VOICES at OHIO UNIVERSITY SPEAK about APPALACHIA

Report Four: Diverse Perspectives about Education

Survey Conducted by the Appalachian Faculty Learning Community, Spring 2004

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Diverse Perspectives about Education

Survey participants answered questions about education, Appalachia, and Ohio University. This report summarizes the findings about relationships between education and Appalachia at Ohio University. Topics described include differences between students from Appalachia and those from other areas; stereotypes encountered in educational settings; local perceptions of Ohio University’s relationship with Appalachia; perceived positive responses to Appalachia by the University; and student engagement. Survey results provide suggestions related to student recruitment and education and ways for the university to improve community connections.

EDUCATION AND APPALACHIA AT OHIO UNIVERSITY

A theme echoed by many survey respondents was a need for greater student engagement with people, places, and activities related to Appalachia. One student wrote:

I think that a new focus on Appalachian culture is long overdue. Appalachians are not just poorly educated hayseeds. They are a people who have many fascinating cultural practices. I feel we should attempt to bring Appalachia into the 21st Century while preserving the uniqueness and tradition of the Appalachians.

Another student said, “I believe that Ohio University has untapped potential to play a role in the region.” Several participants suggested that divided perspectives about education and Appalachia often occur at Ohio University. For example, an administrative staff person wrote, “Appalachia seems to be invisible or maybe it's the elephant in the room.” In other words, while Ohio University is situated in Appalachia and many aspects of education that occur at the University may be linked to the region, the implications of this relationship are often ignored.

Some survey respondents referred to concerns that often separate the university and community. For example, one person said:

Local people do not even recognize the term Appalachia. Local people don't have any connection to OU. The university doesn't draft local students and find them scholarships to go to the school. The university hires local people for maintenance or low level jobs and they are always subject to being laid off just before they become permanent. Inside the university, only a few local people rise to prominence. Local people are not prized or respected by the leadership at OU. Local people are put down by the same big city people who take the jobs at OU. I have heard it said to my face by leadership at OU that local people are not smart enough to be helped and that Appalachians will always be Appalachians.

Separation between town and gown is often experienced at Ohio University, but is never more pronounced than when distinctions between insiders and outsiders are raised.

One participant described what many others echoed throughout the survey: “I consider Ohio University to be potentially the most promising institution for the advancement of
Appalachian concerns. Yet, even its geographic location in the region fails to prompt visible and cohesive efforts in this direction. The first and most important step is accepting and embracing the Appalachian heritage.” Another respondent said:

Ohio University introduces many outside influences to this region, but I think the direction of the exchange in this relationship is a little one way. Ohio University does much to bring other cultures into Athens, but little to promote Appalachia as part of its identity. Ohio University has the potential to promote and introduce Appalachia to the rest of the United States.

A message from many respondents was said one by one participant: “We are an institution of privilege situated in the poorest county in Ohio!”

Faculty Members’ Views Appalachia

Although several students commented that some faculty members refer to Appalachia and its residents in negative terms. Evidence existed that many faculty members are sensitive and concerned about the region. However, one faculty member wrote, “As an educator in an Appalachian community, I feel that it would benefit me a great deal if I could educate myself about Appalachia. I know very little now!” Another faculty person wrote: "Students say terrible things like, ‘this town wouldn't be here if I wasn't here going to school.’ I think that's a pompous and ridiculous attitude, rejecting all the things that this area and Appalachian peoples have to offer. I think students need to have their eyes opened."

It appears that faculty members associated with Ohio University are mainly divided into three camps: (a) those that are culturally sensitive and aware of needs connected to Appalachia and want to see changes occur, (b) those aware of needs associated with Appalachia but are indifferent, and (c) those that are either ignorant or uncaring about needs associated with Appalachia.

Students at Ohio University from Appalachian Regions

Many students at regional campuses, as well as a good number that make their way to the Athens campus, are first-generation college attendees. Faculty members who are not local to the region or who have just relocated to Ohio University from other areas of the country may have little understanding about the needs of these Appalachian region students. For example, a faculty person wrote:

Some faculty need to know more about how to relate to Appalachian students who are often the first college attendees in their families. Many have graduated from schools with fewer resources and been part of communities that have been socially and economically different from the mainstream. Faculty often lack understanding about ways to address the needs of these students, mistakenly stereotype them, and fail to offer them assistance.
Several survey participants mentioned anxieties experienced by regional high school students about attending the large campus in Athens, an academic setting they perceive as foreign and overwhelming.

Values related to education are closely coupled with economic and employment needs of those in the region. Some participants suggested that many regional families have not yet fully developed a respect for higher education; as it is an ethic that many families have not instilled in their developing children. A student asked if this change in attitude about education could be accomplished until things were done locally to address the area’s economic problems. A survey participant said:

The University needs to make clear how the financial aid process works--many students in the area see a cost of $18,000 per year and believe that they will never be able to afford to attend. Also, it is imperative that the University establish MORE scholarships specifically targeting students from Southeast Ohio--no matter what anyone says, the single most common reason students from this area do not attend college is the PRICE.

Thus it appears that family values and economics are important determinants in whether youth and adults from the Appalachian region of Ohio seek higher education.

Another concern raised by survey participants was related to obtaining an education that was respectful of the Appalachian culture. A student wrote, “Appalachians don't want to be converted into non-Appalachians, and that is unfortunately what education does to them because there is no use for an education in this depressed region of the country.” A local resident and undergraduate student provided this perspective about education:

In general, people in this region are very suspicious of education...they want their children to do well in high school, but they tend to fear intellectual elitism and so they don't want their children to become TOO educated. People in this region have always valued hard work, but they tend to respect physical labor, factory work, etc. over more intellectual occupations--to them the super-educated are seen as lazy because they refuse to get REAL jobs and instead leach off of the hard work of others. For this reason, many Appalachian parents are skeptical about sending their children to college and often feel that children who embrace education are in some way turning their backs on their family/heritage. Also, some believe that there is really no reason for many Appalachian children to get good educations, because they do not want to leave the region or their families to pursue the jobs that a good education would prepare them for.

That regional students need educational experiences that enable them to return home and contribute to communities was viewed by many as a great concern.

**Adequacy of Preparation of Regional Students for Higher Education**

Academic preparedness was another topic discussed. Many survey participants had concerns about the level of educational preparedness among students from the Appalachian region of Ohio. For example, one respondent wrote:
Most Appalachians will not experience OU because they can't get in. I was not prepared by the local public school system in the early 80s and had to attend a community college for a while and came in as a transfer. The local public school systems have to graduate kids with better grades who have been counseled about university well in advance.

Another student completing an undergraduate degree wrote:

I was not really ready for academics here even though I graduated fifth in my high school class. I don't think that education in Appalachian schools prepares students for college course work. I had to work through not knowing how to use a computer while adjusting to residence life, taking a full course load, and being away from my family and friends. The first two years here were tough, but I'm glad that I didn't leave OU because my work here will open up opportunities that I never would have had if I'd gone back home.

Still another student participant said:

The main problem is that kids in Appalachian school districts aren't prepared to attend Ohio University. I personally know of dozens of very smart kids who were 'straight A' students at …. Schools. When they came to OU, they flunked their first quarter and were never able to recover no matter how hard they worked. The problem is that students are held to very low standards in these schools and then they get to OU, it is not enough.

The lack of preparation of regional students was definitely a recurrent theme in the survey data.

**Regional Campus and Transfer Students**

Students who are attending at regional campuses or are transferring to the main campus may have difficulties different from most mainstream students. For example, a student attending a regional campus said:

Many times students have difficulties due to our economic gap, many of us are still considered poor and therefore we tend to have more personal issues that sometimes are overlooked as just an excuse. When gas prices are as high as they are and some students drive 80 miles round trip daily to attend school, maybe a little more understanding would be helpful.

Regional students described needs to have faculty members understand their concerns, especially when they might be rather different than those coming to Ohio University from other places.

A faculty person wrote, “Many students are first-generation college attendees and drive over from a fifty-mile radius. OUC’s motto is ‘Come Home to College,’ quite appropriate, I think.” However, coming home to college for regional students attending at either the main or regional campuses often means traveling 50 or more miles each way to attend classes. When classes are spread out over several days during a week, ‘coming home to college’ seems to entail some effort and costs that residential students do not experience. Often undergraduate students who do
make their way to the main campus find themselves ill-prepared for what they encounter. For instance, one undergraduate student said, “Well, my first quarter here, I was really feeling homesickness. Everywhere I looked, it seemed like there were stuck up city people who looked at me like I was a country hick.” It makes one wonder whether regional students may sometimes experience the same feelings of isolation as international students.

Many regional students attending branch campuses and the main campus are non-traditional students. Typically, they are older and returning to college to obtain education for second careers. A 32 year old freshman wrote:

With the unskilled job market dwindling, more and more non-traditional students will be attending the University from the Appalachian region. I would like to see more programs specifically geared to adult students. Adult students need to be made to feel more welcome. The branches take that into account, but the Athens campus leaves branches out of the loop in a lot of valuable activities that could benefit the adult students.

These older students have concerns and needs much different from traditional students. Another student, seeing opportunities at Ohio University, wrote, “I came to college when I was told that I would not get anywhere and would live in Morgan County my whole life.” Regional students' reasons for seeking higher education often are related to desires to escape the region.

Young women at regional campuses may have adjustment needs in an educational setting that are different from more traditional students. A female student from OUZ wrote:

There needs to be another way to help older women get the educational funds or the help to find the monies that they so desperately need. So many older women are left with no provider and cannot manage a low income, along with trying to find ways to pay for tuition and books. This has been one of the biggest stressors for me. There are a lot of women floundering because they do not know all of the ins and outs of trying to get back to school and STAY THERE.

Many young women from the region may marry younger or be a single parent before they make the decision to attend college. A faculty person said: "Reach out to young women, especially at the regional campuses. Domestic Violence, power and control issues are rampant in their young dating and married lives. I can't tell you all the horror stories I hear when these bright young women find out what kind of work I do."

Meeting the needs of non-traditional students from regional campuses often presents challenges different from those associated with the main campus. Many survey participants stated that more needs to be done by Ohio University to attend to the educational needs of those transitioning from regional campuses to the main campus.

**Stereotypes Encountered in Educational Settings**

A number of survey participants identified that Appalachian students are often discriminated against and stereotyped by their speech and other personal characteristics. One student wrote,
“We're not stupid even though many think we are, we're also not all on welfare or in-bred either, my cousin’s brothers nor my uncle’s sister are not my spouse.” Another student said, “The preconceptions about Appalachian students and residents must be dispelled. We are not ‘slow’ because we might have a different accent. Just give us a chance and you will be pleasantly surprised.” A faculty member wrote:

As a linguist, I'm interested in dialect variation; especially in the area we call the Midland. This overlaps the diagonal Appalachian mountain and plateau chain. I've published several articles on the dialects of this area and am interested in dispelling myths about Appalachian English and promoting respect for it as a legitimate dialect. Unfortunately, it is denigrated in this area, particularly by public school teachers, and that only fosters further social and cultural divisions. This lack of respect is a fundamental problem in this area. I've seen primary and secondary school administrators and teachers intimidate parents, simply because the parents weren't as educated and the administrators/teachers ‘talked down to them.’ Primary and secondary educators cannot assume parents are able to assist children with homework. While many Appalachians are highly intelligent and often highly educated, often children come from homes where the parents don't have a high school degree.

This respondent suggested that parents need assistance with self-development and the tools necessary to assist their children with homework.

An undergraduate student taking Swahili described exposure to international students and reported that one had related that she had thought that all Americans were basically wealthy, until she worked for a local social agency. This American student suggested that OU get more involved in schools (not just Athens, but Meigs, Gallia, Vinton, Scioto, etc.) at the elementary and secondary levels to better inform the children of Appalachian communities about ways to overcome economic disadvantages through a college education. A faculty person wrote about the University, “We focus on minority recruitment because of their disadvantaged background, but make little effort to help those of Appalachia who may be even more disadvantaged. Much of this was brought to the public view by political activist, Rev. Jessie Jackson.”

Some respondents thought there was value for the University to consider the Appalachian region as similar to other underserved and rural populations.

Some survey participants lamented on conflicts experienced with others by those identifying themselves as Appalachian while attending Ohio University. One student described being insulted and getting in fights, he said:

I have come across many people at OU that think the people from my area are ‘hillbillies,’ and I have even gotten into fights about it. I see comments like this as a personal insult, not only to me, but to my family (who are all college educated from OU). This may not sound like the actions of an ‘educated’ person, but when people keep ‘dogging’ and degrading you, it gets old.
Reasons why Appalachian students are late or miss classes may relate to things like work responsibilities, family needs, or the fact that they have to travel long distances daily to attend school. A student from the Appalachian region said that professors need to know that, “our families are very important. In the Appalachian region we were raised to believe that family is #1.” Another student wrote, “Many Ohio University students do not respect the local people simply because they think the locals stupid or weird. I think more classes should be offered so students and community members could respect and understand more about one another.” Many wrote comments similar to this: “The University should not just cater to students from northern Ohio, but have respect for the local students of Appalachia as well.” It seems that many think that faculty members do not pay adequate attention to the differing needs of students.

A faculty member wrote about “patronizing attitudes toward the locals.” Another respondent wrote “Locals (I mean true locals, not Athens imported locals) don't appreciate being shown the errors in their ways, but they do appreciate help and concern.” Another faculty member suggested, “Incoming Appalachian students should be welcomed just as other minority groups are. These kids need to be nurtured - particularly if we want to capitalize on their gifts when they are finished with school. We need to show them how to be successful here - not in Chicago or Columbus.” This was a message repeatedly conveyed by many participants.

Perceptions of Ohio University’s Relationship with Appalachia

Issues associated with image seem to be a concern at Ohio University when the topic of Ohio University and Appalachia is raised. Many comments indicate that the community needs to be more involved in the educational process. For instance, one person said, “I feel like OU is a fish out of water in Appalachian Ohio. There's a very distinct distance between the academic world and the local community.” This attitude is reinforced throughout the survey as many students discuss not being taught anything about Appalachia. A graduate student wrote, “I don't feel like any of my graduate coursework has raised any discussion on the topic of Appalachia. It has not seemed to be a prominent issue.” An undergraduate student said, “If I would have seen more classes [about Appalachia] offered, I would have taken them.” Another student wrote, “Personally, I would like to be more involved with the issue, but don't know how to go about doing that.” Many students indicated some introduction to Appalachia or course work related to the region and its people would be helpful.

Many participants shared this student's perceptions: “I believe that there is a pervasive, low-level prejudice against students from Appalachia, but I have no hard evidence.” Others also shared the perception that Athens presents a place to obtain an education without providing students a strong opportunity to learn from the region or a chance to understand the diversity that exists. For example, a student wrote:

I think a lot of students come to Athens, attend the university for four years, and then leave without gaining any appreciation for the region and its residents. It is as though Athens exists in some sort of bubble. This lack of knowledge about one's neighbors contributes significantly, I believe, to some of the stereotyping that continues to cast local residents in a negative light and to deteriorating town-gown relations.
Another person said, “Appalachia is definitely a ‘diversity’ issue that seems to not count when diversity is discussed. OU has too many rich spoiled brats and no one seems to care about lower income kids.” Many shared the viewpoint that OU is more interested in the state’s urban areas and needs to do a better job embracing the Appalachian region.

Although Ohio University has been in Athens for more than 200 years, many perceived the University and those associated with it as outsiders. One person wrote, “Appalachian stereotypes are a barrier, especially at the undergraduate level. Due to geographic isolation and the coal mining industry's collapse, Appalachians tend to fear outsiders. My perspective is the University is often seen as an outsider to the community.” Continuing to build cooperative efforts between the University and its regional communities was recommended by many. Another respondent provided a representative comment of what many others echoed:

Stereotypes of the ‘locals’ being poor, uneducated, unmotivated, and just generally ‘red-necks,’ leads to an elitist attitude throughout the faculty, which is handed down to students. It seems to me that there are two communities in Athens County. One is the elitist groups associated with Ohio University who are typically much more liberal than the surrounding community. The community outside of Athens city is much more conservative and places value on home and family and working hard for a living. There is a definitely a gap between the two communities that, if bridged, could greatly benefit both.

Several participants noted that faculty members need to sincerely understand the region better and not merely focus on it when it benefits them personally for research funding or scholarly endeavors. The attitude of many was suggested by one individual. “We need to make southeastern Ohio a priority for developing economic development programs, improving educational opportunities for our youth, and improving social services.” Other respondents wrote things that implied that the University and its faculty, administrators, and staff need to recognize the talents and expertise of local people from the region. For example, a respondent suggested, “Most professors consider the Appalachian student to be lower than themselves and possibly less educable than other students.” Comments from many indicated that at Ohio University prejudice was often experienced in relationship to Appalachia.

Participants identified a need for Ohio University to embrace its Appalachian connections. A student suggested that OU, “create an appreciation for the positives of Appalachian culture and/or the people (including students) who come from the region and a respect for the ‘natives’ and their attitudes and expectations.” A faculty member pointed out that OU, “had a chance to host the Appalachian Studies Association conference in 2006 and lost it because OU wouldn't outbid Sinclair Community College in Dayton--to top a mere $40,000!” The individual continued:

ASA is the largest such organization in the country, devoted to work on and involvement in regional policy making, ecology, economics, schooling, arts and literature, folklore and music, mining and agriculture, etc. This event could have been a forum for change in our area--not some half-educated group of ‘concerned’ faculty and students who never venture beyond Stroud's Run or Amesville.
Other respondents commented about faculty and student interactions. One student described her perspective arguing: “Professors need to realize many of their students work during the semester to pay for tuition. Also, professors who assign group project work need to remember that not all students live on campus. It is difficult to meet the group project requirements when a group member commutes from Chillicothe or Zanesville.” Another student response provided some understanding about what many seem to encounter at OU:

> Many students never come into contact with the Appalachian culture. We become immersed in our college-student bubble, and never consider how fortunate we are to be given the opportunity to go to college. We walk around in name brand clothing without even stopping to consider the children that are going hungry and sparsely clothed only a few miles away. The University fails to pop this bubble and challenge students' ignorance. It is hard to say what the University is doing well, because I have never personally seen a University event or course which facilitates interaction between the Appalachian people and the students.

A faculty member wrote, “Teachers should try to weave lessons on the local culture into their syllabi whenever possible; and if teachers themselves are not informed, they should try to become so. Inviting local guest speakers is one good way to do this and have some education from the 'town' to the 'gown' for a change.” Comments in the survey suggest that many have the perception that more could be done by the university to honor and respect the diversity of Appalachia and its people.

**Positive Responses to Appalachia by Ohio University**

Not all responses about Ohio University were negative. In fact, many respondents identified positive aspects about the way the University addresses education and relates to the community. Although many suggested changes to be made, many thought the university had an increasing sensitivity to the needs of Appalachian students and was making great strides in its efforts to work with communities and address regional campus needs. Some participants said nothing should be changed at OU and reported that things should continue as they currently exist. Many reported positive ways the University interacts with local schools and community organizations to make positive changes. For example, specific strengths identified about the University included:

- Awareness of Appalachia and its needs that might be completely ignored if the University were not located here
- Classes pertaining to Appalachia (e.g., geography of Appalachia, political science classes)
- High approval of OU participation in the economic development of the region (e.g., Small Business Development Center, the Edison Biotechnology Institute and the Innovation Center, ILGARD)
- The partnerships recently forged in the College of Communication (Appalachia Reads and the American Cancer Society Partnership)
- The regional campus system accessibility to many in the region who would not have the opportunity otherwise
• An extensive OU-COM outreach program that is very valuable to Athens and its surrounding counties
• The College of Education has attempted to address diversity issues related to social problems such as poverty, racism etc. through student observations and student teaching in local schools
• Growing attention given to Appalachian literature in the English department
• Residence Life’s expectation that all Resident Assistants organize an opportunity for students to get involved in a community service project
• Kids on Campus program
• Programs related to the area school systems, as well as those in outlying communities
• Annual Women in Appalachia Conference at the Zanesville Campus
• Many faculty teaching via experiential learning
• The Voinovich Center programs such as the Consortium for Energy, Economics and the Environment that deal with issues of ‘jobs versus the environment’
• Kennedy Museum exhibitions about Appalachia Fall 2003
• The Vis-Com department’s encouragement for all students to engage with the surrounding communities to create a hands-on learning experience in Appalachia
• Sociology and Women Studies departments focus on addressing inequality that could be tied more closely to Appalachian issues
• Appalcorp programs
• The Small Business Development Center work with some academic programs and departments on campus to teach about business in the Appalachian area

Student Recruitment

Survey respondents were from the Athens campus and from regional campuses. These participants identified a number of education issues that might be considered by Ohio University. One student pointed out, “The focus seems like it should be less towards teaching about Appalachia and more about teaching in Appalachia!” Here are some suggestions made by participants pertained to the recruitment and education of those from the Appalachian region:

• Offer an introduction to the Appalachian area and its people to incoming students and faculty
• Offer a class for non-traditional students who need to know about current technology and access to OU facilities
• Assure that all students know about financial planning resources
• Recruit more students from Appalachian regions
• Keep academic standards at OU or the regional campuses high, but provide students with the resources needed to be successful.
• Mentor students in academic areas
• Expose children of southeast Ohio to the possibilities of going to college
• Address the distinct learning needs of K-12 when of teaching students about how to work with youth in southeast Ohio
• Assist regional campus students who must balance work and school in order to obtain a degree in higher education

Student Engagement
Many participants mentioned specific teachers, classes, and University activities that positively address issues related to Appalachia in a positive way. Others suggested moves that would better inform all University students and faculty members about the region where they work and study. Here are some areas participants thought could be changed at OU to enhance its ties to the region:

**Curricula**

- Offer diversity classes that include information about Appalachia and its people
- Add a class that addresses the history of the town and area (include field trips)
- Engage students in learning experiences about Appalachia
- Increase students’ cultural breadth about Appalachia
- Offer courses like Psychology of Appalachia more often
- Thread ideas and content about Appalachia into classes whenever possible.
- Include Appalachian arts and music as part of the University courses and activities (e.g., Homegrown Music Night at Memorial Auditorium).
- Teach more history, economics, and English courses about the history and state of Appalachia to educate students on their location and Athens’ past.
- Create a way students interested in Appalachia can identify all classes concerning Appalachia offered at OU (e.g., departments offering the classes)

**Support**

- Create a library resource where materials related to Appalachia can be easily located
- Utilize service learning to break barriers between students and the Athens community
- Enhance activities of Residence Life that address students’ understandings about Appalachia
- Establish a unified approach to providing information and services related to Appalachia
- Encourage sororities and fraternities to involve themselves in service activities that are address local needs of southeast Ohio populations beyond Athens County
- Develop an Appalachian Student Organization to support regional students and offer information to other students
- Establish peer outreach teams to go to regional high schools and talk to students about the college experience (e.g., pre-enrollment workshops that focus on college life, study habits, and things like homesickness and tolerance)

**Connecting Ohio University and the Appalachian Region**

Others suggested that educational activities of students and faculty members at Ohio University encourage greater involvement within the community and Appalachian region. Some examples of areas where survey respondents thought that the university could advance its mission are:

- Share university resources with individuals, families, groups, and communities from the region in aggressive and constructive
- Address issues of poverty in the surrounding communities from various perspectives.
- Assure that more research conducted at this university is of use to the region
• Create more opportunities for researchers, sociologists, psychologists, doctors, and students on the Athens campus to interact with people from the region (e.g., form bonds with elementary schools, create teaching partnerships, train for job skills, etc.)
• Realize the strengths of the region and create ways to harness them for overall improvement (e.g., refocus technology research efforts on local concerns, such as mining and other natural resource extraction technologies, and create an Appalachian scholarship fund to assist prospective students)
• Host a volunteer program for students and faculty to help those in need throughout southeast Ohio
• Create opportunities for medical students to learn about the health care needs of southeast Ohio residents
• Assure that student teachers from OU understand the special needs and circumstances of K-12 students in the region (e.g., disparities in readiness to learn, availability of needed supplies, family support)
• Follow Hocking College’s example of Robbins Crossing as a way to develop programs to help students and others learn about Appalachia and its cultural ties
• Create programs or scholarships that let Appalachian students celebrate or acknowledge their heritage
• Develop opportunities for K-12 students in the region to experience the arts, workshops, and lectures at Ohio University
• Work with others to use technology resources (both educational and material) to assist the underserved community
• Encourage faculty to use expertise and partner in sustainable development of the region (e.g., city development, ecological wastewater treatment, wetland or "living machine" greenhouse treatment)
• Engage in more listening and dialogue with the community about concerns/views and move away from what seems to be an attitude of entitlement
• Build upon the assets of the Voinovich Leadership Center and ILGARD (e.g., labor market analysis, marketing plans, regional goals, etc.)

CONCLUSIONS

Findings indicated that relationships between Appalachian stereotypes and education still exist. Many survey participants agreed that an opportunity to engage in more learning opportunities for students associated with the area would be beneficial. Although many faculty members are keenly aware of the region and provide students with time to thoughtfully engage with people and places of the region, others are insensitive, sometimes pejorative, and often propagate stereotypes rather than dispel them.

Orientation of faculty, students, and staff to the region may be important first steps in overcoming these images. Finding ways to connect academic activities and scholarship to the region can be important ways to develop meaningful relationships between the community and the academy. Using strategies such as active learning, service learning, and innovative uses of technology could be ways to foster more directed student engagement with the needs of the region and its people. Employing focused encounters with the region's people can dispel myths and stereotypes and promote better understanding about the diversity found in southeastern Ohio.
A difficult task to accomplish is linked to the educational needs of those living in the region. Many students from Appalachian counties are disadvantaged in comparison to students from other places when it comes to K-12 education and need additional resources and supports. Work with regional families and communities to foster values of higher education are needed. Incentives to support abilities of local families to finance higher education for their children are still needed. OU may wish to consider more substantive ways to support and encourage students transitioning from regional high schools to college.

Although Ohio University and its constituents have a 200-year history in the region, many still view the academic institution as an outsider. Demonstrating University concern about educational and socio-economic needs of those in the region and identifying the needs of its "local diversity" could advance links with the communities of southeast Ohio and its families. Identifying the commonalities shared between needs of the Appalachian region and its people and other underserved rural regions in the nation and world could provide academic and scholarly opportunities beneficial to all.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop a new faculty orientation about Appalachia.
- Develop a transitional program that assists students in southeastern Ohio to move from high school to college.
- Promote the value of higher education in southeastern Ohio.
- Encourage faculty to find ways to include learning about the community in course content.
- Create a University and area task force to find ways to promote scholarly opportunities to the underserved.