013 Transition Leadership Academy.

APPLICATION OF RESEARCH-BASED TRANSITION METHODS IN SERVICE PROVISION TO INDIVIDUALS AND PROGRAMS

INSTRUCTION GOAL 3

ACHIEVEMENT FY 2013

Goal 3a: 4 ATLI direct service experiences will be provided for AU students
Actual: 4 direct service experiences were provided

Goal 3b: 4 consumer empowerment experiences will be provided
Actual: 4 experiences in consumer empowerment were provided

Goal 3c: 4 service experiences in transition program development will be provided
Actual: 6 experiences in program development were provided
EARLY LEARNING PROGRESS PROFILE

For the Early Learning Progress Profile (ELPP) project, FY 2013 represents the second year of a three-year transition to the new ELPP website, quadrupling the number of complete records received last year. This past year, 1,856 pairs of *Entry* and *Exit* student data records were submitted. These data records were reported to the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), for Alabama’s Indicator 7 data, which measure the improvement of preschool children in their (a) positive social-emotional skills, (b) acquisition and use of knowledge and skills, and (c) use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs. The FY 2013 ELPP data indicates that the students’ progress, as measured by the difference between their *Entry* and *Exit* scores, exceeded the targets.

The ELPP website is unique to ATLI’s other web-based data collaborations in two ways. First, the ELPP website receives pre-school program entry and exit evaluation data throughout the year, rather than for a limited period. A second unique feature is its daily data update from the Alabama State Department of Education database, which reflects the latest changes in the ELPP teachers and preschool students across Alabama. These two features represent a significant increase in ATLI’s ongoing responsibility for the collection, analysis, and reporting of Alabama’s federal indicator data.

“The ELPP website is not only a comprehensive tool for collecting aggregated data for SPP/APR Indicator 7 reporting, but also allows the collection of data to provide feedback on progress monitoring for individual children.”

— Jan Enstrom, Education Administrator, Alabama State Department of Education
ALABAMA PARENT SURVEY

FY 2013 marked the tenth consecutive year that ATLI has provided data collection, analysis, and reporting services on the Alabama Parent Survey to the Special Education division of the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE), which then reports to the U.S. Department of Education’s, Office of Special Education (OSEP). The results for Indicator 8, regarding parental involvement in schools, reflected responses from 4,754 Parent Surveys, representing a 23% return rate of the 20,340 surveys mailed this spring.

Data analysis revealed that 74% of parents responded with agree or strongly agree to 11 survey items describing school efforts to involve parents of students with disabilities. Additional local education agency (LEA)-specific survey results are provided for inclusion in the LEA Special Education Performance Profile for each participating school system.

POST-SCHOOL OUTCOMES

For eighteen consecutive years, ATLI has provided Post-school Outcomes (PSO) survey data analysis and reporting services to the Alabama State Department of Education. Data received in FY 2013 revealed that 20% of the responding young adults with disabilities (192 of the 981 participants) were enrolled in higher education within one year of leaving high school, a 6% increase over the prior year’s figure. An additional 21% (n=202) of these young people were competitively employed, and 5% (n=52) were either enrolled in some other postsecondary education or training program or engaged in non-competitive employment within one year of exiting high school.

These statewide results were reported to ALSDE to submit to OSEP in compliance with federal Indicator 14, in addition to LEA-specific survey results provided for inclusion in the LEA Special Education Performance Profile for each reporting school district.
Research Goal 1

INVOLVE LOCAL, STATE, AND NATIONAL TRANSITION STAKEHOLDERS WITH THE DESIGN, DEVELOPMENT, AND/OR CONDUCTION OF RESEARCH

In FY 2013, ATLI continued its service to the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) by providing analysis and reporting of federal Indicator 14 Post-school Outcomes (PSO) survey data. The 981 former students with disabilities whose surveys, from 32 LEAs, were submitted, analyzed, and reported, represent a 79% survey completion rate among the 1,236 former students identified as potential survey-takers.

The results of the Indicator 14 data analysis were submitted to the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Among the results was the finding that 20% (n=192) of the 981 responding Alabama students with disabilities were enrolled in higher education within one year of leaving high school, an increase of 6% over PSO survey data analyzed last year. In FY 2013, 21% (n=202) of these students were competitively employed, and 5% (n=52) of them were enrolled in some other postsecondary education or training program or engaged in non-competitive employment.

In addition to providing statewide Indicator 14 data to OSEP, ATLI also generated survey results for each of the 33 participating local education agencies (LEAs). In these reports, each LEA’s former student aggregate responses to each survey item are compared to the responses from all of the 981 Alabama former students with disabilities. These reports can be downloaded and printed from an ATLI-hosted PSO website.

ALABAMA PARENT SURVEY

In FY 2013, ATLI also provided data collection, analysis, and reporting services to ALSDE’s Special Education Services for federal Indicator 8, regarding parental involvement in schools. The 4,754 completed Parent Surveys represents a 23% return rate of the 20,340 Parent Surveys mailed out earlier this year.

In FY 2013, ATLI launched the Early Learning Progress Profile (ELPP) website. This year marks the second of three years during which the collection of Alabama’s ELPP data will transition from an online spreadsheet to an ATLI-hosted website. ELPP data collection uses two identical ELPP instruments, which are completed by local teachers about their preschool students when they enter and exit their special education services program. The impact of these services is measured by changes in the students’ ratings in the three outcomes of (a) positive social-emotional skills, (b) acquisition and use of knowledge and skills, and (c) use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs.

ATLI research staff facilitates Alabama’s compliance with three State Performance Plan Indicators, as required by the U.S. Department of Education:

Indicator 7. Pre-School Outcomes
Percent of preschool children with IEPs who demonstrate improved:
A. Positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships);
B. Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication and early literacy); and
C. Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs.

Indicator 8. Parent Involvement
Percent of parents with a child receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities.

Indicator 14. Post-School Outcomes
Percent of youth who had IEPs, are no longer in secondary school, and who have been competitively employed, enrolled in some type of postsecondary school, or both, within one year.
For the three years (FY2012-FY2014) when the data collection method is moving from an online spreadsheet to the ELPP website, the instrument data from both sources is being combined to meet federal reporting requirements for Alabama and its school districts. During FY2013, 1,856 sets (Entry and Exit) ELPP instrument data were submitted via the ELPP website, four times the number of data sets received last year. By the end of the third year, the number of student data sets submitted is expected to increase to about 2,500.

**Research Goal 1**

**ACHIEVEMENT FY 2013**

Goal 1a: 100% PSO Survey return rate  
Actual: 79% return rate  
Goal 1b: 25% Parent Survey return rate  
Actual: 23% return rate  
Goal 1c: 100% of spreadsheet students identified  
Actual: 100% of spreadsheet students identified, cumulatively 2,485 students

**Research Goal 2**

SHARE TRANSITION RESEARCH RESULTS WITH LOCAL, STATE, AND FEDERAL AGENCIES

For FY 2013, the Post-school Outcomes (PSO) Survey and the Parent Survey results are federally reported for the entire Alabama sample, as well as for the individual participating school districts.

For FY 2013 the Early Learning Progress Profile (ELPP) data will be used to report results for Alabama to OSEP, and for reporting the results for each of Alabama’s public school systems on the ALSDE website.

The PSO Survey results are used to comply with the Indicator 14 federal data requirements, the Parent Survey results form the basis for the Indicator 8 results, and the ELPP website data will be used to satisfy the Indicator 7 federal reporting requirements.

In June, during the Transition Leadership Academy, district-level data analysis reports were shared with LEAs in drafting their transition plans for the upcoming school year.

**Research Goal 2**

**ACHIEVEMENT FY 2013**

Goal 2a: PSO with one-fourth of AL districts  
Actual: One-fourth of AL districts  
Goal 2b: Parent with one-fourth of districts  
Actual: One-fourth of AL school districts  
Goal 2c: 134 LEAs’ ELPP student data records submitted via the ELPP website  
Actual: 134 of LEAs’ ELPP student data records submitted via the ELPP website

**Research Goal 3**

DISSEMINATE FINDINGS AT STATE, NATIONAL, AND INTERNATIONAL FORUMS

**STATE FORUMS**

In FY 2013, a presentation about using factor analysis of the PSO data was made at the Alabama Transition Conference.

**RESEARCH GOAL 3**

**ACHIEVEMENT FY 2013**

Goal 3a: 1 state level forum  
Actual: 1 state forum  
Goal 3b: 1 national level forum  
Actual: 1 national forum  
Goal 3c: 1 international forum  
Actual: 2 international forum
Outreach

ATLI Outreach: Projects and Activities in Service to the Transition Community

Alabama Transition Conference XXIII (March 4-5, 2013)

The 23rd annual Alabama Transition Conference (ATC) focused on the future for students in transition, as introduced in the opening session with an inspiring keynote by Mike Kersjes, author of A Smile as Big as the Moon. Through his keynote address, “Power of the Human Spirit,” Kersjes shared his story of preparing and accompanying the first group of students with disabilities to attend Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama.

The two-day conference, consisting of seven two-hour workshops and 51 fifty-minute concurrent sessions, attracted 833 transition stakeholders by disseminating the latest information relevant to transition’s most current and improved resources, research and instruction. Of the 51 concurrent sessions, 9 were specific to the 66 students in transition attending the conference.

The always popular Transition Update was provided by Dr. Philip Cleveland of the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE), Jim Harris III of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) and Courtney Tarver of the Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH). Conference presenters of national renown included Dr. Cinda Johnson of Seattle University and Linea Johnson of the University of Washington, coauthors of Perfect Chaos and presenters of Conversations about Mental Health and Disability; and J. Erin Riehle, the founder and Senior Director of Project SEARCH at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital. Members of Youth and Young Adults in Transition (YAIT) contributed to the conference program by introducing speakers in the opening session, workshops, and concurrent sessions.

New for ATC XXIII was the Speed Conferencing session in which three presenters, Crystal Richardson of ALSDE, Linda Hames of ADRS, and Steve Lafreniere of ADMH, presented on three topics, rotating their presentations through three conference rooms, while the participants remained seated. This session was especially well received, as shown by the many positive comments on the post conference evaluations. Revised for ATC XXIII, and showing a greater than 50 percent increase in participation from the previous year’s poster session—which did not include a competitive element—the 2013 Poster Session Competition included three divisions: high school students, university undergraduate students, and university graduate students.

As in previous years, the Share Fair provided a networking opportunity for showcasing transition-related work projects, teaching materials and case management tools. The Exhibitor’s Breakfast encouraged those in attendance to peruse the exhibitor displays. Exhibitor registration income helps fund the 25 registration fee waivers available to students in transition and their parents.
COMMUNITY-BASED INSTRUCTION

ATLI is in its fourth year of serving as a community-based instruction (CBI) site, providing a vocational skills training program for local high school students with disabilities. CBI creates a positive influence on individual work skills and behaviors, increasing the likelihood of their entering the workforce during and after high school. Students learn and apply new skills in an office setting by assisting ATLI staff with projects and activities, such as producing and assembling materials for the annual Alabama Transition Conference, participating in interviews, providing feedback for the quarterly Directions newsletter, unpacking and organizing research surveys, and using various office machines as necessary. Through our community-based instruction program we hope to engage students of varying disabilities by providing them with beneficial instruction in areas that will reinforce their goals during and after graduation from high school.

TRANSITION LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

The Transition Leadership Academy, formerly known as the Local Transition Planning Summit, entered its fourth year of activity with a new structural design, as requested by the local transition planning teams. The Summit had previously been hosted both during and after the Alabama Transition Conference (ATC). Local transition planning teams consistently reported that they did not wish to miss conference concurrent sessions to attend the Summit during the conference, nor did they feel they could increase their time away from work to attend the Summit post-conference. As an alternative, in 2013 LTPS was renamed the Transition Leadership Academy and offered June 5th-7th at the Grand National Marriott Hotel in Opelika, Alabama. The responses to this new structure were overwhelmingly positive, with most teams saying they would return in 2013.

Nineteen participants comprised the nine teams attending the Academy, and represented education and other service provision agencies for the following school systems: Auburn City (new this year), Anniston City, Birmingham City (new this year), Bullock County, Calhoun County, Clarke County, Monroe County (new this year), Opelika City, and Trussville City. Nine consultants representing the State Interagency Transition Team (SITT) provided technical assistance to the teams during the Academy. Two additional consultants, Ryan Kellum and Jackie Burr, attended from the National Post-school Outcomes Center in Oregon. Thirteen ATLI staff and student volunteers assisted the local transition planning teams in developing their local plans.

Each of the nine teams attending the Academy completed transition plans for their local education areas. These have been reviewed by the Auburn Transition Leadership staff, and feedback has been provided to the teams.
Outreach (continued)

ATLI Outreach: Projects and Activities in Service to the Transition Community

ATLI Directions NEWSLETTER

*Directions* is a quarterly newsletter designed to highlight stories regarding students with disabilities and their transition process. It also serves as a venue 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. *Directions* is distributed to the individuals highlighted, local high schools, transition-related agency offices, conferences, and Auburn University’s College of Education offices and Office of Accessibility. The newsletter is accessible to online viewers of the ATLI website and the Alabama State Department of Education website.

Each issue of the newsletter affords an ATLI graduate student the opportunity to assume the role of guest editor. The following list comprises the publication schedule and features the four FY 2013 issues of *Directions*.

*Volume 3, Issue 4* (Guest Editor: Sadi Fox), Highlighting Opelika High School’s Youth and Young Adults in Transition “YAiT” Group, the 2012 Community Transition Expo, Mrs. Terri Norris, Transition Coordinator for Monroe County Schools, and Students in Training from Auburn High School.

*Volume 4, Issue 1* (Guest Editor: Serey Bright), Highlighting Joshua Heard, student at Auburn University-Montgomery and Representative Mike Hubbard, Speaker of the House, Alabama State Legislature.

*Volume 4, Issue 2* (Guest Editor: Joshua Turchan), Highlighting Eric Peebles, student at Auburn University, the 23rd Alabama Transition Conference, Mr. Steven Lafreniere, Chief of Staff for the Division of Developmental Disabilities at the Alabama Department of Mental Health, and ATLI’s own, Mrs. Christina Adams-van der Westhuizen.

*Volume 4, Issue 3* (Guest Editor: Betty Schiffer), Highlighting Wyatt Jinright, student at Auburn High School, the impact of the 2013 Transition Leadership Academy, Mr. Curtis Gage, Education Specialist for the Alabama State Department of Education, and Auburn University’s Best Buddies Chapter.

Courtney Dotson is the coordinating editor of the newsletter.
Outreach (continued)

ATLI Outreach: Projects and Activities in Service to the Transition Community

ALABAMA STATE INTERAGENCY TRANSITION TEAM

The Alabama State Interagency Transition Team (SITT) consists of a multidisciplinary group of representatives from 19 state agencies and organizations. SITT convenes regularly to seek and implement new and better ways of providing secondary special education and transition services. In the last few years, membership has grown to 36; a steering committee developed vision and mission statements and long range goals; and the team has become a solid resource and booster for programs, services, and stakeholders across the state. SITT’s objectives serve to (1) provide structure and supports to maximize youth and young adults’ skills, knowledge, and experiences of transition; (2) provide the necessary structure and support to maximize transition stakeholders’ knowledge of the transition process; (3) strengthen SITT to promote interagency collaboration throughout the state; and (4) develop a cross-agency process of data sharing and analysis to improve outcomes for youth and young adults with disabilities.

Recent accomplishments. In November 2012, the structure was in place for local transition planning teams to interface with the SITT team during the SITT meeting. This service was offered to the 41 teams who have participated in the Local Transition Planning Summit since its beginning in 2010. In May 2013, SITT members from ALSDE and ATLI participated in the 7th Annual Capacity Building Institute in North Carolina. SITT members presented a content session titled, Introduction to Alabama’s Statewide Youth and Young Adults in Transition Group, YAiT, presented by Courtney Dotson and Alicia Myrick; and a poster session titled, Alabama’s State Interagency Transition Team, No Transition Stakeholder Left Behind, also presented by Courtney Dotson and Alicia Myrick.

The SITT website continues to be accessed and maintained via auburn.edu/atli. Information posted on this site includes the state’s transition plan, a list of agency representatives and their contact information, the vision and mission, scheduled quarterly meetings, related links, and meeting notes.

“SITT allows us to look at the continuum of issues present in transition and have the representation and hopefully the resources to preventatively address these challenges.”

— Steven Lafreniere
Chief of Staff,
Division of Developmental Disabilities,
Alabama Department of Mental Health
Training in Transition (TNT) is a series of on-site workshops, online modules, and webinars providing professional development for service providers and personal development for young people with disabilities and their families. Since 2007, modules have been made available and are updated as needed. These training modules cover topics such as the foundations of transition, using assessments for planning, student development, transition standards and the individualized education program, and interagency collaboration. Since 2011, live webinars are hosted twice a year.

New online modules, released in September 2013, include: Module IV, Lesson 2, *Using Assessment for Transition Planning*; and Module V, Lesson 2, *Alabama Interagency Transition Initiatives*. *Using Assessment for Transition Planning* was presented onsite during the 2013 Alabama Transition Conference and Alabama MEGA Conference. This year’s onsite training sessions impacted 177 transition stakeholders.

The two live webinars hosted this year were titled, Webinar III: *How to Start Your Own Youth and Young Adults in Transition (YAIiT) Group* and Webinar IV: *2013 Alabama Transition Updates*. These training events impacted 311 transition stakeholders.

Additionally, for Webinar III, a Quick Start Orientation Manual about Alabama’s Youth and Young Adults in Transition (YAIiT) was created. The manual serves as a beginners guide on the foundations of YAIiT and how to get started with a group in your local area.

Overall, during this fiscal year, the TNT Series engaged 177 transition stakeholders during on-site trainings and 598 transition stakeholders with online training and live webinar events, resulting in the project serving a total of 775 transition stakeholders.

“Young adults are always knowledgeable and answer all questions.”

—TNT Onsite Trainee

YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS IN TRANSITION

The Alabama Youth and Young Adults in Transition (YAIiT) project has been established to encourage and facilitate the development of self-determination in young people with disabilities so that they may mentor other students within the state, as well as collaborate with groups in other states who share the vision of promoting self-determination and youth leadership. The Auburn Transition Leadership Institute co-sponsors the statewide YAIiT project in conjunction with the Alabama State Department of Education’s Special Education Services division.

During FY 2013, the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute awarded 18 registration fee waivers for the Alabama Transition Conference XXVIII to students in transition and their family members. YAIiT members contributed to the annual Alabama Transition Conference by using their leadership abilities to introduce state leaders and speakers in the general sessions, workshops and concurrent sessions. A total of 66 students in transition attended the conference and participated in the youth conference. Topics of the youth conference included *Healthy Living, Life Strategies, Welcome to Reality, Career Match: Linking Who You are with what You’ll Love to Do and Getting the Job you Want*. Additionally, YAIiT students and family members were treated to a YAIiT Meet-n-Greet on Monday.

Three YAIiT members were present for Governor Bentley’s proclamation signing, *March is Transition Month in Alabama*. In September 2013, Cynthia Massey of the Alabama Sate Department of Education reported 21 YAIiT teams were registered across the state.
Outreach Goal 1

PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENT FOR ALL TRANSITION STAKEHOLDERS

ATC 2013 drew 833 total participants (750 registered attendees and 83 university volunteers), including participants from Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Ohio, Utah, and Washington. Every stakeholder group was well represented, with 414 from education, 95 from rehabilitation, 51 job coaches, 67 students in transition and 11 family members in attendance. Eighteen agencies and four universities sent representatives as did 114 of 132 local education agencies (LEAs). Of the attendees representing secondary school transition practice, 24% were from middle schools and 66% were from high schools.

OUTREACH GOAL 1 ACHIEVEMENT FY 2013

Goal 1a: 500 participants
Actual: 833 participants

Goal 1b: 80% of AL counties represented at conference
Actual: 98.5% of AL represented (66 of 67)

Goal 1c: 75% of AL LEAs represented at conference
Actual: 85% of LEAs represented (114 of 134)

Two new training modules were developed, Module IV, Lesson 2, Using Assessment for Transition Planning; and Module V, Lesson 2, Alabama Interagency Transition Initiatives.

Outreach Goal 2

INSERVICE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: ONLINE AND ONSITE

As of September 30, 2013, a total of 775 online and onsite training experiences have been recorded through the TNT series. Onsite training workshops were held at the 2013 Alabama Transition Conference, and at the 2013 Alabama MEGA Conference.

Two live webinars were hosted, Webinar III: How to Start Your Own Youth and Young Adults in Transition (YAIT) Group and Webinar IV: 2013 Alabama Transition Updates.

OUTREACH GOAL 2 ACHIEVEMENT FY 2013

Goal 2a: 450 online trainees
Actual: 598 online trainees

Goal 2b: 150 onsite trainees
Actual: 177 onsite trainees

Goal 2c: 85% report moderate to much increase in knowledge
Actual: 85% reported moderate to much increase in knowledge

Record-breaking attendance!
The best thing about the conference ...

“...seeing others professionals dedicated to the same cause!”

“...being able to receive information on updates in Transition.”

“...lots of variety of sessions being offered.”

“...the opening session and introduction of Mike Kerjes done by a student, Richard Anderson...”

“...ease of access to presenters.”

-Participants’ comments from the 2013 post-conference survey

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Outreach Goal 3

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS IN TRANSITION

Three events were coordinated by ATLI to serve youth and young adults in transition: the youth conference held in conjunction with the annual Alabama Transition Conference, the 2012 Community Transition Expo (collaboratively sponsored by Auburn University Collaborative Approach to Training Transition specialists, and ATLI), and community-based instruction work experiences (CBI).

ATLI hosted 66 young people at the youth conference, where they participated in advocacy and leadership activities.

Three hundred students with special needs and their family members attended the 2012 Community Transition Expo.

Seven local high school students received work experience at ATLI.

Outreach Goal 4

INTERAGENCY DIALOGUE AND LEADERSHIP ON LOCAL, STATE, AND NATIONAL LEVELS

The 2013 Transition Leadership Academy, formerly known as the Local Transition Planning Summit, drew nine teams (19 participants) to set goals and objectives for their LEAs. Of the nine teams, three were new this year.

ATLI coordinated all four meetings for Alabama’s State Interagency Transition Team.

ATLI’s director continues to contribute to peer review panels and committees for the National Post-school Outcomes Center and the Council for Exceptional Children, Division of Career Development and Transition.

Outreach Goal 5

PROMOTE TRANSITION AWARENESS IN LOCAL, STATE, AND NATIONAL COMMUNITIES

ATLI published 4 more issues of Directions—its transition awareness newsletter, in FY 2013, and Governor Robert Bentley proclaimed March is Transition Awareness Month in Alabama, as youth in transition and state leaders looked on.

One staff member presented at the 7th Annual Capacity Building Institute in Charlotte, North Carolina.

OUTREACH GOAL 3 ACHIEVEMENT FY 2013

Goal 3a: 2 events will be coordinated for youth in transition
Actual: 3 events were coordinated (ATC, Expo, CBI)

Goal 3b: 15 youth/young adults in transition will participate in direct services/opportunities
Actual: 366 youth/young adults in transition participated in conference and workshops

Goal 3c: 1 high school student will be provided community-based instruction
Actual: 7 high school students were provided community-based instruction

OUTREACH GOAL 4 ACHIEVEMENT FY 2013

Goal 4a: 25 Local Education Agencies (LEA) receive interagency transition goal-planning support
Actual: 9 LEAs received goal-planning support

Goal 4b: 4 quarterly meetings will be coordinated annually for SITT
Actual: 4 meetings coordinated

Goal 4c: 1 invitation to national leadership position
Actual: 1 national leadership position extended 2012-2013

OUTREACH GOAL 5 ACHIEVEMENT FY 2013

Goal 5a: 4 issues of an ATLI newsletter will be published and distributed
Actual: 4 issues were published and distributed locally and statewide

Goal 5b: 1 statewide proclamation on transition will be issued
Actual: 1 statewide proclamation was issued

Goal 5c: 1 presentation at a national conference or meeting
Actual: 2 presentation at a national event

Members of YAIT attended Governor Bentley’s signing of the Transition Awareness proclamation, along with transition leaders from Auburn University, Alabama local education agencies, the Alabama Department of Mental Health, and the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services.
FY 2013 ATLI Funding & Expenditures

The Institute’s contractual responsibilities for the Alabama State Department of Education were continued for FY 2013, as was funding from Auburn University, College of Education. As shown in Figure 1, these two sources comprised the majority of ATLI funding, with limited funding from the CATTS four-year federal grant and the Alabama Transition Conference revenues after expenses.

Figure 1. Funding sources for ATLI

Figure 2. An analysis of FY 2013 expenditure categories reveal that the majority of funding dollars from all sources are used for personnel costs.
**Figure 3.** FY 2013 ATLI Expenditures. The major Institute expenditure for FY 2013 is for personnel, including part-time employees from the university's Temporary Employment Services, with operating expenses and indirect costs comprising the

**Figure 4.** A more detailed analysis of personnel categorical expenditures illustrates a distribution across A.U./C.O.E., contracts, and grant funding sources. The assignment of administrative support staff personnel costs highlight the importance of A.U./C.O.E. funding to the operations of the Institute.

* Part-time director percentages represent only time allocated to ATLI activities, apart from other faculty responsibilities.
The Auburn Transition Leadership Institute continues to provide valuable services and support to Alabama’s transition stakeholders. In FY 2013, the numbers of persons participating in each of ATLI's instruction, outreach, and research activities total 10,017. The engagement and impact numbers of this year represent a 13% increase from FY 2012 in service contributing to the integrity of our nation, our state, and our university, and our dedication to positively influencing the lives of persons with disabilities.

Table 1: Analysis of Transition Stakeholders Engaged in Institute Activities 2012-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Area</th>
<th>FY 2013 Activity</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>Graduate student workers</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undergraduate student workers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Post-school Outcomes Survey</td>
<td>981</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent Survey</td>
<td>4,754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early Learning Progress Profile</td>
<td>1,856</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach</td>
<td>Transition Conference</td>
<td>833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TNT Series</td>
<td>775</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local Transition Planning Summit</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State Interagency Transition Team</td>
<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community-based Instruction</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CATTS Community Transition Expo</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>10,017</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FY 2013 AWARDS, PUBLICATIONS, & PRESENTATIONS


Fox, S.J. (2013, June). Effective ways to tutor students with disabilities. Children’s Creative Learning Summer Camp, Truman Pierce Institute, Auburn University, Alabama.


Building Brighter Futures

Auburn Transition Leadership Institute
Annual Goals
2013-2014

INSTRUCTION
I-Goal 1: Provide experiences in research, instruction, 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 the design, development, and/or conduction 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