



Campus Visit Summary **University of North Carolina at Asheville**

Campus Visit Date: June 6, 2007

Brief Overview

The designated undergraduate liberal arts university in the UNC system; offers 30 majors in the Arts, Humanities, Natural and Social Sciences, professional and pre-professional areas, leading to the baccalaureate degree, as well as a master of liberal arts program. UNC Asheville is nationally recognized for its required Humanities sequence a course of study that encompasses past and present ideas and events concerning the individual, community, nature, and the divine, as well as the relationships among them, and the Undergraduate Research Program, which promotes close faculty-student interaction and unique research experiences in all disciplines. The Asheville Experience emphasizes an integrative approach to learning and development.

The scenic 265-acre campus is located in the vibrant city of Asheville, a mecca for the arts, music, festivals and moviemaking. Nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains, Asheville is a haven for both urban and outdoor adventures.

- Total Enrollment Fall 2006: 3,497 (headcount)
- Undergraduate Enrollment Fall 2006: 3,471 (headcount)
 - 90% white, 3% black, 7% other
 - 58% female, 42% male

Campus' definition of its "region"

Located in Asheville, the campus has been designated since 1992 as the undergraduate liberal arts institution for the University (and thus is unique in the UNC system). In fulfilling its mission, UNC Asheville sees its service area for liberal arts education as statewide.

UNC Asheville's primary service area has historically been Buncombe County and surrounding counties in western North Carolina. However, current demographics indicate that 28.1% of students (headcount) come from the Piedmont area, 6.3% come from eastern NC, 15.4% of students come from out of state (including international students), and 50.2% of students are from western NC. For Fall 2006 semester entering freshmen, 41.8% were from the Piedmont, 9.4% were from eastern NC, 16.4% were from out of state (including international students), and 32.3% were from western NC.

Current responses to regional and statewide needs

The campus highlighted the following programs and initiatives as representative of its efforts to meet regional and state wide needs:

- A Better Educated Citizenry:
 - *Integrative Liberal Studies (“ILS”)* – integrative and interdisciplinary studies and learning opportunities organized in “integrative topical clusters” in which students learn subject matter content knowledge and also develop soft-skills (critical thinking, communications, etc.). The campus is currently developing methods for student assessment (ILS is in its first year of full implementation).
 - *Undergraduate Research Program* – Student research projects are conducted under the supervision of a faculty research advisor; students present research at Fall and Spring symposia and at National Conference of Undergraduate Research. Students develop critical thinking and problem solving skills in conducting research. All enrolled students are eligible to participate in the program.
 - *Teacher Education Initiatives* – the campus is engaged in a number of activities to improve recruitment of a diverse population of teaching students and enhance teaching knowledge and techniques through professional development programs for K-12 teachers. Graduates of UNC Asheville’s School of Education have 100% licensure rate, and 74% of graduates are employed in NC public schools.
 - *Summer Conferences & Institutes* – Through Asheville Institutes, faculty organize summer seminars and workshops on topics of interest to the community; summer youth camps serve middle and high schools students in areas including music, mechatronics engineering, engineering, and biological sciences.
 - *Science Olympiad* – UNC Asheville hosts one of 10 regional Science Olympiads each spring (middle and high school students compete in science and technology competitions).
 - *Center for Teaching and Learning* – professional development program for faculty to enhance teaching excellence and career advancement.
 - *Great Smokies Writing Program* – program for writers that includes academic classes led by professional writers.
 - *Asheville Graduate Center* – graduate degree programs from other UNC campuses are offered to members of the Asheville community.
 - *Distance and Extension Education* – the campus offers courses for teacher enrichment, prep courses for post-graduate exams, and courses for individuals incarcerated in the NC penal system.
 - *Community Leadership Programs* – through its Leadership Programs Office, programs are offered in three main areas: academically based leadership development, campus based leadership programs (focusing on development leadership skills in students), and community leadership development initiatives (“Leadership Asheville” and “Leadership Haywood” programs serve communities by offering leadership development programs to the public).

- Economic Development:
 - *Asheville HUB* – multi-agency economic development partnership in Asheville focusing on creative, sustainable economic development. Organized into 7 development clusters, UNC Asheville and AB Technical Community College lead the Technology Cluster – faculty and students are connected with community leaders to address issues facing the community (see NEMAC and RENCI projects below)
 - *National Environmental Modeling and Analysis Center (NEMAC)* – multidisciplinary center for advanced and applied environmental computer modeling and research focusing on both scientific and societal environmental issues (examples include weather prediction, and environmental planning strategies for sustainable economic development). NEMAC is a lead initiative in the Asheville HUB project.
 - *Renaissance Computing Initiative (RENCI)* – collaborative effort between UNC-CH, NCSU, and Duke, the program is currently focusing on research in two areas: disaster planning, mitigation, and response, and bioinformatics, genomics, and disease.
 - *Crystal Ball Seminar* – campus hosts annual seminar on economic trends and forecasting.
 - *Craft Campus* – planned for opening in 2009, the Craft Campus will offer students instruction in arts and crafts in an environmentally responsible and sustainable facility, powered by methane gas from a former landfill.
 - *Small Business Technology Development Center (SBTDC)* – small business assistance offered through the campus’ SBTDC office include management counseling, management education, business research, government procurement, export financing, boating industry advice, technology commercialization, and innovation research outreach.

- Supporting and Connecting with the Community:
 - *NC Center for Health and Wellness* – currently under development, the center will conduct research programs in health and wellness, and offer health promotion programs. The Center is linked with the Mountain Area Health Education Center and Mission Hospitals. Three main areas of focus will be childhood obesity, workplace wellness programs, and senior wellness.
 - *Environmental Quality Institute* – faculty and student research projects in environmental and public health areas have led to projects such as the Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, which assists in testing and identifying contaminated sites and educating on health impacts of lead poisoning
 - *State of Black Asheville* – student led symposium focusing on the needs of the African American community in Asheville in areas such as education, health care, law enforcement, and housing; seen as an example of how a university can play the role of “neutral convener” in addressing social issues.

- *Key Center for Community Citizenship and Service Learning* – center connects students with service projects in the community; students currently work with 100 area agencies and schools in the area.
- *Center for Creative Retirement* – offers educational and enrichment programs for aging population where program participants help design the programs; currently serves 1600 participants annually.
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Methods of identifying and incorporating regional and statewide needs into academic mission

- Regional and statewide needs are identified through many of the programs outlined above (example – needs of the business community are identified through the campus’ participation in the Asheville HUB)
- Faculty receive external input through research projects
- Conferences such as the State of Black Asheville identify ways in which the university can serve the community (example: UNC Asheville students serving as mentors for African American K-12 students was an outcome of the symposium)
- Campus strategic plan update is currently underway and has planned process to coincide with UNC Tomorrow study so that its updated plan can take Commission recommendations and BOG action into account.

Teaching Innovations (soft skills development, experiential learning, etc.)

- Integrative Liberal Studies is an academic response and approach for well-rounded college graduates to lead the state in varied positions
 - It enables students to think critically, analyze real world issues and develop creative solutions
- Undergraduate research opportunities develop the capacity for critical thinking, as they encourage students to identify real world problems, challenges and solutions
 - There is a shortage of individuals who can develop an understanding of a problem, formulate solutions, collect data to test their ideas and present results to a variety of audiences
 - 60% of students are involved in undergraduate research
- Study abroad and study away (studying at another institution within the US) provide a unique opportunity for students to diversify their higher level educations. Study abroad not only allows you to learn more about the world, but it gives you a new perspective on your situation at home
 - 153 students studied abroad in 2005-06
 - 233 students studied abroad in 2006-07

- *Great Smokies Writing Program* – offers opportunities for writers of all levels to join a supportive learning community in which their skills and talents can be explored, practiced, and forged under the careful eye of professional writers

Enrollment growth – General

- UNC Asheville is prepared for smart growth that maintains its personal touch, student/faculty ratio and open space on campus

Enrollment growth – Special Populations

- 3% African American population currently enrollment has moved the administration to increase their efforts in diversity
- A new diversity scholarship will increase the opportunity to recruit new students from underrepresented populations
- Faculty members have increased their presence and involvement in the recruiting process
 - Student government and Faculty Assembly are creating a joint initiative to address deficiencies in this area

Faculty Issues

- *Faculty salaries* – On average, UNC Asheville has the lowest in the system, yet Asheville has one of the highest costs of livings in the state. This results in significant challenges in recruiting and retaining faculty.
- *Promotion and Tenure policies* – because of UNC Asheville’s mission as a liberal arts institution, P&T policies emphasize and reward teaching excellence. Undergraduate research supervision, other scholarly work, and service and presence in the university community are viewed positively.

External Communications

- *Campus impact* - UNC Asheville does not currently assess its impact on the community; the campus would like to explore this and needs resources and technical assistance in order to do so.
- *“Liberal Arts” is neither “liberal” nor “artsy”* – the campus recognizes the challenge in communicating the value of a liberal arts education in ways that demonstrates its relevance in the 21st century (such as, the development of soft-skills, global awareness, and leadership/ethics)

Barriers and Challenges facing the campus

- *Private fundraising* – the campus has little history in private fundraising and alumni development. The recent senior class gift campaign is viewed as a positive step in building alumni development programs
- *Clarity of the role of campus* – in viewing itself as the state’s premier liberal arts institution, the campus expressed a tension between excelling at this unique role and also serving the state
 - Example: maintaining a small student enrollment consistent with national peers in the face of growing UNC student enrollment:
2006 enrollment: 3095 FTE; Projected 2017 enrollment: 3500 fulltime students + 350 part-time students + 250 distance education students = 4100 total headcount.
- *Increasing student diversity* – the student body is currently 90% non-minority (only 3% African American); the campus is developing initiatives to increase the diversity of its student body and faculty (such as direct recruitment of minority students and minority student scholarships)
- *Improving retention and graduation rates:*
 - Retention rate: 80.7% (from freshman to sophomore year) Goal: 85%
 - 4-yr Graduation rate: 33.1% Goal: 40%
 - 6-yr Graduation rate: 53.5% Goal: 60%

Opportunities

- *Private College affiliations* – the campus sees strong opportunities in offering private college courses and programs on the UNC Asheville campus; this would build on the campus’ existing Graduate Center, where graduate programs from other UNC campuses are offered to members of the Asheville community
- *Improving external communications* – communicating more effectively and comprehensively with the community will increase awareness and utilization of campus programs and resources, enable campus to better articulate the value of a liberal arts education, and give campus more input from the community on regional needs the campus is well-positioned to address
- *Enhancing ILS Program* – in addition to developing outcomes assessments of students, the campus could also survey employers of graduates to assess success of students post-graduation
- *National Environmental Modeling and Analysis Center (NEMAC)* – established in 2003 with the vision to become a national center for the modeling and analysis of environmental data. The Center provides coordination of advanced and applied research projects (many of which include undergraduates) and operates as an

information center regarding funding and collaborative opportunities for joint research efforts. Coordinates with RENCI and the ashevilleHUB.

- *Renaissance Computing Institute (RENCI)* – a major collaborative venture of Duke University and NC State, UNC Chapel Hill and the state of North Carolina. RENCI currently focuses on two broad issues: Disaster planning, mitigation and response, and bioinformatics, genomics and disease. The UNC Asheville and ECU sites will have a particular focus on GIS and data collection. Coordinates with NEMAC and the ashevilleHUB
- *The ashevilleHUB* – a major planning initiative for the Asheville area, including Buncombe County, involving partners in all facets of the community. UNC Asheville is taking a leading role in this effort.