

# Renamed Center aims to raise profile

By [Sarah Newell Williamson](#) | Hickory Daily Record

Getting the word out to the community about the benefits of the Appalachian State University Center at Hickory is the most important thing the Center can do over the next five years.

If it can do this, an official said Friday, the Center will be a smashing success.

A survey completed by the Appalachian State University Greater Hickory Partnership in 2008 found that in the next five years it should focus on making the community aware the Center is here and what it offers. The partnership officially was renamed the Appalachian State University Center at Hickory on Wednesday.

John Quinterno's company conducted the study. He said the results showed the average attendee of the Center is a white female, married and with no minor children in the house. Most students are 25 to 54 years old and are employed full-time before, during and after getting their degree.

In every aspect of the survey, the location of the Center was the key factor for students, Quinterno said.

"The location and convenience of the Center trumped almost everything," he said. "One person said they chose it because of 'location. I don't want to drive to Boone.' So many people work on a full-time basis and can't drive to other places."

The study also showed that most respondents agreed the classes were an affordable option. However, no one surveyed said they were unemployed students.

"Do they not know the Center's here, is the marketing not getting to the right place?" Quinterno said. "Is the Center expanding to regional advancement, reaching to people who don't yet have degrees, or are you broadening the people who are already educated to get more educated, not that that's a bad thing."

Information from the study will be used in shaping the Appalachian State University Greater Hickory Partnership, said Jane Everson, the director.

"Anyone who wants to get the education they want, from the school they want, can go here," Everson said. "And we need to look for more diversity. We need to look at what we do well, and do it better."

Information from this study will be used in shaping the Center, Everson said. And though ASU is a large part of the new partnership, there will still be a local stake in what gets done at the center.

"The regional advisory council for all four counties will advise me on local work force development needs," she said. "We'll partner with ASU, as to whether they can bring a program here, or whether we should go outside to another university. It brings responsibility to them to bring it and deliver it."