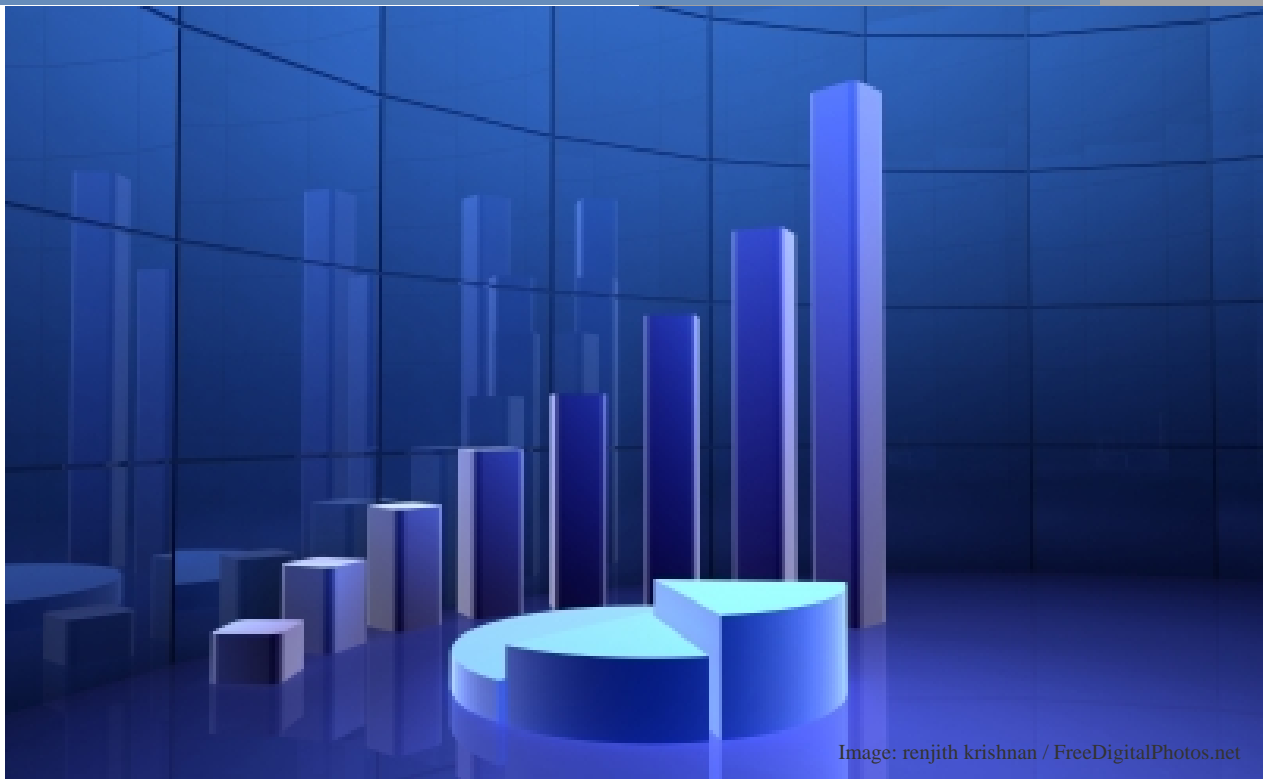


2011

Annual Report



Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama

P.O. Box 292300
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(205) 726-2482
<http://parca.samford.edu>

WHO WE ARE

In 1988, a group of Alabama civic leaders invested in the future of our state by creating an independent research organization to report objectively on issues important to improving the government of the state, cities, counties and public schools. They realized that good state and local government is one of the keys to making Alabama a better place to live, work and do business.

To carry out this purpose, they formed the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama (PARCA). Since its inception, PARCA has had former Governor Albert Brewer as its Chairman and Jim Williams, who has 40 years of research experience, directing its work.

Today, PARCA has a staff of three professionals who provide objective, factual research analyses to citizens and public officials, as well as consulting expertise to governmental entities that are seeking to create more effective, efficient services.

Our Mission:

To provide objective, nonpartisan information that will lead to the improvement of state and local government in Alabama.

We define improvement as:

- Increased capacity to make sound decisions
- Delivery of high-quality services at reasonable cost

PARCA STAFF



Jim Williams
Executive Director



Joe Adams
Research Coordinator



Marci Edwards
Director of Communications

2011 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY

SMART Budgeting

For the past eight years, PARCA has worked with various levels of government throughout the state to facilitate the development of SMART Budgeting systems. SMART Budgeting is based on the application of strategic planning and performance management principles to a government's annual budget. These principles require a budgeting plan to be specific, measurable, accountable, responsive and transparent. Each department within the government creates a brief performance plan with activity measures, short- and long-term goals, and quantitative indicators of progress toward achieving those goals. The plans are used in development of the annual budget and evaluated frequently during the budget year.

In 2011, PARCA finished its second successful year of SMART Budgeting implementation with the City of Montgomery. Previously PARCA worked with the cities of Decatur and Mobile, Jefferson County, and the State of Alabama on SMART Budgeting. The State’s implementation was recognized in the Pew Center’s *Grading the States* rankings as a significant initiative for improving state government.

Support for the Governor’s Commission to Improve State Government

The 2011 PARCA Annual Meeting Program featured former Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue, who discussed his successful Commission for a New Georgia, an initiative for improving the cost-effectiveness of state government. In his luncheon address, newly inaugurated Alabama Governor Robert Bentley announced his Commission for Improving State Government. PARCA Executive Director Jim Williams was appointed to the Commission and spent the major part of his time during the year providing research support to the Commission, which we hope will bring great dividends to our state government operations.

EDUCATION

“Demographics do not determine destiny.”

–Jim Williams, PARCA Executive Director

Analyses of School System Performance

We believe one key to improving Alabama’s educational results is to engage the local community and its public school system in working to improve student performance. To facilitate this process, each year PARCA analyzes the results that every school system and each of its schools achieve on Alabama’s reading and math tests for students in grades 3 through 8. The State of Alabama grades leniently, so we look at the percent of students in the school system who in effect make an “A” on the tests (officially called “Level IV”). We look at the performance of students from black, white, non-poverty and poverty backgrounds to gauge whether schools are succeeding with all kinds of students. Results are color-coded green when they exceed the state average, and red when they are below the state average, for ease in recognizing both high and low performance. In 2011, PARCA published the sixth year of results for every school system on our web site.

Dothan’s Progress: Proof that Every School and System Can Improve by Focusing on Results.

With support from the Wiregrass Foundation, PARCA has been working with the Dothan City School System and “Yes We Can! Dothan” for the past four years, providing annual performance analysis of student test scores. The chart below contains a count of system-level results compared to state averages. The increase in green (above-average) results over time is remarkable. In Spring 2011, Dothan’s results were in the top 10% of all Alabama school systems.

DOTHAN CITY SCHOOL SYSTEM, ARMT RESULTS FOR GRADES 3-8						
YEAR	Dark Green	Green	Gray	Red	Dark Red	Gold
2011	20	23	2	3	0	5
2010	16	26	4	2	0	5
2009	6	26	2	12	2	2
2008	3	24	4	15	2	1
2007	2	19	6	21	0	2
2006	8	15	7	18	0	1
2005	2	13	8	24	1	0

Every year, PARCA goes to Dothan and presents an analysis of the system’s results to the community, focusing on successes as well as areas needing improvement. The presentation is carried on local television, and the live audience includes the school board, city and county officials, the chamber of commerce and other community members, as well as school administrators. Our numbers don’t provide the answers: they help the schools and the community focus on improvement. The hard work of making that happen is done within the community, which has decided to create world class schools.

In addition, PARCA does in-depth analyses for school systems on a consulting basis. Recent clients include the school systems of Dothan, Mobile County, Montgomery County, Birmingham, Jefferson County, Huntsville, Madison City, and Madison County. Presentations from these engagements can be found on the web site.

School System Efficiency Studies

This year, PARCA worked with Baldwin County School System to conduct an operational review focusing on the quality and efficiency of services in the non-instructional areas of its operations. The research focused on four administrative and financial functions within the school system, looking at the implementation of over 300 operational best practices. The purpose of this review was to look for administrative areas in which improvements might be made and/or expenditures reduced. In prior years PARCA performed similar efficiency studies for the Huntsville and Mountain Brook systems. The Baldwin study design included a number of improvements to increase the usefulness of the study to school system administrators interested in greater efficiencies.

School System Budget Model

PARCA began work on a budget model for the Birmingham City Schools in 2010, and developed an improved version of the model during 2011. The purpose of the model is to produce information that can be used by system administrators and the school board to analyze resource allocation among the various schools and the central office, by funding source. The availability of such a model should help the system to focus its instructional investments in order to improve student performance. The model is adaptable to other school systems, and work is underway to automate its inputs more completely.

Student Dropout Studies

Mobile County Public Schools

PARCA has been working with the Mobile Area Education Foundation since 2008 to develop an in-depth dropout analysis. The 2008 study worked to differentiate between students who graduated and those who did not to identify predictive indicators of students not likely to graduate. The results showed very clear trigger points where graduation rates dropped sharply. That information was then used to create intervention mechanisms used by the Mobile County Public School System to impact the dropout rate.

In 2011, PARCA began looking at the 2007 9th Grade cohort of students in Mobile Public Schools to see how the rates of suspensions, arrests, grades, and attendance for those who graduated compared to those who did not. This work is continuing.

Montgomery Public Schools

PARCA recently completed a cohort study of Montgomery County students for the Montgomery Education Foundation. This study, which was similar in nature to the work for Mobile County Public Schools, was done as part of an effort increase the number of high school graduates throughout Montgomery County.

Alabama Pre-K Program Study

Pre-K programs have been proven repeatedly to provide a strong foundation for later learning. Although Alabama ranks high in quality of Pre-K programs, accessibility is still very low, according to the National Institute for Early Education Research. PARCA partnered with the Alabama School Readiness Alliance to conduct a comprehensive inventory of Pre-K programs in Alabama that includes every public elementary school statewide. A survey is being performed to collect information, after which a comparative analysis of school performance in Pre-K versus Non-Pre-K schools will be done, including 1st grade retention rates and 3rd grade ARMT scores.

Literacy Funding Analysis

Recent fiscal problems with federal and state governments make the pursuit of private grants increasingly important. There are fewer funds to go around, making the arena crowded and more competitive than before. The Literacy Council of West Alabama recruited PARCA to create a report examining the opportunities for funding from governmental, nonprofit, and corporate grant programs for the Council and its partners. Funding opportunities were described, the sources of major grants were identified, and recommendations were made regarding developing a strategy for obtaining grants.

All completed PARCA reports and presentations can be found on our website at <http://parca.samford.edu>.

THE PARCA PERSPECTIVE

This year has seen major internal changes for PARCA. Marci Edwards has become our first Director of Communications, and she is working to create a more customer-focused organization. She is responsible for improving the accessibility of PARCA's information, as well as all aspects of public relations and marketing.

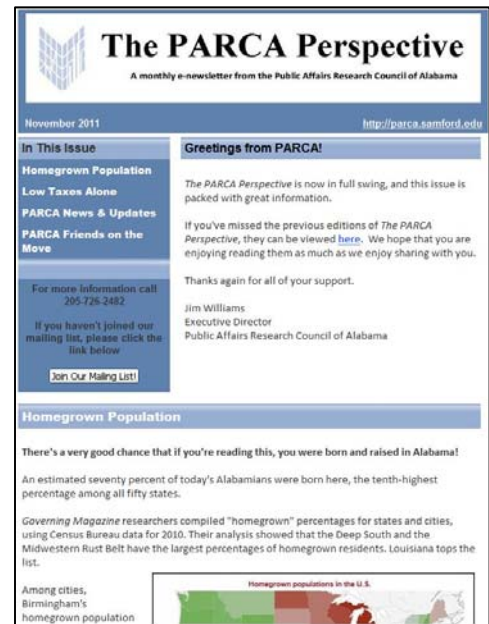
In the summer of 2011, PARCA began to produce *The PARCA Perspective*, a monthly e-newsletter which provides information about issues affecting Alabama, updates on PARCA studies and projects, and news on PARCA's closest supporters. The *Perspective* allows PARCA to reach its audience in a more frequent, timely, and accessible way. It is also a gateway to *The PARCA Quarterly*, which has been produced for the last 15 years, and is now included each quarter in the *Perspective*.

This change has shown great results. *The PARCA Perspective* is sent to a mailing list of over 2,000 supporters, and our feedback measurements show that it has produced readership rates well above those achieved by similar communications of other organizations. It also has improved our efficiency by substantially reducing postal expenses. To join the mailing list for *The PARCA Perspective*, go to <http://parca.samford.edu>.

PARCA can also be found on Facebook at www.facebook.com/PARCAAL. There, the public can find up-to-date information about PARCA studies, events and related news articles. It's one more way that PARCA is reaching out to its audience.

LOCAL ACT DATABASE

Local acts are laws of the State of Alabama that pertain only to one or a few selected counties or cities, rather than to the entire state. They are a major part of the laws governing local governments in Alabama. There are more than 35,000 local acts on the books. Only in recent years has any attempt been made to codify these acts and make them accessible. Most are only available in printed form through the Acts of Alabama, for the year in which they were enacted. Recognizing the importance of access to these laws, PARCA began a number of years ago to create a comprehensive, searchable database of local acts. In 2011 PARCA began to make the database available through subscription, and it is being utilized by libraries, law firms and individuals statewide.



PARCA ROUNDTABLE

The PARCA Roundtable was established in 1998 by young, motivated business and civic leaders to provide the opportunity to examine and discuss issues and government policies in Alabama in conjunction with the research conducted by PARCA. Today, the Roundtable meets quarterly with political, business and civic leaders to look at the most important issues facing Alabama's state and local governments, and to increase the involvement of its members in seeking solutions to the state's problems. It is a membership-based organization built through nominations by past and current members, as well as the PARCA Board. In 2011, the Roundtable met with Birmingham City Mayor William Bell to discuss his challenges and successes in office, and toured the Alabama Black Belt to see the ingenuity and growth emerging in the area. Members also had a meeting to discuss educational initiatives developing in Alabama. Speakers included Birmingham Education Foundation Chairman Fred McCallum; Mary Boehm, President of A+ College Ready and Teach for America Executive Director J.W. Carpenter.

2011 PARCA Roundtable Members

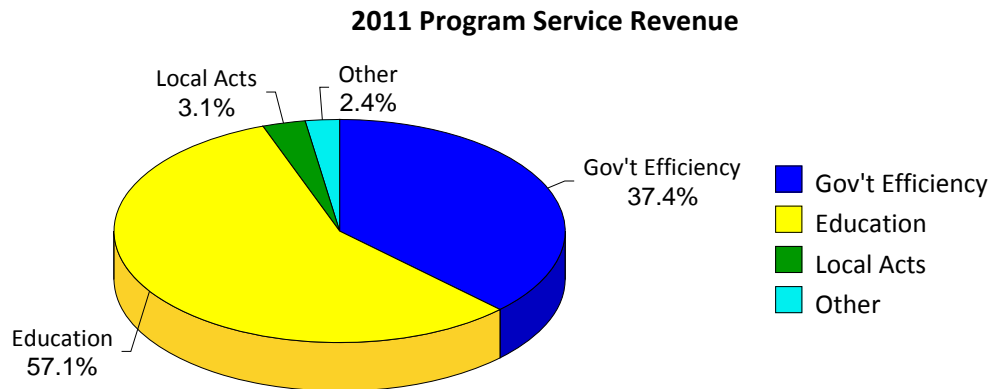
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Mark Berte	Alabama Coastal Foundation	Andrew Nix	Maynard Cooper & Gale
Scott Berte	Dixon Hughes	Anthony Oni*	Alabama Power Company
David Bowsher	Adams & Reese	Greg Powell	fi-Plan Partners
Emily Branum	Balch & Bingham	J.T. Price	Porter White & Company
Jennifer Breland	UAB Office of Alumni Affairs	Jennifer Rash	The Alabama Baptist
Melanie Bridgeforth	American Heart Association	Jeremy Retherford	Balch & Bingham
Kane Burnett	Bradley Arant Boulton Cummings	Clay Ryan*	Maynard Cooper & Gale
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John Dorsey	Project Horseshoe Farm	Jennifer Sims	Cumberland School of Law
Elizabeth Fleming	Public FA	Hanson Slaughter	Sterne, Agee & Leach
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Timothy Howe	The Howe Group LLC	Dax Swatek	Dax Swatek & Associates
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Daniel Hugunine	Balch & Bingham	Alan Warfield	Jones Walker
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* Executive Committee

FINANCES

PARCA is a nonprofit 501(c)3 corporation that receives most of its financial support through annual contributions by businesses and individuals who believe in its work to identify and promote good-government initiatives. One-third of its budget is earned from consulting services which PARCA provides to state and local governments seeking to make improvements. The generosity of our contributors and the confidence of public officials who use our work products enable PARCA's dedicated staff to accomplish its mission.

The chart below shows our 2011 consulting revenue by subject area. We feel that our work reflects an effective balance of important issues affecting our state.



2011 PARCA FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS (\$200 AND ABOVE)

We are supported by a number of corporations, foundations and individuals. In addition, many public sector organizations subscribe to our research publications.

A+ Education Partnership
 AAA Alabama
 AAA Cooper Transportation
 Alabama Association of School Boards
 Alabama Beverage Association
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 Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce
 Calhoun Community College
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2011 PARCA FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS (continued from page 5)

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City of Hoover	Porter, White & Company, Inc.
City of Mountain Brook	Postsecondary Education Department
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Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham	Press-Register
Consolidated Publishing	Proassurance
Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools	Protective Life Corporation
Decatur - Morgan County Chamber of Commerce	Public F. A., Inc.
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Dunn Investment Company	Reese Phifer, Jr. Memorial Foundation
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Great Southern Wood Preserving	Stevens, William J.
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Hand Arendall LLC	The Anniston Star
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Healthsouth	The Decatur Daily
Hughey III, James	The Huntsville Times
Jackson Thornton & Co.	The National Security Group, Inc.
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Jimmie Hess Fund	Troy University
Jones, Carl	University of Alabama
KPS Group, Inc.	University of Alabama at Birmingham
L. B. Wallace Community College	University of Alabama at Huntsville
Larson, Barbara	University of Alabama System
Lawson State Community College	University of North Alabama
Leadership Alabama	Volkert & Associates
Lightfoot Franklin & White	Vowell, Cameron
Marx Brothers, Inc.	Vulcan Materials Company
Mayer Electric Supply Company	Wallace Community College
Maynard, Cooper & Gale	Wallace State Community College - Hanceville
McWane, Inc.	Walthall, Kennon
Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce	Waters & Company
Morgan County Economic Development Association	Wells Fargo & Company
North, Jim	Westmoreland, Andrew

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