2025

DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

# Impact Report




APPSTATE

# GREETINGS FROM EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR JJ BROWN



For Appalachian State University's Division of Student Affairs, the past academic year was marked by growth, excitement and a strong sense of community, as well as significant challenges — chief among them was the devastating impact of Hurricane Helene on our Boone campus and the surrounding region. I am extremely proud of how our Student Affairs team went above and beyond to support not only students, but also faculty, staff and local community members during one of the most trying times in our institution's history, all while navigating personal challenges of their own. The resilience and dedication of our campus community continue to reflect our long-standing commitment to student success.

This year's Impact Report highlights key areas where Student Affairs has and continues to make a difference in the lives of Mountaineers — from relief and response efforts to support App State's Mountain Strong recovery from Helene, to fostering a sense of belonging among students by engaging them in the campus and local community, to empowering students through campus employment opportunities that provide real-world experience and prepare students to thrive after graduation. As you explore the report, you'll find numerous examples of how our talented staff create transformational opportunities that shape student lives both inside and outside the classroom. Our divisional tagline — Care. Engage. Transform. — is a daily reminder of how we serve and connect with our students.

**Care:** Our work creates a culture of care that builds a foundation for students to thrive and be resilient.
**Engage:** Our diverse, student-centered community fosters local-to-global learning, leadership, engagement and service.
**Transform:** We transform students into dynamic leaders and lifelong learners who will make a difference in their communities and throughout the world.

In spring 2025, as our university transitioned into its next chapter under new leadership, Chancellor Heather Norris made some changes to the university's organizational structure to streamline our operations and maximize our ability to support student success. The Student Affairs departments that support students and student success, along with Enrollment Management and Arts Engagement and Cultural Resources, moved to the Division of Academic Affairs. This alignment reflects a universitywide commitment to student success, positioning us to support student growth through every dimension of campus life.

Our collective mission is to elevate the student experience — intellectually, socially and professionally, and we remain committed to putting students first and to ensuring excellence in all we do to support their success at App State and beyond. I am honored to be starting my 16th year as a Mountaineer in a new role, as App State's Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice Chancellor, and I look forward to serving the university in this broader capacity. I hope this report offers a meaningful glimpse into the impact of our work and the shared purpose that drives us forward each day.

With Mountaineer Pride,



JJ Brown
Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice Chancellor

# care. engage. transform.

**25,527**
volunteer hours contributed by App State students

**$166,700**
in first-year scholarships awarded (14 total awards)

**$64,500**
in club leadership scholarships awarded (39 total awards)

**$52,000**
in continuing scholarships awarded (48 total awards)

**$42,091**
donated to the Mountaineer Emergency Fund to help App State students in need

**1,687**
student employees

*2024–25 academic year*

## ACCOLADE HIGHLIGHTS

App State earned the 2025 School of the Year Award from the South Atlantic Affiliate of College and University Residence Halls, which is the highest honor an SAACURH member school can receive. The award recognizes outstanding achievements on the campus level by a residence hall government and associated groups, as well as contributions on the state, regional and national levels.

App State senior Cooper Murray won SAACURH's 2025 Residence Hall Association President of the Year Award, which recognizes the outstanding service of an RHA president at an affiliated school who has had a direct positive impact on their school and region, as well as the National Association of College and University Residence Halls.

For the second consecutive year, App State earned national recognition as a top 10 food allergy-friendly College, ranking No. 5 on Spokin's list of "Top 100 Food Allergy-Friendly Colleges" for 2025.



## A MOUNTAIN STRONG RECOVERY FROM HURRICANE HELENE

When Hurricane Helene — one of the worst natural disasters in the history of the institution — struck Western North Carolina in fall 2024, App State's Division of Student Affairs staff quickly mobilized to support Mountaineer students, faculty and staff impacted by the storm. Recognizing that student success hinges on stability and well-being, the division coordinated a comprehensive response that included the creation of a centralized Disaster Relief Hub in Plemmons Student Union. The hub, which operated from Oct. 1 until Oct. 18, became a lifeline — providing students, faculty and staff with access to short-term bridge funds through the App State Disaster Relief Fund, as well as other critical resources, including counseling services, academic assistance and support, housing assistance and support, legal assistance for students, financial aid assistance, counseling services and insurance consultations.

Volunteers from across the university — many of whom were facing their own challenges — stepped up to assist in recovery and relief efforts, while more than 4,900 people across the state, nation and world reached out to support Mountaineers by contributing to the Disaster Relief Fund, with App State raising and distributing over $4 million in bridge funding that benefited students, faculty and staff as they navigated significant losses and challenges from the storm. Additionally, App State Campus Dining, along with volunteers from across the university, worked throughout App State's two-week closure to prepare and serve over 80,000 hot meals to campus and community members in need, free of charge.

Working together, Mountaineers answered the call to ensure the university's Mountain Strong recovery from Helene.

### RECOVERY AND RELIEF — BY THE NUMBERS

**20**
students displaced by the hurricane were provided short-term housing

**$4 million+**
in bridge funding raised and distributed by App State Disaster Relief Fund

**80,000+**
community meals served in Central Dining Hall

**Nearly 5,400**
students, faculty and staff received assistance through App State's Disaster Relief Hub

**5,800**
volunteer hours contributed by Disaster Relief Hub staff

**525**
volunteer hours completed by 175 students serving 15 High Country organizations during App State's Together We Are Mountain Strong Day of Service

## HELPING MOUNTAINEERS IN NEED



"Serving in the Resource Hub was a unique way for Campus Activities team members to work together in a different capacity. We were able to connect with students and staff during a very challenging time, to provide support and help people get financial assistance. During those very challenging initial weeks, it was a nice way to serve our campus while being in community with others."
— Beth Holcomb, Director of App State Campus Activities



"The days after the hurricane were surreal — our community and so many students were negatively impacted. Working in the emergency hub gave the Financial Aid team an opportunity to connect with and help our student population in a time of real need. Being able to relieve even a small amount of the stress was so important! I am proud of the way the school and community pulled together to support each other."
— Sheila Burleson, App State Senior Associate Director of Financial Aid



"When Hurricane Helene hit, making sure everyone had a hot meal and a place to gather became more important than ever. It's not just about food — it's about showing up for one another."
— Elizabeth Riede, Executive Director of Campus Dining

## NOTES OF APPRECIATION FOR HUB SUPPORT

"It was nice to be able to connect with the people working at the Disaster Relief Hub and receive financial assistance so I could start the process of finding a new home. I'm very grateful for the help."
— Anonymous

"The funding I received through App State's Disaster Relief Hub helped me put food on my table and also repair the water damage in my home. To those of you who worked the hub, thank you for being there for us."
— Anonymous

"The flood waters almost covered my car completely. It was a total wreck, and I didn't have the means to buy another one. App State's Disaster Relief Hub helped me by providing funding that I could use to make a down payment on another vehicle."
— Anonymous





**Judy Haas**
Dean of Students

Through her work at the Disaster Relief Hub, App State Dean of Students Judy Haas helped assist students, faculty and staff who lost their homes, their means of transportation, as well as essential items due to the hurricane. Here, she shares her firsthand account of working in the hub and how it served as a central lifeline for the Boone campus community.

## IN THE HEART OF THE HUB: A DEAN'S ACCOUNT

What began with a single phone call from then–Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs J.J. Brown became a movement of hope and recovery — and a powerful demonstration of our community's resilience. Within 24 hours, we worked to establish a team consisting of staff volunteers from across the university, who quickly mobilized to form the App State Disaster Relief Hub.

In the transformed Plemmons Student Union, students, faculty and staff found more than just shelter — they found a designated starting point for comprehensive support. Alongside immediate financial assistance through the App State Disaster Relief Fund, the hub provided Mountaineers with emotional counseling; practical guidance, such as assistance with filling out FEMA applications; and essential amenities such as showers, electricity and reliable internet access for several hours each day. Over time, the hub evolved into a multifaceted resource center offering updated information about community resources, including food assistance, shelter, animal care, cleaning supplies, diapers, water and more. A nondenominational group also hosted open dialogue sessions, offering emotional support to anyone who simply needed to talk — or ask for a hug.

Each day, campus community members in need visited the hub with visible tears, sharing their feelings of being overwhelmed and a simple, recurring plea: "I need help." The need among the Mountaineer Community was profound. And our hub team stepped up with a coordinated response that addressed these urgent needs — serving as a testament to Mountaineers' commitment to care for one another, even during one of the most difficult moments in our university's history.




Mountaineers

# FOSTERING BELONGING TO FUEL STUDENT SUCCESS

A sense of belonging is key to students' success at App State. When students feel accepted and valued for their authentic selves, they are more likely to engage meaningfully with peers, contribute to collaborative problem-solving and perform at their highest potential. Student Affairs seeks to foster a sense of belonging in all students through small group activities, clubs, community-building programming and civic literacy efforts that empower students to thrive academically and personally.

## CIVIC LITERACY

**77**
Civic Literacy Initiative presentations

**1,800+**
students engaged in Civic Literacy Initiative programs

Civic Literacy Initiative Executive Summary, Fall 2024

## ORIENTATION

**5,590**
students attended new student orientation

**5,391**
family members attended new student orientation

**95%**
of incoming students indicated they understood orientation expectations

**Nearly all incoming Mountaineers**
acknowledged that belonging is important to them during their time at App State

2025 New Mountaineer and Family Engagement Sense of Belonging Survey

## MOUNTAINEER FAMILIES

**500**
family members attended Spring 2025 Family Weekend

**250**
Mountaineer family photos given away at Capture the Moment photobooth events

**125**
guests attended Legacy Family Brunch

2025 New Mountaineer and Family Engagement Sense of Belonging Survey

## UNIVERSITY HOUSING

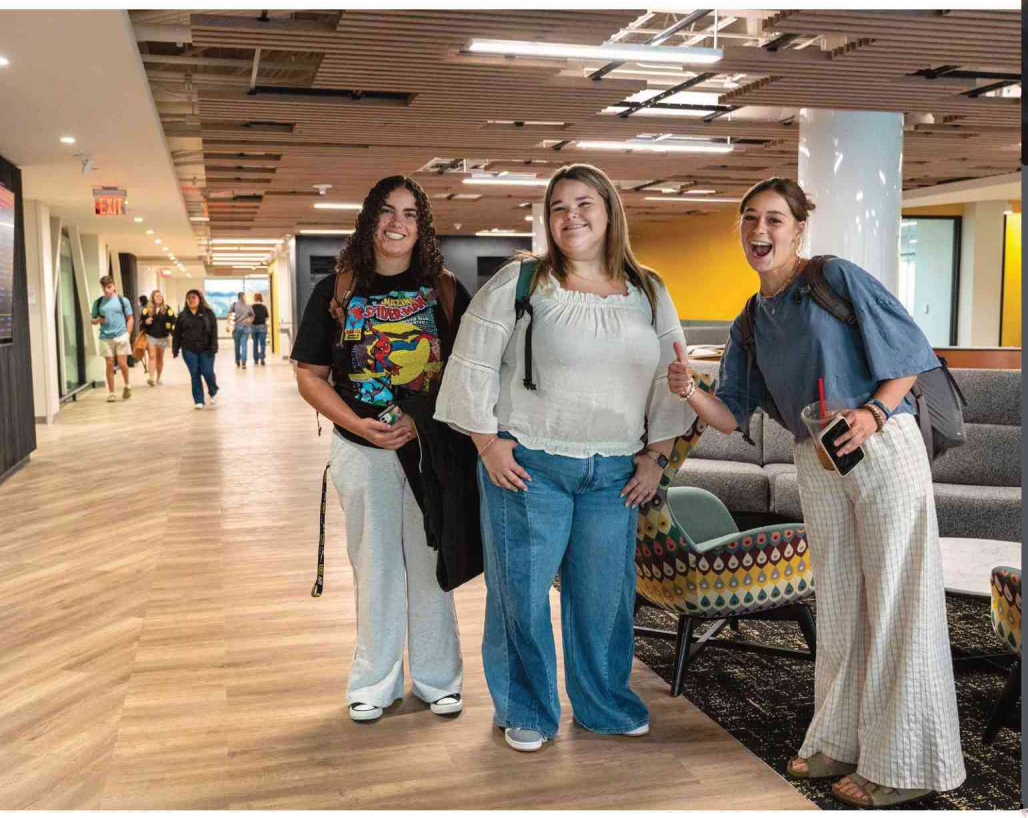
**6,075**
students lived in campus residence halls

**151**
students served as Resident Assistants

App State University Housing

## ORIENTATION — HELPING STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

*Orientation helps incoming first-year and transfer students, as well as their families, prepare for the transition to life at App State, providing opportunities for new Mountaineers to get to know campus, learn about academic requirements and connect with other students.*





### Jacob Vaughn '22

"My involvement with App State's Appalachian Popular Programming Society (APPS) has transformed me as a person. I have made lifelong friendships through APPS, planned events that I will remember for the rest of my life and, as a chairperson, I acquired leadership skills and was able to fully grow into my personality. The organization helps build a community at App State is incredibly unique, and without APPS, I never would have had such an amazing college experience."
— App State alumnus Jacob Vaughn '22

"As a transfer student, it was helpful to be in a group of other incoming transfer students. Our Student Orientation Undergraduate Leader was able to answer questions that we had about being successful at App State and got our group excited about coming to school here."
— A fall 2024 incoming transfer student

"The orientation experience, and App State as a whole, completely exceeded my expectations. The school's passion and commitment to delivering a holistic, rock-solid education — along with the community and support it provides to enable student success for all students — is absolutely clear."
— A family member of a fall 2024 incoming Mountaineer student

"My overnight orientation at App State rocked! Playing games with other incoming students helped me meet new people. My SOUL (name removed) was so nice and made our group feel welcome."
— A fall 2024 incoming first-year student



# EMPOWERING STUDENTS THROUGH CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT

Campus employment helps students gain real-world experience, develop transferable skills and build the confidence needed to thrive after graduation. Student employees contribute significantly to the daily operations of the university — they staff front desks, support events, assist in research and help keep campus life running smoothly. Students regularly share that, beyond compensation, they appreciate the personal growth these opportunities afford, which contributes to their overall success at App State.



**1,687**

student employees in Student Affairs (2024–25)

## Top 5 largest employers in Student Affairs:

Campus Dining — 514 students

University Recreation — 374 students

New Mountaineer and Family Engagement — 212 students

University Housing — 200 students

Plemmons Student Union — 107 students



"Student employment is one of the most impactful forms of experiential learning. It provides students with the opportunity to apply what they're learning in the classroom, build critical competencies such as communication, leadership and problem-solving and begin to envision their place in the professional world. Guiding students toward these opportunities means helping them grow not only as professionals but as people, and that's at the heart of the work we do in the Career Development Center."

**Holly Benson McQueen '20 '22**
*Assistant Director of App State Student Employment*

## 2024–25 STUDENT EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR



**Hannah Antworth**, a senior from Waxhaw, was named **App State's 2024–25 Student Employee of the Year**. Facilitated by App State's Career Development Center, the annual award recognizes a student employee who has worked at least six months part time (or three months full time) during the selection period and who is judged on their reliability, quality of work, initiative, professionalism, contribution and dedication to the office in which they are employed.

An interior design major with a concentration in applied design, Hannah has worked as a desk assistant in University Housing since spring 2024 and serves as a Student Orientation Undergraduate Leader in New Mountaineer and Family Engagement. She is also a member of the organizations' social media teams and leads training sessions for new University Housing desk assistants.

"Hannah's commitment to learning and growing in her role is evident as she actively seeks opportunities to expand her knowledge and improve her skills," said Hannah's supervisor, Geneva Watson, housing assignments coordinator in University Housing. "Additionally, she goes above and beyond to assist her peers and anyone in need within the office, and her ability to teach and mentor others further highlights her leadership skills and dedication to the team's success."

Hannah, who completed a summer 2025 internship at Hickory-based Atriax Group, a general contracting company, credited her on-campus work experience with providing her a solid foundation for navigating the internship.

"I have developed a level of confidence, self-reliance and leadership that I didn't have prior to my roles at App State," she shared.

## SPOTLIGHT: STUDENT EMPLOYEES IN LEADERSHIP



Nicole Tran

In March 2025, App State University Housing Resident Assistants Nicole Tran, a senior political science major from Charlotte, and Courtney Castellow, a senior public relations major from Winterville, were elected by their peers to serve as the student body president and vice president, respectively, for the 2025–26 school year.



Courtney Castellow

Nicole was an RA in New River Hall, and Courtney was an RA in Thunder Hill Hall during 2024–25. Both will return as RAs for the 2025–26 academic year and be part of the Thunder Hill Hall staff. Additionally, Nicole is serving a one-year term on App State's Board of Trustees, which she assumed in May 2025.

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engage.
transform.

## LIST OF STUDENT AFFAIRS DEPARTMENTS

Campus Activities
Campus Dining
Campus Services Express
Campus Store
Case Management
Center for Student Success and Community
Child Development Center
Community-Engaged Leadership
Conference & Event Services
Counseling & Psychological Services
M.S. Shook Student Health Service
New Mountaineer and Family Engagement
Off-Campus Student Services
Office of the Dean of Students
Parking & Transportation
Plemmons Student Union
Staff Development & Strategic Initiatives
Student Affairs Assessment
Student Conduct
Student Legal Services
Student Veteran Services
University Housing
University Post Office
University Recreation
Wellness & Prevention Services

*2024–25 Student Affairs units*




*App State received many thank-you messages from campus and local community members for the resources and support the university provided in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. This poster, which was displayed in App State's Central Dining Hall, reads: "Thank you for everything y'all are doing!"*

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