

Appalachian State's Approach to Entrepreneurship

www.entrepreneurship.appstate.edu

Why entrepreneurship:

With the decline of many traditional industries in our region in recent years, the future economic development of western North Carolina is critically related to the region's ability to grow from within, rather than rely exclusively on recruitment of relocating and expanding firms. At the same time young people are increasingly interested in entrepreneurship as they see family and friends succeed in business and they become captivated by the stories of young founders of companies like Yahoo and Google.

A survey of more than 400 students and faculty across campus highlights the burgeoning demand for more entrepreneurship programs at Appalachian State. 86% of business students and 73% of non-business students had at least thought about starting a business. Perhaps an even more important finding, however, was that more than one out of three business students and one out of six non-business students at Appalachian State said their *primary career aspiration was to own their own business*. That translates into approximately 3,000 students at Appalachian State right now who seriously want to be entrepreneurs. 71% and 52% of non-business students said they would like to add a course in entrepreneurship to their major field of study.

What we are doing:

The Center for Entrepreneurship at Appalachian State was created in 2006 to help unleash this entrepreneurial energy on campus and in our region and equip budding entrepreneurs with the tools to help make them more confident and successful.

On campus, our primary thrust is to make more courses and co-curricular programs available to more students.

- A new **Concentration in Entrepreneurship** for business students will be offered beginning Fall 2007.
- Five courses in entrepreneurship have been created and are open to students in all majors including **Understanding Entrepreneurship, Harnessing and Managing Creativity, Entrepreneurship Practicum, New Venture Creation** and **International Entrepreneurship** where students and faculty travel and work with students from overseas universities on new business ideas.
- An **Entrepreneurship at Appalachian State Initiative (EASI)** steering committee composed of faculty and staff members from all across campus develops plans for making more entrepreneurship programs accessible to non-business students.

- An annual **Young Entrepreneurs Symposium (YES)** sponsored by Backyard Burgers has been developed as part of **EntrepreneurshipWeek USA**, where a panel of Appalachian graduates in their 20's discusses how they've launched successful businesses.
- Each fall we hold annual **Carole Moore McLeod Entrepreneur Summit** where more than 40 entrepreneurs from throughout the southeast participate in panel discussions and presentations on a wide variety of topics related to entrepreneurship.
- That same day, we will hold our popular **"Pitch Your Idea in 90 Seconds"** student business contest, sponsored by Mission House Creative in Raleigh.
- The **Association of Student Entrepreneurs** club brings guest speakers to campus and organizes campus-wide entrepreneur activities including programs like the **Extreme Entrepreneur Tour**, featuring very successful young entrepreneurs from around the country.

Another key part of the Center for Entrepreneurship's mission is to work with regional partners to support entrepreneurial activities and engage more faculty and students in service to the broader community.

- The **Watauga Entrepreneur Development Partnership** provides a series of community workshops utilizing classroom training and mentoring to help aspiring entrepreneurs launch their businesses. Appalachian State's Center for Entrepreneurship partners with the Appalachian Regional Development Institute and Watauga County to provide these workshops at no cost to participants.
- The **High Country Business Network** brings together successful entrepreneurs with startups through bi-monthly meetings and also partners with the **Blue Ridge Entrepreneurial Council** to provide free seminars throughout the region.
- An **Entrepreneurship Practicum** course has been developed and delivered in partnership the Small Business and Technology Development Center (SBTDC) where teams of senior entrepreneurship students work on semester long projects with SBTDC clients.
- The **Appalachian Enterprise Center (AEC)**, a joint effort between Watauga County and Appalachian State combines resources for small businesses and a business incubator in one facility. The AEC houses the Appalachian Regional Development Institute, Advantage West, SBTDC, SCORE and the Appalachian Energy Center. Incubator space will become available this summer and student ventures will be welcome. In the few months since the AEC has opened, it has already become the nerve center for economic development in the area.

- The **High Country Business Resource Alliance**, a joint effort between the Appalachian Regional Development Institute and Center for Entrepreneurship brings service providers who support entrepreneurs in Ashe, Alleghany, Wilkes, Watauga, Avery, Caldwell, Mitchell and Yancey counties in northwestern North Carolina. The mission of this effort is to help service providers get to know each other better and provide small business owners better access to resources throughout the region.

Next Steps:

Future plans include a possible minor or certificate program for non-business students, a student mentoring program, an entrepreneur internship program, expanded international entrepreneurship offerings, K-12 entrepreneurship and financial literacy programs, and a campus-wide and/or regional business plan competition.

Because of the increasing demands that come with growth, we need to add both financial and human resources. With the incredible demand for more entrepreneurship programs all across campus and in the region, there is much more we could be doing if we only had more bandwidth. The Center for Entrepreneurship continues to seek both public and private support. Naming rights for the center and individual programs are available.

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