

**Appalachian
Teaching
Project:
Alumni Survey Report**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Executive Summary	4
2	Methods	6
3	Results	7

Executive Summary

Appalachian Teaching Project (ATP) students engage in research projects in Appalachian communities that address endemic problems. At the completion of the project each year, students present their findings to the Appalachian Regional Commission staff and invited guests at an annual conference in Washington, DC. The East Tennessee State University Applied Social Research Lab was contracted by the program sponsor, Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), to conduct a study to better understand the benefit that students see in participation in ATP, as well as opportunities to better align the program outcomes with the ARC mission. To this effect, this report provides analysis of the findings of a survey conducted with alumni from the ATP. The report highlights include:

Methods

The survey was administered online through Qualtrics and received 118 completed responses. The target sample included the approximately 2,000 students who have participated in the ATP across 22 Appalachian schools since 2001. Of these, we were able to obtain names for 1,545 alumni. Through multiple search channels, we were able to obtain 312 email addresses from the names within our target sample.

Respondent Demographics

The median age of respondents for this survey is 27 years old, with the oldest person being 74 years old and the youngest person being 20 years old. A majority of the alumni who responded are white (89%), have at least a Bachelor's Degree or higher (79%), and participated in the ATP within the last 5 years (56%).

Participation Outcomes

Most alumni either completely agree or mostly agree that participation in the ATP has helped them develop skills in community-based research (93%), helped them increase their knowledge of sustainable community development (92%), and helped them develop a better understanding of the Appalachian region (92%). Approximately half of the alumni report that their current jobs involve community partnerships (49%) and over ¼ of them report that their current job involves community-based research (41%), community development (40%), or economic development (32%).

A majority of alumni (65%) say that they still live in the Appalachian region and that their participation in the ATP either moderately (36.8%) or highly (23.7%) influenced their decision to stay in the region. Alumni were also asked how participating in the ATP has impacted their careers and opportunities. Approximately ¾ of alumni state that participation in the ATP has impacted their career choice in some way (73%) and over half say that their participation has impacted their career opportunities in some way (68%).

Background

Since 2001, over 2,250 students across 22 Appalachian schools have participated in the Appalachian Teaching Project (ATP). ATP is funded by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)—a federal-state partnership with the mission “to innovate, partner, and invest to build community capacity and strengthen economic growth in 420 counties across the 13 Appalachian states. ARC’s investment plan identifies five investment goals to advance this mission: creating economic opportunity; preparing a ready workforce; building critical infrastructure; leveraging natural and cultural assets; and cultivating leadership of community capacity.”

Each year participating ATP students engage in research projects in Appalachian communities that address endemic problems. In the process, students build leadership capacity through applied research and community development in the community setting. Participating institutions structure their courses differently, but all offer a for-credit course that asks, “How do we build on community assets to shape a positive future for Appalachia?” and addresses one or more of the five strategic investment goals of the ARC.

At the completion of the project each year, students present their findings to the ARC staff and invited guests at an annual conference in Washington, DC. The purpose of the program evaluation, conducted by the East Tennessee State University’s (ETSU) Applied Social Research Lab (ASRL), is to better understand the benefit that students see in participation. Data collected for this purpose and presented in this report were collected through a survey of alumni from the 22 institutions since 2001, inclusive of the 2018 cohort.

Methodology

Survey Design and Administration

ASRL worked in collaboration with ATP faculty and ARC staff to develop a survey instrument to capture the impact of the ATP program on alumni. The final instrument is provided in Supplement 2. The survey was administered through Qualtrics between June 17, 2019 and August 31, 2019. As of August 31, there were 118 complete responses to the survey.

Sampling

The population for this study includes any student who has participated in an ATP affiliated class since 2001. At the beginning of the project, ASRL and Dr. Roach reached out to participating schools to develop a list of ATP alumni and their email addresses, if they were known. This produced a list of 1,545 names. Each name was then web-searched for contact information, including on LinkedIn and Facebook to try and find an active email for as many students as possible. The directory of contact information was updated throughout the duration of the data collection. In addition to directly emailing alumni, (1) the school directors were asked to share the survey link with their ATP alumni, (2) the survey link was shared on ATP and ARC social media sites, (3) the survey link was shared to the ARC listserv. Additionally, a contact survey was used to allow former participants to update their own contact information. The total number of emails sent for the last reminder was 312.

Results

Demographics. The median age of respondents for this survey is 27 years old, with the oldest person being 74 years old and the youngest person being 20 years old. A majority of the alumni who responded are white (89%), have at least a Bachelor's Degree or higher (79%), and participated in the ATP within the last 5 years (56%). None of the respondents report that they did not finish their degree and are not planning on completing it. In contrast, 44% report currently being a student. A demographic profile of respondents is provided in **Table 1** and a breakdown of responses by ATP institution is provided in **Table 2**.

Table 1. Basic Demographic Information for Alumni Survey Respondents

Alumni Respondents	
Age (median, years)	27
Percent Female (n=117)	64%
Caucasian/White (n=118)	89%
Education - Not finished degree, working towards completing it (n=116)	18%
Education - Currently a student (n=118)	44%
Education - Bachelor's Degree or higher (n=116)	79%
Working full time (n=117)	67%
Not working, retired, disabled, etc. (n=117)	12%
Participated in ATP within the last 5 years (n=117)	56%

Table 2. Institutional Break Down of Alumni Survey Respondents

Alumni Respondents	
Alfred State College	13.6%
Appalachian State University	8.5%
Auburn University	11.9%
East Tennessee State University	16.1%
Fairmont State University	1.7%
Frostburg State University	0.8%
Indiana University of Pennsylvania	2.5%
Morehead State University	2.5%
Ohio University	1.7%
Radford University	8.5%
SE Kentucky Community and Technical College	8.5%
Union College	0.8%
University of North Georgia	3.4%
University of Pittsburgh Bradford	0.8%
University of Tennessee – Knoxville	9.3%
Virginia Tech	1.7%
Young Harris College	5.9%

Program Participation. Respondents were asked two open-ended questions about their program and project under ATP: (1) “What program concentration was the ATP course associated with at your institution?” and (2) “Please describe your ATP project(s) in 1-2 sentences. If you have participated in multiple ATP projects, please describe each in 1-2 sentences.” **Table 3** provides frequencies for the course concentration. Responses in the Other category included Studio Art, Secondary Education Capstone, Place Based Pedagogy, MPPA, Master of Science, Service Learning, and Honors College.

Table 3. Course Concentrations

	Frequency
Anthropology	2
Appalachian Studies	50
Architecture	8
Biology	2
Community Planning/Engagement/Design	20
Documenting Community Traditions/ Folklore	4
Environmental Sciences	2
Ichthyology	5
Political Science/Public Administration	3
Sociology	2
Sustainability	2
Other	10

Because of the diverse way in which respondents described their ATP project, we conducted a word frequency content analysis to understand themes. The top occurring words across the 94 responses to this question were community (n=32), project (n=23), worked (n=15), local (n=15), county (n=14), town (n=13), oral (n=11), economic (n=10), focused (n=10), and development (n=9). See **Figure 1**. Responses typically included the community in which the project was conducted and the general focus on the project, with numerous responses giving details on the methods of the project and/or discussing the community-involvement aspect (see Supplement 3 for full list of project descriptions, n=94): Select direct quotes are provided below.

- *A project involving everyone in the studio class. We split into groups of 4 and divided up the town of Wellsville among the groups and proposed redesigns of the community to improve the livability of the town. We then presented our complete plans to people that lived in the town*
- *Based in the Copper Basin region of TN, my project focused on the creation of a greenhouse at the local high school.*
- *Creating a guidebook to snorkeling in southern Appalachia in order to increase ecotourism in the area while enhancing water quality and preserving our native fishes.*
- *My ATP experience involved looking at the AASIS high school/college mentor program through Radford University.*
- *Interviewed three men who are/were lumberjacks in the Great Smoky Mountains area. I learned of their practices for sustainable forestry, methodologies for the ways they did business, and how they came to their final product.*
- *We worked with a local conservation organization to promote their work and story, and the ecological and cultural history of the New River.*

Figure 1.



Participation Outcomes. The data shows us that a majority of participants are actively developing new skills and a better understanding of the Appalachian region. Most alumni either completely agree or mostly agree that participation in the ATP has helped them develop skills in community-based research (93%), helped them increase their knowledge of sustainable community development (92%), and helped them develop a better understanding of the Appalachian region (92%). Additionally, 60% of alumni or more say that they strongly agree or agree with all eleven of the potential outcomes asked about during this survey.

However, there are two areas where alumni feel that the program can improve by marking “mostly or completely disagree.” These two areas are helping to develop new contacts in the broader community (16%) and developing skills to establish community/organization partnerships within the region (9%). See **Figures 2-3**.

Figure 2. Participation in the ATP...

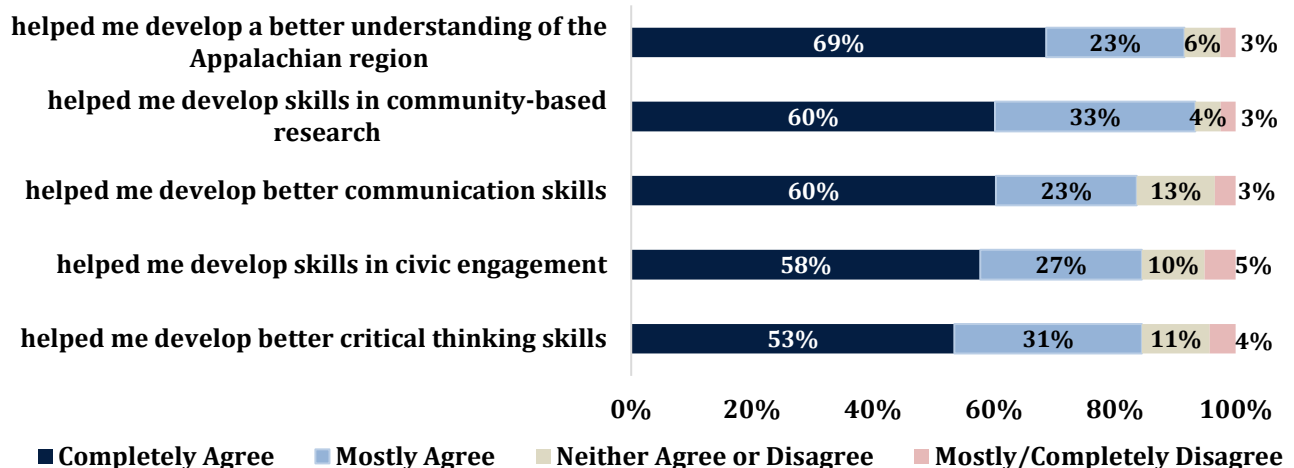
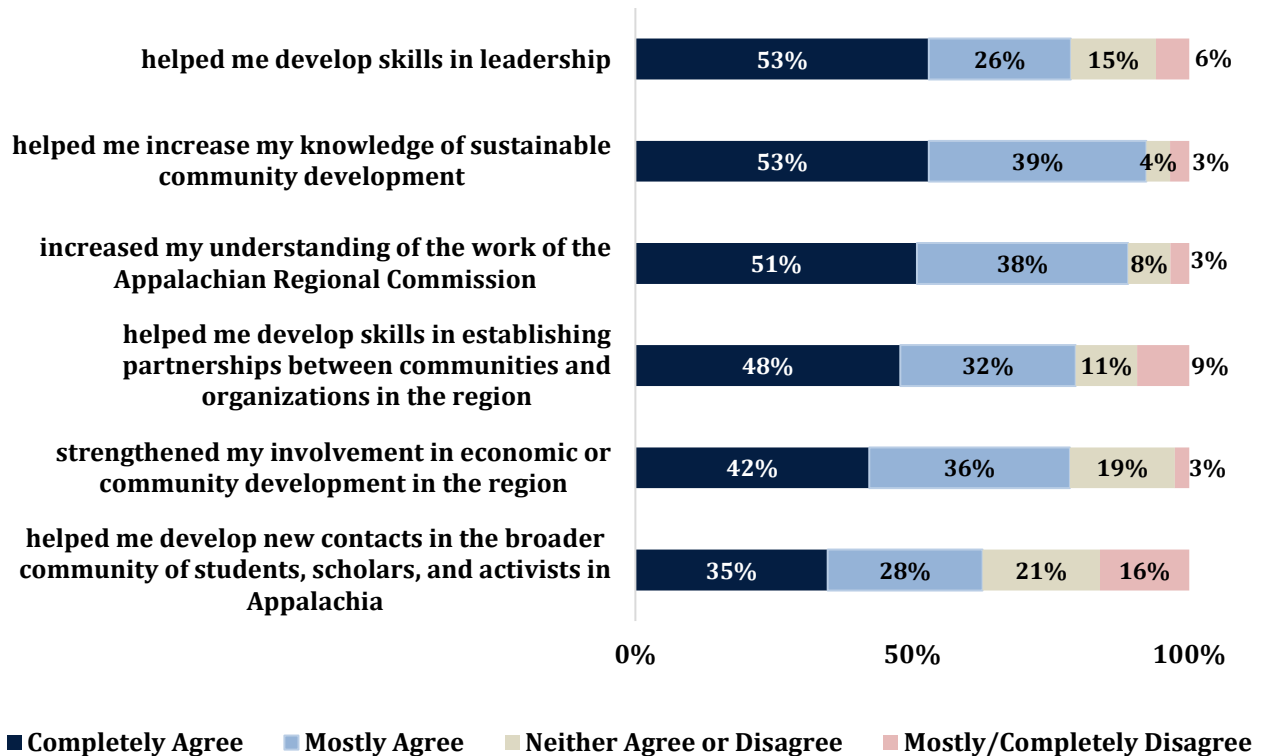


Figure 3. Participation in the ATP...



Regarding impact on their perception of Appalachia, respondents were asked, “How did your participation in the ATP help you develop a broader vision for the potential of the Appalachian region?” Responses focused heavily on the inter-related potential of the region, economics of the region, culture of the region, and history of the region. In fact, most of the 77 responses to this question would fit into multiple of these areas. Select direct quotes are provided below.

Better Understanding of the Potential of the Appalachian Region:

- *After doing the research I now know exactly what potential the Appalachian region has to offer for the future. I learned that there is something that is available to the people of Appalachia that could be used as an asset to enhance the economy of the region and that is art. Whether it be pottery, or any type of art and musical abilities the Appalachia region is very rich in artistic ability and talents. Now we need to come up with a plan to make these talents more profitable for the people of the region.*
- *I am from Wise County, VA, so I have thought my whole life about the potential and beauty of the Appalachian region. ATP is what really got me going thinking about what are some tangible things we can do to develop the region economically.*
- *I gained a better understanding of the region as a whole, its assets, and the challenges it faces. Furthermore, I gained lasting friendships and partnerships.*
- *The variety of projects presented shows Appalachia is using unique ways of developing potential to the region.*

Better Understanding of Industry or Economics in the Appalachian Region:

- *Allowed me to see the impact of a single industry economy on a region and to understand the possible pathways needed to heal those problems created and to develop a new diversified economy*
- *Allowed me to see the various economic chances available to individuals in the region.*
- *Diversified economies are possible and important*
- *Learning more about agri-tourism was incredibly helpful, from a community cultural capital perspective; it's something that I do refer back to in my PhD program.*
- *we have assets that aren't recognized by the country as a whole and should be discussed and valued on a national level*

Better Appreciation for the Culture of the Appalachian Region:

- *Appalachia is known for its resilience, which continues today thanks to the ARC and initiatives such as the ATP.*
- *I had a better understanding that the Appalachian region and culture still exists to this day.*
- *Spirit and resilience of the people of the region.*

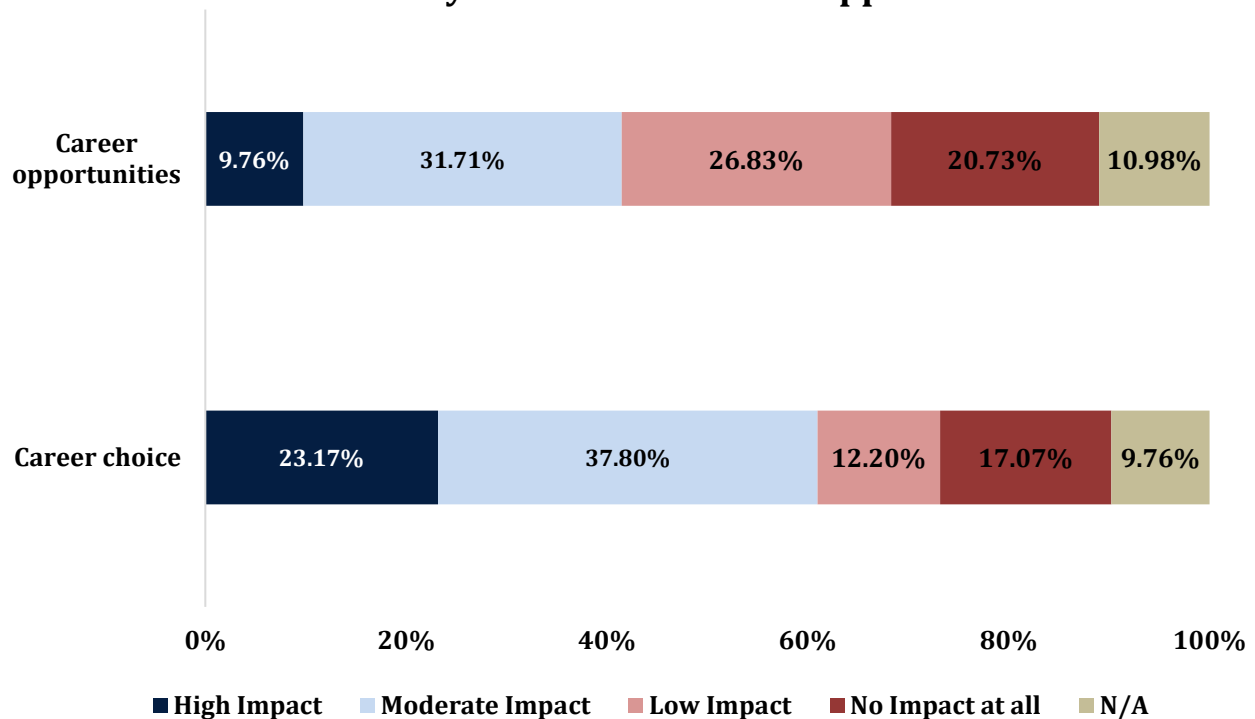
Better Understanding of the History of the Region:

- *Before participating I didn't know the detailed history of the region or understand the current events. The many ideas that students had made me realize the many ways that the communities can be positively impacted through these projects.*
- *Despite living in the Appalachian region for nearly 10 years, I knew very little about the region. This project was extremely helpful in exposing me to the region, its history, and its unique culture and challenges.*

Current Employment. A majority of alumni (65%) say that they still live in the Appalachian region and that their participation in the ATP either moderately (36.8%) or highly (23.7%) influenced their decision to stay in the region. These alumni also report high employment rates, with a majority of Appalachian residents working either full time (64.5%) or part time (21.1%).

Alumni were also asked how participating in the ATP has impacted their careers and opportunities. Approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of alumni state that participation in the ATP has impacted their career choice in some way (73%) and over half say that their participation has impacted their career opportunities in some way (68%). See **Figure 4**.

Figure 4. How much of an impact has your participation in the ATP had on your career choice or opportunities?



Respondents were also provided with an open-ended question: “How has your participation in the ATP impacted your choice of career?” Of the 45 respondents who answered this question, most explained different ways in which ATP has impacted their choice of career, some explained that they chose ATP because it supported a career path they were already following, and a few (n=2) provided that this program did not have an impact, or had little impact, on their career. For those responding that ATP impacted their career choices, impacts fell into the areas of increasing their desire to work in a career where they work with communities, impacting their desire to work in a career in a specific area (examples included teaching, sustainable community development, and other service fields), impacted their decision to continue their education, and impacted their decision to work in the Appalachian region/work with Appalachian communities. Respondent quotes for each of these areas, as well as for ways in which respondents expressed that participation confirmed their career choices, are provided below.

Impacted Desire to Work with Communities:

- *My participation in the ATP fostered my interest in working directly with communities on practical projects that generate tangible impacts. Beyond simply 'speaking to' communities, it helped me develop more direct skills in more bi-directional engagement, which in turn has contributed to my work as a planner and educator.*
- *More focused on community activism and environmental policy.*
- *My career choice was already made but I am more involved with other civic engagement activities and organizations.*

- *Participating in the ATP gave me more experience connecting academic work to community work, and that helped shape my future studies and career as a community-engaged academic.*
- *Community involvement is a huge part of the Planning profession. This experience helped me to understand the importance of this involvement and what it entails.*
- *It allowed me to recognize my interest in community organizing and working with communities.*
- *I've learned that the sense of COMMUNITY is essential to the welfare of all those that reside within it and I've chosen to work within a career field focused on creating that sense of home and working to better the community around me.*
- *The project I worked on as part of my participation was useful in giving me direct experience with engaging in community-based projects, and confirmed for me that I wanted to direct my career in a way that included a human/community focus.*

Greater Knowledge on a Specific Topic/Increased Desire to Work in a Specific Area:

- *The ATP made me more aware of how building design and development affect a community and its people. I will never forget what another student said about working on a project in her home town. She said she had never been proud of where she came from before working on her project. I have always been proud of where I came from and her comments made me want to work in a sector of architecture that can have positive impacts on distressed communities.*
- *I am more sympathetic of the disparities across the area and how the effect people differently. It furthered my decision to work in the service field.*
- *I am currently employed in urban community development but my participation in the ATP has inspired me to pursue a career in rural community development.*
- *It helped me clarify my career goals. Instead of going to law schools I got a degree in sustainable development.*
- *Participation in the ATP steered me towards more civic engagement and Appalachian engagement projects and opportunities in college, which collectively set my path towards working in nonprofits in the South and Appalachian region. ATP helped me feel more comfortable about wanting to learn about Appalachia, a region that is presented as "un-understandable" sometimes, which allowed me to increase travel to, understanding of, and engagement in the region. Growth in knowledge of the Appalachian Regional Commission has also been helpful for me in pursuits in my undergraduate and professional career to this point.*
- *The ATP was my first hands-on experience with community-based projects. Since then, I have sought additional opportunities to work on community projects, and have done so many times. My passion for citizen engagement has grown as a result of the ATP, and I have focused my studies and career goals to ensuring that I can continue to help build better neighborhoods and communities, providing a sense of place and economic security for the people who live there.*
- *I am now a Teacher. Working with students through ATP influenced that decision greatly.*

Impacted Choice to Obtain a Higher Degree:

- *Allowed me to follow a Master's degree that focused on the ARC and its relationship to the coal industry.*
- *The ATP program . . . led me down a path to pursue M.S. degrees at [two institutions]. From there, I went on to pursue a PhD and although my dissertation was not directly linked to the Appalachian region, much of my coursework and thinking related back to the region. Now, with a PhD in public health in environmental epidemiology, I've been using my education as a professor at [an Appalachian]University. Since being [here], I have tried to stay active in the affairs of the region and have integrated the lessons I learned from the ATP and IRAPP into my own courses and my services that I provide.*

- *My participation in the ATP allowed me to continue my academic career by completing my Master's degree in anthropology and currently pursuing my PhD in anthropology. My research focus has continued to be on environmental topics that involve the inclusion of community development in partnership with valuable community stakeholders. I plan on pursuing a career that allows me to apply my skills, knowledge and passion to the continued progression of human-environment relationships, whether in Appalachia or another region of the United States.*

Greater Appreciation of Appalachian Culture/Impacted Desire to Work in Appalachia:

- *Helped me understand the importance of spreading knowledge of Appalachian culture, especially issues not often accurately understood by people not living in Appalachia.*
- *My time/experience with the ATP helped to solidify my deep appreciation and love for Appalachia. This is one of the reasons that I decided to stay and work in the region. The beauty of both landscape and people are inspirational to say the least.*
- *I do community engagement work and my love for serving people in the Appalachian region grew from the projects I did with my college. I have lived here my whole life and am so happy to give back to the strong people who raised me.*
- *I chose to teach children in this region.*
- *I became a public librarian to support education in the Appalachian region*
- *I am able to better understand the unique challenges and circumstances of those I serve in Appalachia through current job due in part to my ATP participation.*
- *I developed a love for Appalachia while attending Radford University. All of the experiences I had with Appalachia while there helped strengthen my desire to become a college professor.*
- *ATP helped me realize whatever career path I chose I chose for it to be within Appalachia. Out migration is a huge part of some of the problems the region faces.*

Confirmed Career Path:

- *I participated in ATP because it fit my career path in community development in Appalachia. I was established before participating*
- *Prior to ATP, I was interested in pursuing a career in community development in the Appalachian region and ATP was a great experience to prepare me for that career choice.*
- *My participation in ATP did not necessarily impact my career choice, however I am a professional artist, and it does have an effect on my art. I also started a community garden at my job which was influenced by my participant in ATP.*
- *I knew I wanted to work in this region. After ATP participation I fully realize now that change must come from within if it is truly going to take root. Outside entities for decades have been deciding the fate of Appalachia and while that outside influence has been both positive and negative - there must be a ground level area of expertise to guide the policies, vision, and future goals of those outside entities. ATP helped me realize that I can be one of those insider leaders.*

As presented in Figures 2-3, 60% or more alumni respondents report that participation in the ATP has helped them develop new skills and a better understanding in 11 different topic areas. To show how the skills and knowledge acquired through the ATP has been applicable to their real world jobs, we asked alumni if their current jobs involve some of the main goals of the program. Approximately half of the alumni report that their current jobs involve community partnerships (49%) and over ¼ of them report that their current job involves community-based research (41%), community development (40%), or economic development (32%). See **Figure 5**. Additionally, respondents were asked about their current professions. See **Table 4**.

Figure 5. Does your current job involve any of the following?

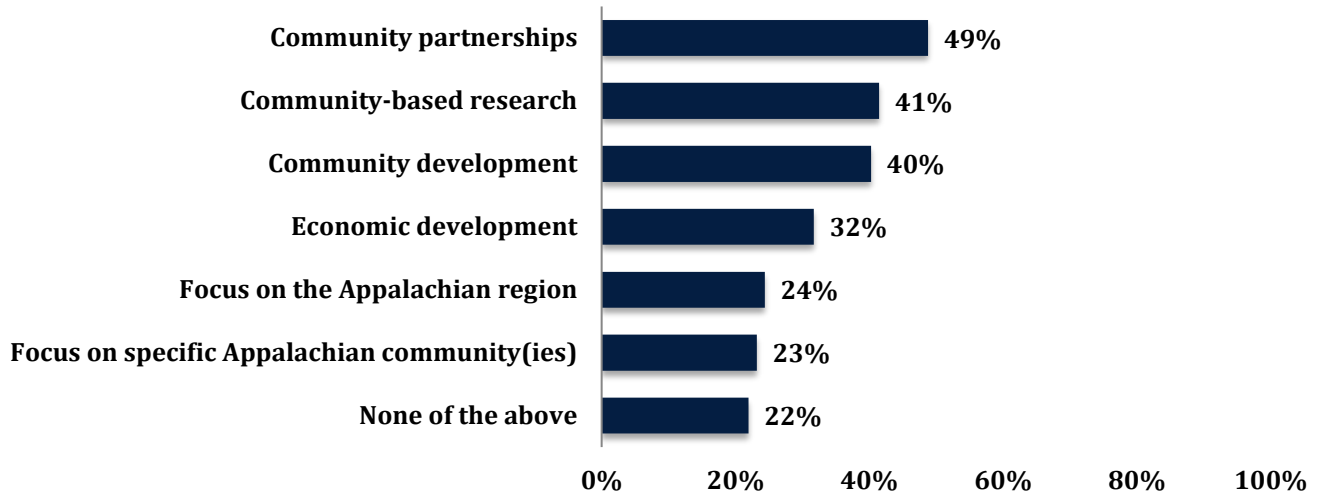


Table 4. Job Descriptions

	Frequency
Higher Education	9
Architect	11
Retail and Sales	7
Artist	5
Community Development	4
Researcher	5
Executive Assistant	2
Graduate Assistant	4
Educator	10
Nonprofit	4
Government	2
Student	2
Other ¹	33

¹ Americorps Member, Self Employed, Military Operations, Behavior Therapist, Sports Staff, Bike Mechanic, Construction Intern, Curator, Customer service rep, Environmental planner, Estimating processing, GRA archives and special collections, Grant manager, Juvenile directions, Librarian, Marketing administrator, Program manager, Office assistant, Outreach assistant, Outreach counselor, Personal Aide, Production clerk, Project designer, Project Director for the Mountain Training Network at Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical College, Rental coordinator, Residential assistant, Residential life, Right of way specialist, Seasonal technician, Software trainer/instructional designer, Training coordinator, Workflow manager, Entrepreneurial Community Assistant Coach

Participants were also asked, “How has participation in the ATP impacted your career opportunities?” Of the 36 respondents who answered this question, almost all explained positive ways in which their participation in ATP impacted their career opportunities. As supported below by direct quotes, these ways included that their participation led to a career opportunity, impacted career or research opportunities, provided skills that impacted career opportunities (i.e., public speaking, communication, applied research, leadership), led to direction in career path, and led to professional network development. Additionally, two students provided that ATP did not impact their career opportunities, stating: “Outside of academia, the general public is not well informed of ATP or, most concerningly, the ARC” and “No real impact.”

Directly Led to a Career Opportunity:

- *Having experience in community-oriented work under diverse conditions and with a range of stakeholders directly contributed to my first appointment subsequent to completing my master's degree.*
- *After my participation in the ATP, I had the opportunity to continue working in our target community of Macon County, Alabama. As a result, I formed new relationships, spoke at various organizations in the community about Auburn's ATP project, and was hired by Auburn University to continue assisting with outreach programs.*

Provided Experiences that Impacted Career or Research Opportunities:

- *My participation gave me experience in several community-based research techniques as well as project management and communications skills. These experiences gave me a foundation to build on when I continued my education as a researcher, which ultimately helped me get my current position as an assistant professor working with communities in Appalachia.*
- *I think it helped me open doors within my graduate program...It very much so opened my eyes to many research projects within graduate school.*
- *I was employed FT when I participated in the ATP and am still employed in the same position but I have been able to improve my work in community development as a result of participating in this project.*
- *Participation in ATP is great to use on my resume and to discuss during job interviews because it allows me to highlight skills such as collaborative team working abilities, establishing community partnerships, and my work with community development. Furthermore, ATP developed skills such as public speaking, team work, and much more.*
- *leadership and community involvement experience*
- *ATP is where I first taught children. Prior to leading a lesson on 'how to plant a tomato seed' I had never worked one on one with kids.*

Developed Skills that Positively Impacted Career Opportunities:

- *Made me a better public speaker.*
- *The type of education I received along with the program impacted me directly more so than impacted what employers may or may not think about me. The program overall from investigating problems, doing background research, collecting data, analyzing our findings, and then presenting the material to a national audience in DC including ARC officials as well as several regional conferences really made a positive impact on my career trajectory in the sciences and seeing beyond my own self-imposed horizons.*
- *The skills I gained by participating in the ATP has made me a competitive applicant in a variety of job positions. It also contributed to my acceptance into a Masters and Doctoral program as*

well as multiple applied research project teams including a \$200,000 EPA Area Wide Planning project.

- *Improved my communication and leadership skills which I can apply in my career. I can discuss the benefits of the experience with potential employers.*

Led to Direction in Career Path:

- *Being aware of the area and the strengths and weaknesses it has, has shown me that these issues are far reaching. I am more aware of the real-life problems in our area. I looked/always look for jobs where I can have the biggest impact.*
- *I feel ATP helped me get a better idea of the range of career opportunities in the region and in community development.*

Impacted Professional Network:

- *My friends from the university of North GA and Appalachian State have given me opportunities to further my professional development. I met them at ATP.*
- *ATP broadened my perspective of community impact work and brought me into contact with organizations doing community development work in the region. It helped me make some valuable connections.*
- *It helped me with networking.*

Finally, respondents were asked if they had any additional feedback to provide about ATP. Respondents provided both feedback praising the program and feedback intended to improve the program. Below, we provide examples of praise bifurcated as benefits of the program and expressing gratitude for the program. Next, we highlight quotes to express support for continuing or expanding the program. Finally, we provide recommendations provided by participants for improving ATP. Recommendations are presented as those specific to the conference, to communication and networking, and to the general program structure.

Highlighting Benefits of the Program:

- *Anyone looking to get involved with community involvement would greatly benefit from involvement with the ATP.*
- *Great program! keep it going and support it in lower economic communities*
- *I absolutely love ATP. It is such an excellent opportunity for young students to attend and participate in an academic conference with limited personal risk. Many of the students from my college who participate in ATP have not attended any other conference and have very little experience with public speaking. They're typically intimidated by their presentation but the format of ATP where everyone presents allows them to know that the audience will not unfairly judge them or their presentation.*
- *I love learning about projects outside of my specific field. I work with cultural arts programming but I've had the opportunity to learn about design, ecology and environmental projects that I wasn't aware of before ATP.*
- *It encouraged me to think about the region from different perspectives. As an outsider, I think that is important.*
- *The ATP was one of my favorite experiences in college. Forcing myself out of my comfort zone, I learned from the community I worked in, gained public-speaking experience, and made friends that have lasted much longer after our project together ended. I believe being engaged in one's community is a vital part of personal and communal growth, and the external, positive benefits of the ATP experience include increased social capital and economic growth for the Appalachian region.*

- *The members of the ATP staff whom we met are invested in the project, the institutions they sponsor, and students. Their encouragement and support is genuine and sincere - they see good work, good ideas emerging from the project.*

Expressing Gratitude for the Program:

- *ATP is a wonderful entity- it is a beautiful idea/concept, and it is carried out even better. The diverse universities and students represented is a great thing. I loved my ATP experience, and I am so thankful so many students who did not grow up in the Appalachian region are exposed to this experience to see the beauty and potential of our home.*
- *I don't quite know how to put the impact of the ATP into words. It touched a part of my mind and soul that I didn't even know existed. The importance of this project was staggering and everything about the ATP and ARC is a vital part of knowledge about Appalachian heritage and marked my years at Radford University more than any other collegiate experiences.*
- *I feel very fortunate to have participated in the ATP. Thank you so much for sponsoring and administering this program!*
- *It is a great program. I found it very useful to participate in projects that had a real impact on the community.*
- *Such a unique opportunity to work with students from across the states to find creative ways of encouraging social and economical change to communities that most of the world has turned a blind eye towards. Would highly recommend it to any student, and think a similar program should be a requirement for all students.*
- *Thank you so much for the opportunity. I learned quite a bit. Also, because of the interviews I did while involved in the project I learned about the benefits of raw milk- I've been consuming it ever since!*

Expressing Need for Continued or Greater Support:

- *I think this is a valuable and unique learning opportunity that should continue to be supported by the ARC.*
- *I wish programs like this were larger - I think it would work really well in regional high schools and in programs that might not otherwise be focused specifically on Appalachian issues.*
- *It should continue forever!*
- *Keep giving students this opportunity*
- *This is a truly fantastic project and I am so thankful to have been able to participate in it. Although I no longer do work in the Appalachian region, the skills, knowledge, and connections I developed from this experience are priceless.*
- *Try and extend the program to other universities. Fight for more government money and grants.*
- *wonderful program. hope it continues for years to come*
- *There needs to be more participants in terms of the number of universities who participate. Many large institutions in the region (WVU, UVA, UK, Penn State, Pitt) were not presenters at the conference when I was an attendee and presenter .*

Recommendations to Improve the Conference:

- *I think that student presenters outnumbered others at the conference. Which was good to see what others are doing to help develop the Appalachian region but getting more listeners from different levels of government and the community would bring more awareness to issues and ideas presented at the conference.*
- *I would suggest having stricter rules for the presentation. Most, if not all, groups went up there with a piece of paper that they read off of. While it is understandable to have notes, students are not gaining presentation and communication skills by reading a piece of paper to an audience. Also, see my comments above about the type of projects that should be conducted. If the goal is to*

increase engagement and opportunities in Appalachian regions, the projects need to reflect that. Universities present a unique opportunity to connect the youth, the community, and the government. All stakeholders will be more productive if there are clearer guidelines about the final project and write-up that need to be completed.

- *More time to talk to everyone about their posters individually.*
- *My class had to split up between a couple different tables because there wasn't one large enough for us when we got there. This was beneficial in meeting other students and learn more about what their project involved. I'm glad we had to sit with other people and recommend mixing up the tables more*
- *Provide more specific guidelines on project parameters*

Recommendations to Improve Networking and Communication Opportunities:

- *ATP should allow ARC employees to connect more with students.*
- *I would love to know if there is an alumni chapter for the ATP or at least a newsletter that goes out to past ATP participants on what the current participants are working on.*
- *Intentional on-going connections between alumni sounds useful.*

Recommendations to Improve the Structure of the Program:

- *Avoid making ATP classes evening classes for undergraduate students. Possibly split it to two classes a week in the afternoon.*
- *Involve more non-academic members of Appalachia. Often we box ourselves into a familiar setting, leaving out so many Appalachians we really should be reaching out to for input about how to best impact our communities. I feel that ATP/ARC focuses too many resources on preparing for elitist conferences and meetings rather than transferring money and knowledge into the darkest areas that really need to be a part of the sustainability movement.*