

## **Appalachian State University – Profile As of 2008-09**

Appalachian State University aspires to be a model 21<sup>st</sup>-century, nationally recognized university that combines the best characteristics of liberal arts and research institutions by resourcefully blending teaching and scholarship.

- We are committed to attracting, educating, and graduating the best students and to producing the highest levels of scholarship.
- Our large enrollment, our rural location, and our quality of academic life create a unique environment for student and faculty engagement.
- In many ways we combine the best of a small liberal arts college (e.g., close relationships among students, faculty, and staff) and a large research university (e.g., breadth of programming and scholarship).

Offering nearly 140 undergraduate and graduate degree programs, Appalachian attracts students from 45 states and more than 36 foreign countries. We emphasize “a community of learners,” a challenging academic environment in which students and faculty together ask questions, explore ideas, cultivate understanding, examine what they believe and delve into new possibilities.

- Seven academic colleges form our undergraduate and graduate degree offerings: Arts & Sciences, Business, Education, Fine & Applied Arts, Music, University College, and Graduate Studies & Research.
- A nationally recognized first-year experience program combines a variety of programs and experiences—both inside and outside the classroom—that prepare students to live and work in today’s complex network of local, regional, and global communities.
- Exchange programs with 41 universities in 17 countries make Appalachian part of the global academic family. Nearly 450 students explore the world and study abroad each year, selecting from more than 45 Appalachian overseas education programs established on all continents except Antarctica. The Institute of International Education ranks Appalachian seventh in the nation among master’s degree granting institutions for undergraduates studying abroad.
- More than \$15 million in research and service grants and contracts was awarded to the university this year. Our faculty mentor students in research and creative endeavors. A portion of the external funding summer research for undergraduates and research assistantships for graduate students.

Located at 3,333 feet in the Blue Ridge Mountains of northwestern North Carolina, Appalachian provides a favorable location for learning to occur. The campus shares an aesthetically pleasing, culturally and recreationally rich mountain environment – all combine to attract a faculty, staff, and student population seeking a high quality of life.

- We value our unique location – we have a genuine respect for the natural environment and a commitment to principles of sustainability. We have a “green energy” plan and a sustainability council, both of which seek to inform, educate, promote, and protect the natural environment.
- Our students support the campus’ Renewable Energy Initiative (REI) which supports the benefits of energy conservation, energy efficiency, and renewable energy.
- New degree programs with an emphasis in sustainable development are further examples of our commitment to encourage future generations the importance of planning and promoting the environment best practices.

### **Curriculum Development**

Between 2005 and 2008, Appalachian undertook a major overhaul of its general education program, producing an integrated, interdisciplinary, and vertical general education model, scheduled for full implementation in fall, 2009, which draws on the national best practices that have been articulated and promoted by organizations such as the Association of American Colleges and Universities.

We developed a set of learning outcomes with four main goals: thinking critically and creatively, communicating effectively, making local to global connections, and understanding responsibilities of community membership. All students will take an interdisciplinary first-year seminar and a first-year writing course, followed by a writing course in the second year, a third-year writing course in the major, and a senior capstone in the major.

The heart of the curriculum is a series of four “perspectives”—aesthetic, historical and social, science inquiry, and local to global—within which students will take thematically integrated courses that will come up for periodic review. Additional requirements include wellness literacy, quantitative literacy, and information/communication/technology literacy. Throughout the process, the campus and other constituencies (high schools, community colleges, employers, and alumni) were involved through a series of open forum, surveys, and focus groups.

### **Experiential Learning**

At the heart of an Appalachian education is making connections both inside and outside of the classroom. Providing the opportunities to develop learning connections through service and scholarship is a critical component of experiential learning. Our students are actively involved in service for the local, regional and global communities through the highly successful Appalachian and Community Together (ACT) program. ACT is the university’s clearinghouse for community service, service-learning and community-based research opportunities. The office offers diverse opportunities for individuals and student groups to get involved in human services and environmental advocacy, as well as assist faculty members and community partners with integrating community service projects into their academic courses and local agencies. In 2008 Appalachian students provided an estimated \$1.85 million of volunteer service to the community during the school year based on the national standard for volunteer time. Many of the first year seminar courses and others in the general education curriculum incorporate service components as a part of the academic pedagogy.

Another element of experiential learning is student research. Appalachian’s Office of Student Research supports and promotes learning through mentored research experiences with university faculty and other national and international scholars and professionals. We believe that these special collaborative relationships are among the most rewarding experiences for both faculty members and students. The university sponsors an annual Celebration of Student Research and Creative Endeavors each April. The Celebration showcases and encourages meaningful research in all disciplines by undergraduates and graduate students at Appalachian. Last year, over 100 students representing over 20 departments presented their results in a performance, platform talk, or poster.

Whether it is community service, special research projects, service learning initiatives or international exchange programs, the university promotes the positive ideals of engagement and understanding in the most literal sense. All of these initiatives encourage intellectual dialogue and collaborative approaches that enhance academic performance, professional development, and student satisfaction.