This text is from an old report but it shows the type of information you may want here. The letter should introduce and summarize the important topics for the year.

Appalachia is catching up with the nation as a whole on many socioeconomic indicators—even surpassing the national averages in some areas—but the Region still lags in postsecondary education. The U.S. Department of Education estimates the college-going rate of high school graduates nationwide at 63.3 percent; for Appalachia the rate is between 35 and 55 percent, according to Commission data. And only 17.7 percent of the population age 25 and older in Appalachia has a college degree, compared with 24.4 percent of the population in the nation as a whole. While this gap may not appear large, it is growing. Because at least some college or postsecondary training is now necessary to obtain jobs that pay a livable wage, it is critical that we close the college-going gap between Appalachia and the nation.

The Appalachian Higher Education Network Seeks to Increase Educational Attainment

Increasing the college-going rate and raising educational attainment levels is the mission of the Appalachian Higher Education (AHE) Network. The Network is based on a successful college access program in Appalachian Ohio—the Ohio Appalachian Center for Higher Education (OACHE)—which was established in 1993 by the Ohio Board of Regents. Since 1998, the Appalachian Regional Commission has helped establish centers in Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. Consortia of two- and four-year institutions of higher education and community-based nonprofit organizations run each center. In 2003, the original center in Ohio won the “Innovations in American Government Award” from the Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government.

All centers have achieved high rates of success. The key to their success? The director of OACHE attributes it to total school buy-in, with all teachers and administrators participating in and "owning" the program.

Vision

All students of the North Carolina Appalachian region will be college ready.

Mission

North Carolina Appalachian Collaborative for Higher Education (NCACHE) is committed to building strategic partnerships to strengthen our local communities through college access and success.

Contact Information:
Appalachian State University
NCACHE
ASU Box 32152
Boone, NC 28608
828-262-8016
ncache.appstate.edu
It is with great pleasure that I present the 2011 NC Appalachian Collaborative for Higher Education (NCACHE) Annual Report. NCACHE serves high schools in the western NC region through a collaborative effort with UNC-Asheville, Western Carolina, and Appalachian State.

The 29 Appalachian counties in Western NC have beautiful natural resources with underdeveloped human capital. The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) classifies many of these counties as distressed or at-risk. This is not a new problem and the causes are historic and systemic. Chronic poverty and a lack of education spanning several generations severely limit a community’s possibilities for generating economic development and garnering interest in educational opportunity.

The NCACHE program helps to address this lack of opportunity by: (1) utilizing data to help teachers, administrators and counselors make better instructional decisions (2) increasing high school graduation and postsecondary educational attainment by replicating the best practices of the successful Ohio Appalachian Center for Higher Education; (3) increasing student and parent knowledge about postsecondary educational attainment, and (4) raising teachers postsecondary education awareness and expectations for all the students they teach.

Since 1998, eight states in the Appalachian region have modeled educational resource centers after the Ohio Appalachian Center for Higher Education (OACHE). The mission of each state’s regional program is to increase high school completion, enhance college readiness, and improve post-secondary enrollment in the Appalachian region. In each state, public and private entities, in partnership with the Appalachian Regional Commission, have joined together to maximize local resources and reduce the barriers to educational attainment - a key component to economic development.
Section I | A Need for Postsecondary Education

Educational Needs Index Educational Factor Analysis Data

Educational Factor - Indicators assess the educational capacity of a region’s adult population. Indicators measure the percent of the population with a high school degree, associate’s degree, and bachelor’s degree, and a measure of the educational attainment gap between younger and older members of the workforce.

The Educational Needs Index (ENI) places an emphasis on the transition between K-12 policy concerns and postsecondary opportunities. The data assists policy makers at state, regional, and local levels as they work to reach informed decisions on issues of adult education and postsecondary education access and attainment. Particular emphasis is placed on the role that training, certificate programs, two-year degrees, and adult literacy initiatives play in forming foundations for more promising futures and stronger economies built upon a more versatile workforce. By identifying and offering intervention strategies for the most pressing issues facing critical regions, this research promotes a more informed and long-term conversation about postsecondary access. The project focuses on the most disadvantaged rural and urban areas of the U.S. and promotes regional partnerships between education, business, and government.

ENI Link: http://www.educationalneedsindex.com/about-eni-v2.php

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Factor Indicators</th>
<th>Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon &amp; Swain</th>
<th>Buncombe &amp; Madison</th>
<th>Henderson &amp; Transylvania</th>
<th>McDowell, Polk &amp; Rutherford</th>
<th>Ashe, Avery, Mitchell, Watauga, &amp; Yancey</th>
<th>Alleghany, Surry, &amp; Wilkes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of 18 to 64 year olds with a High School Diploma (2005)</td>
<td>85.9</td>
<td>85.3</td>
<td>85.4</td>
<td>85.5</td>
<td>83.9</td>
<td>71.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of 25 to 64 year olds with an Associate’s Degree (2005)</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of 25 to 64 year olds with a Bachelor’s Degree or higher (2005)</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference in College Attainment Between Young (25 to 35) and Older (45 to 54)</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
<td>-11.8</td>
<td>-11.0</td>
<td>-4.3</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Educational Needs Index Map of the NC Appalachian Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County &amp; Wilkes</th>
<th>Davie, Stokes, &amp; Yadkin</th>
<th>Alexander, Burke, &amp; Caldwell</th>
<th>Forsyth (outer region)</th>
<th>Forsyth (inner region)</th>
<th>North Carolina</th>
<th>USA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>90.2</td>
<td>82.4</td>
<td>84.2</td>
<td>85.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-0.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>-1.6</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AsULead

As digital media and technology become increasingly important in the workplace, one focus throughout AsULead is to incorporate these skills in a relevant and interactive way. AmeriCorps volunteers worked with rising senior high school students to create videos, blogs, social networking sites, and poster publications to take the message of college access back to their schools and communities. This approach allowed students to seek out information while simultaneously teaching the valuable skills of media literacy and technology. The products the students created became the basis for three parent programs they lead during the academic year.

Impact:
• 20 Students became AsULead Ambassadors
• 3 Parent programs per high school were led by the Peer Leaders (9 total)
• 100% of AsULead Ambassadors have been accepted to a postsecondary institution

College Access Best Practices Bus Tour

NCACHE hosted day two of the Appalachian Higher Education Network’s bus tour showcasing best practices. Day one was spent touring three high schools in northern GA while day two was spent in NC. In NC, participants met with students and faculty at Hiwassee Dam High School and Tri-County Community College’s Early College High School. The tour provided many opportunities to discuss best practices and implementation for college access and awareness programming.

Impact: 71 Educators participated and 11 were from the NC Appalachian region

Participants rated the extent to which new ideas for college access programming were generated and beneficial.

Participant quotes:
“AWESOME EXPERIENCE!!!!”

“Learning innovative ideas that are working in other rural areas that are increasing the post-secondary rate of students was an incredible experience.”

“I really enjoyed the opportunity to talk to the students who were benefitting from the overall project.”
Tours of the Appalachian State University (ASU) Campus

North Carolina professional teaching standard #1 states that teachers demonstrate leadership by taking responsibility for the progress of all students to ensure that they graduate from high school, are globally competitive for work and postsecondary education, and are prepared for life in the 21st century. Teachers communicate this vision to their students and create a culture that empowers students to collaborate and become lifelong learners. In an attempt to support this requirement, NCACHE hosted student visits to the ASU campus. Visitors met with ASU students, athletes, Teaching Fellows, and prospective teachers to tour the campus and participate in facilitated workshops and panel discussions about college life.

Impact: 1556 5th-10th grade students visited ASU in 2011 from 35 schools.

Student Quotes about their favorite part of the tour:

“How I got the college feel and got to walk around and kinda see what it is like to be a student.”

“My favorite part of the tour was just to get to go around and look at the school but I like the library the most.”

“Being able to actually be on campus and the science teacher Jeff Goodman he was awesome. I went there not liking science and came back loving it, he will blow your mind!”

Mini-Grants to NC Appalachian Region High Schools

Mini-grants were awarded to nine high schools in the region for college access programming totalling $43,000.

Impact: Increased Postsecondary Enrollment Rates in high schools
GEAR UP

The program is a response to America’s need for a more highly skilled, highly educated workforce and increases in college enrollment—particularly in the most under served segment of the Appalachian community: first-generation, low income families.

GEAR UP is a six year, federally-funded grant awarded on a competitive basis. It follows specific cohorts of students as they journey from middle school to high school, tracking their progress along the way. Because each student’s academic performance is charted and correlated to the types of services the student receives (tutoring, campus tours, and mentoring hours, for example), GEAR UP is able to effectively judge ‘what is working’ based on attendance and academic performance data to make real-time adjustments to programming.

Impact
• Total Students Served: 2,362
• Total Hours of Service Provided: 182,063
• Average Hours per student: 77.08

Students in First Cohort Increased Postsecondary Enrollment rates by 15.5%

1st Cohort Postsecondary Enrollment

Baseline Postsecondary Enrollment
Upward Bound
The Upward Bound Program has been a staple at Appalachian State University (ASU) since 1972. Currently, 132 students are served through a classic Upward Bound grant and a math/science Upward Bound grant. Upward Bound Scholars are potential first generation college students from predominately low-income families. Programming is aimed at increasing academic performance, college readiness and ultimately, college attendance.

Academic year programming included weekend academies, one-on-one academic counseling, and online and in-person tutoring. Students also participated in a 6 week intensive summer academy introducing students to research, project-based learning, and opportunities for team building.

Impact
- 95% of students performed at grade level in reading and math
- 71% of UB Seniors enrolled in college
- 93% of UB students were retained in college after their freshman year
The North Carolina College Knowledge Inventory (NCCKI) is a 29 item survey inventory developed and validated by GEAR UP North Carolina with consultation from a psycho-metrician at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The NCCKI is a tool that can determine students’ baseline knowledge of college and can also provide school personnel topics to cover with students related to college access. The NCCKI is copyrighted to the University of North Carolina and is available as a free college access resource to any school interested in administering it to high school students. It can be accessed at CFNC.org under Downloadable Resources.

4000 students participated in the NCCKI (2000 had received college access interventions and 2000 had not).

Students Receiving Services Consistently Outperform Counterparts on "College Knowledge"
Data Driven Programming

1. Exposure to a college campus increases students’ interest in postsecondary education

**Students visiting ASU report that as a result of a campus tour, they are more interested in applying to college.**

![Circle diagram showing 95% report they are more interested, 5% report they are not interested]

2. “Spread the Word”, NC public institutions of higher education cost less than students think. Share the Net Price Calculator (found on all college web sites) for estimated costs.

**Students Overestimate the Cost of 4-Year NC Public Universities**

![Bar chart showing overestimation of cost]

3. Support students to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The U. S. Department of Education notes, “Key studies have indicated that FAFSA completion correlates strongly with college enrollment, particularly among low-income populations.” (March, 2012)

Check out this web site for FAFSA completion rates at your school: [http://federalstudentaid.ed.gov/datacenter/fafsahs.html](http://federalstudentaid.ed.gov/datacenter/fafsahs.html)
About the Appalachian Higher Education Network

In 1998, the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) began developing what is now the Appalachian Higher Education (AHE) Network. The AHE Network, currently composed of nine centers, has the mission of increasing the college-going rate in Appalachia, the numbers of students who continue their education directly after graduating high school. This report discusses why a postsecondary education is so critical and the need for the AHE Network in the Region. It then describes the history and effectiveness of the AHE Network model and presents preliminary data on the impact and success of individual AHE Network centers.