



# EDUCATION

## WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

In the Asheville area, the education and business community work closely together to build the elements necessary to support a vibrant economy.



**RIVERBIRDRESEARCH**  
A DIVISION OF THE ASHEVILLE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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# COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

## ASHEVILLE-BUNCOMBE TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

7 College-wide academic divisions including: Academic Success, Allied Health, Arts and Sciences, Business and Hospitality Education, Emergency Services, Engineering and Applied Technology and Workforce Development/Continuing Education. AB Tech offers 61 curriculum programs, 61 degrees, 20 diplomas and 80 certificates.

Source: A-B Tech Institutional Profile 2019-2020

### Craft Beverage Institute

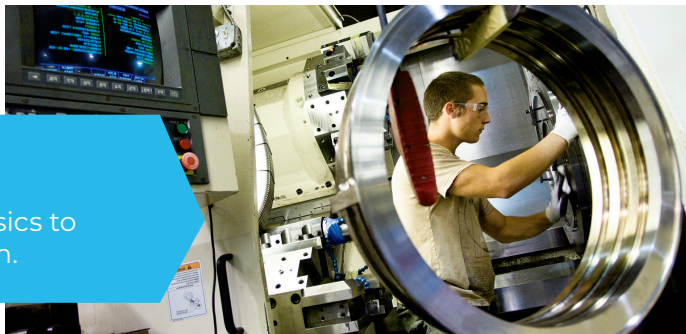
A-B Tech's Craft Beverage Institute of the Southeast provides the training needed to meet the professional standards of Asheville and Buncombe County's spectacular beverage industries.

### Advanced Manufacturing

The Advanced Manufacturing Center is a state of the art teaching facility focused on building and sustaining a skilled workforce.

### Information Technology

A-B Tech has certificates ranging from Computer Basics to Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA) preparation.



## HAYWOOD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Haywood Community College offers over 30 programs and supports workforce, industry, and small businesses through the Regional High Tech Center in Waynesville, NC.

- Award Levels: Certificates and Associate's Degree
- Enrollment (2019-2020): 1,973 curriculum students / 3,526 continuing education students
- Completions (2019-2020): 341 Certificates, 262 Associate's

Select programs include:

- Auto Systems Technology
- Forestry Management Technology
- Computer-Integrated Machining

## BLUE RIDGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Blue Ridge Community College offers more than 100 degrees, diplomas, and certificates in 30 areas of study and has one of the largest Continuing Education programs in the state.

- Award Levels: Certificates and Associate's Degree
- Enrollment (2019-2020): 2,806 curriculum students / 6,906 continuing education students
- Completions (2019-2020): 308 Certificates, 363 Associate's

Select programs include:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- IT & Computer
- Healthcare

>> Photography:

Courtesy of Blue Ridge Community College



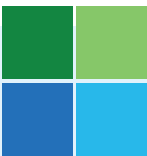
## ISOTHERMAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Awarded as one of the top online schools in North Carolina, Isothermal Community College offers custom training for new businesses and existing industry in the area.

- Award Levels: Certificates and Associate's Degree
- Enrollment (2019-2020): 2,646 curriculum students / 3,315 continuing education students
- Completions (2019-2020): 449 Certificates, 360 Associate's

Select programs include:

- Computer-Integrated Machining
- Information Technology
- Manufacturing Technology



OF THE 58 COLLEGES IN THE NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM,  
12 ARE IN WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA\*:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1   Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College | 7   Mayland Community College            |
| 2   Blue Ridge Community College                   | 8   McDowell Technical Community College |
| 3   Caldwell Community College                     | 9   Southwestern Community College       |
| 4   Cleveland Community College                    | 10   Tri-County Community College        |
| 5   Haywood Community College                      | 11   Western Piedmont Community College  |
| 6   Isothermal Community College                   | 12   Wilkes Community College            |

\*Western North Carolina includes 24-counties: Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Cherokee, Clay, Cleveland, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey counties.

# THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT ASHEVILLE

As part of the University of North Carolina System, UNC Asheville is one of the top public liberal arts colleges in the nation according to *U.S. News and World Report*.

- Award Levels: Certificates, Bachelor's Degree, and Master's Degree
- Enrollment (2019-2020): 4,153
- Completions (2019-2020): 785 Bachelor's, 4 Master's

65%

of UNC Asheville's students complete original research in their field of study

#9 IN "NATIONAL PUBLIC LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES"

*U.S. News & World Report, 2022 U.S. News Best Colleges*



<< Photography: Courtesy of UNC Asheville

## SELECT ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

### Engineering

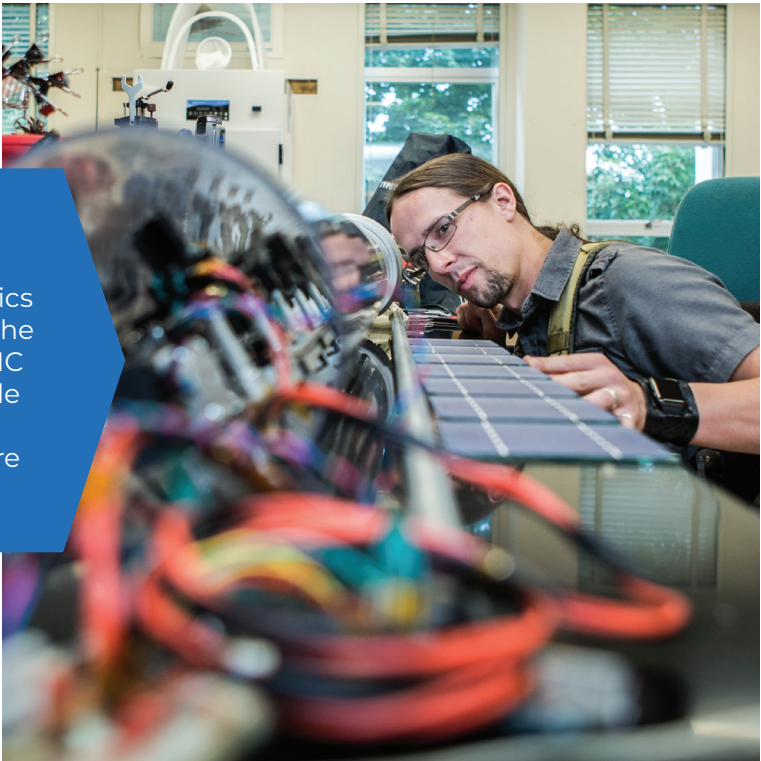
NC State and UNC Asheville jointly offer Mechatronics Engineering with all years completed in Asheville. The 2+2 Engineering program is also offered jointly by NC State and UNC Asheville with disciplines that include Computer Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Environmental Engineering, and more. Two years are completed at UNCA and two years at NCSU.

### Music Technology

The music department has a key partnership with Bob Moog Electronic Music Studio playing an important role in developing talent for music industry growth in the area. The music industry was estimated to contribute \$383M in total output and supported nearly 3,400 jobs in Buncombe county in 2016.

### Life Sciences

Biology and Chemistry Bachelor's degrees are offered with state-of-the-art research labs preparing students for Master's and Ph.D. programs. The Atmospheric Science program provides opportunities to connect with National Centers for Environmental Information, one of the nation's largest weather data centers.



<< Photography: Courtesy of UNC Asheville



# WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

Also part of the UNC System, Western Carolina University (WCU) offers 115 undergraduate majors and 40 graduate degree and certificate programs.

- Award Levels: Certificates, Bachelor’s Degree, Master’s Degree, and Doctor’s Degree
- Enrollment (2019-2020): 13,783
- Completions (2019-2020): 57 Certificates, 2,217 Bachelor’s, 579 Master’s, 43 Doctor’s

*Western Carolina is approximately 50 miles from Asheville and sits on 600 acres of gorgeous mountainous area. Several of the graduate and professional programs operate from a large instructional site in south Asheville in Biltmore Park Towne Square. These include degrees in Business, Counseling, Education Leadership, Engineering, Nursing, Physical Therapy, Public Affairs and more.*

## #9 AMONG “TOP PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES”

Best Value, Regional Universities (South) # 8  
Best Colleges for Veterans, Regional Universities (South) # 8

*U.S. News & World Report, 2022 U.S. News Best Colleges*

### Nursing

Western Carolina University’s Bachelor of Science in nursing prelicensure program is ranked first in the state by the Nursing Schools Almanac research team, in part for achieving an almost perfect rate of graduates passing the National Council Licensure Examination, on their first attempt. Additionally, WCU offers several highly ranked nursing degrees at the Master’s and Doctoral levels in Asheville and online.

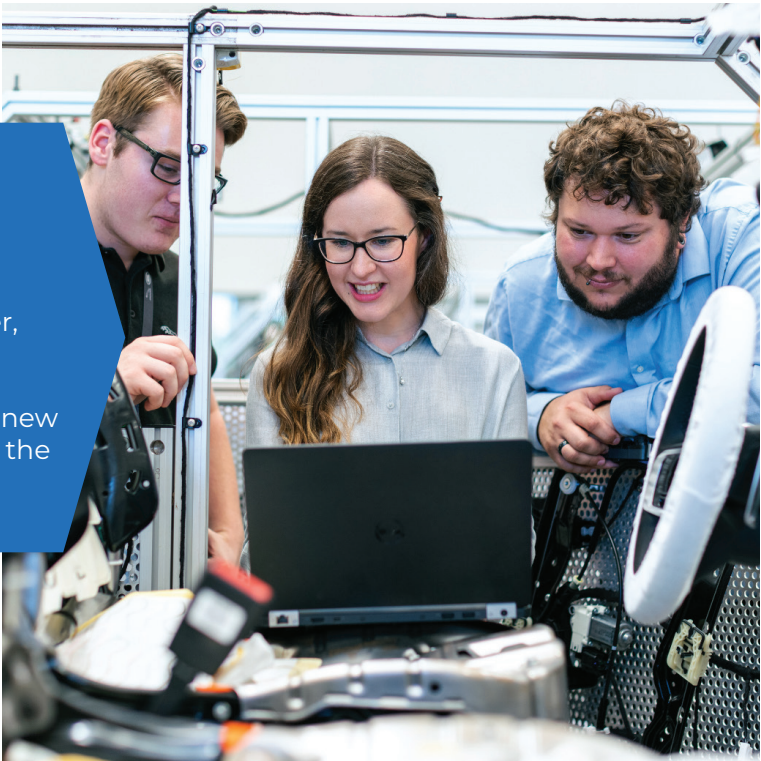


<< Photography: Courtesy of WCU

# SELECT ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

### Engineering

The Bachelor of Science in Engineering program provides traditional engineering curriculum with extensive hands-on laboratory and real world experience. Concentrations include Electrical Power, Manufacturing, and Mechanical. The College of Engineering and Technology also partners with businesses, industry and entrepreneurs to develop new products and processes through The Rapid Center, the in-house research and development center.



### Data Science

The Graduate Certificate in Data Science is designed for the part-time student who wants to improve their skills in managing, visualizing and modeling with data. The stand-alone certificate program is located at the main campus and the instructional site at Biltmore Park-Asheville.



<< Photography: Courtesy of WCU

### Business Administration

WCU’s Business Administration Program is home to the nationally renowned Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, as well as the Master of Project Management and MBA programs , which are fully accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), an international organization.

# APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Located in Boone, about 85 miles northeast of Asheville, Appalachian State University is part of the University of North Carolina system and is regularly cited as a top public school.

- Award Levels: Certificates, Bachelor’s Degree, Master’s Degree, and Doctor’s Degree
- Enrollment (2019-2020): 20,799
- Completions (2019-2020): 265 Certificates, 4,163 Bachelor’s, 704 Master’s, 13 Doctor’s

## CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Career and Technical Education (CTE) is an area of public education that focuses on providing students with opportunities in high skill, high demand and high wage areas. App State offers the only online degree program in the state of North Carolina for licensing Career and Technical Education (CTE) teachers.

#3 AMONG “TOP PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE SOUTH”

U.S. News & World Report, 2022 U.S. News Best Colleges



## Nursing

At Appalachian State, the BSN, RN to BSN, and MSN programs are available within nursing. NCLEX pass rate for BSN students was 98%. Source: NC Board of Nursing, 2018-2020 3-year average.

>> Photography: Courtesy of Marie Freeman, Appalachian State University

TOTAL STUDENTS  
286,557

# ASHEVILLE AREA HIGHER EDUCATION MARKET

## WITHIN 25-MILE RADIUS\*\*

Enrolled Students: 16,691  
Completions: 4,167

- University of North Carolina at Asheville
- A-B Tech Community College
- Montreat College
- Warren Wilson College
- Mars Hill University
- Haywood Community College
- Blue Ridge Community College
- South College - Asheville

## WITHIN 50-MILE RADIUS\*\*

Enrolled Students: 75,899  
Completions: 19,422

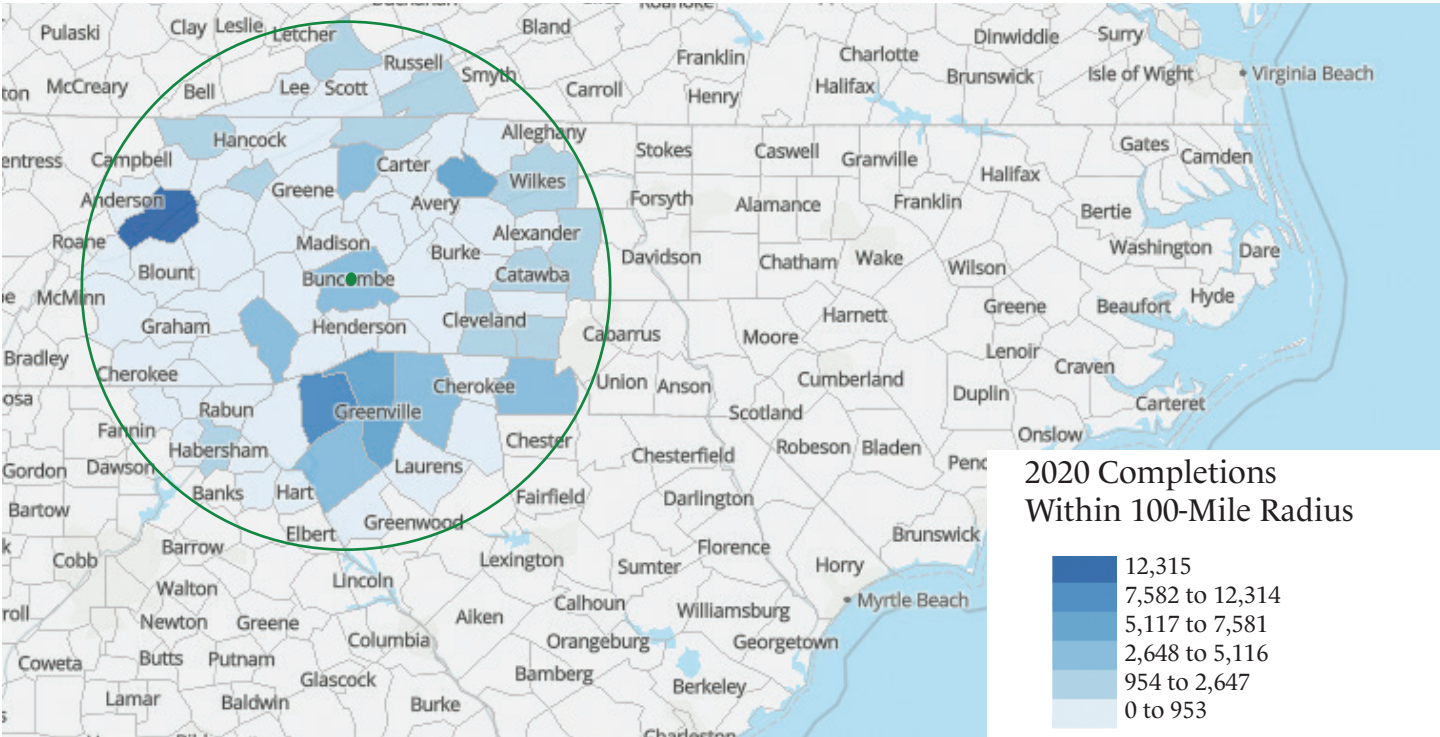
- Brevard College
- Furman University
- Western Carolina University\*
- McDowell Tech Community College
- North Greenville University
- East Tennessee State University
- Greenville Technical College
- Isothermal Community College
- Mayland Community College
- Southwestern Community College
- Western Piedmont Community College

## WITHIN 100-MILE RADIUS\*\*

Enrolled Students: 286,557  
Completions: 76,648

- Appalachian State University
- Clemson University
- Lenoir-Rhyne University\*
- The University of Tennessee - Knoxville
- Wofford College
- University of South Carolina Upstate
- Carson-Newman University
- Converse College
- Tri-County Community College
- Gardner-Webb University
- Pellissippi State Community College
- Mitchell Community College
- North East State Community College
- Walters State Community College
- Winthrop University
- York Technical College

\*Schools that have a satellite campus in Asheville.  
\*\*Not a comprehensive list and subject to change



# PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES & COLLEGES

## LENOIR-RHYNE UNIVERSITY

Lenoir-Rhyne University's Center for Graduate Studies of Asheville is one of the university's three campuses (other campuses are located in Hickory, NC and Columbia, SC). The Center primarily offers master's degree programs, and houses the Lenoir-Rhyne Equity & Diversity Institute (LREDI) and Thomas Wolfe Center for Narrative.

- Award Levels: Certificates and Master's Degree
- Enrollment (2021-2022): 352
- Completions (2020-2021): 39 Certificates, 68 Master's

Select programs include:

- Sustainability Studies
- Equity & Diversity Institute
- MBA Social Impact

### MBA in Social Impact

Emphasizes multiple business-related routes toward a better world and how they rely on one another. The curriculum is built for students who are interested in industries related to mission-driven for-profit companies, nonprofits, philanthropy, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other business models



Photography: Courtesy of Lenoir-Rhyne

## MARS HILL UNIVERSITY

Located in Madison County, Mars Hill University is a private, four-year liberal arts institution. Founded in 1856 by Baptist families of the region, it is the oldest institution of higher learning in western North Carolina on its original site.

- Award Levels: Certificates, Bachelor's Degree, and Master's Degree
- Enrollment (2019-2020): 1,129
- Completions (2019-2020): 221 Bachelor's, 15 Master's

Select programs include:

- Business Administration
- Music Education
- International Studies

### International Studies

Students are provided skills to analyze and tackle global issues while navigating the increasing complexity of our globalized world. Students gain experience with political science, history, economics, and more.



## MONTREAT COLLEGE

Montreat College is a private, Christian, liberal arts college founded in 1916. The main campus is located in Montreat, North Carolina, just outside Asheville. The college's School of Adult and Graduate Studies also has locations in Asheville, Charlotte, Morganton, and online.

- Award Levels: Certificates, Associate's, Bachelor's, and Master's Degree
- Enrollment (2019-2020): 1,046
- Completions (2019-2020): 1 Associate's, 137 Bachelor's, 37 Master's

Select programs include:

- Clinical Mental Health Counseling
- Human Resource Management
- Cybersecurity

### Cybersecurity

Montreat College is designated a National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Education by the National Security Agency (NSA) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).



## WARREN WILSON COLLEGE

A small, private four-year college located in the Swannanoa Valley near Asheville. Warren Wilson College is on an 1,100 acre campus where students can learn in a working farm and garden, in managed forests, in native wilderness, and on land-based work crews from landscaping to fiber arts.

- Award Levels: Bachelor's Degree and Master's Degree
- Enrollment (2019-2020): 845
- Completions (2019-2020): 114 Bachelor's, 25 Master's

Select programs include:

- Economics
- Environmental Studies
- MFA for Writers

### MFA for Writers


Established in 1976 and taught by nationally-recognized faculty, including Pulitzer and National Book Award winners, national and state poets laureate, and NEA, Guggenheim, Fulbright, and MacArthur fellows.



# ASHEVILLE CITY & BUNCOMBE COUNTY K-12 SCHOOLS

There are approximately 30,000 K-12 students in the Asheville City and Buncombe County public school systems and over 2,000 students enrolled in Buncombe County Charter Schools.

Laptops



Tablets



Our schools are connected with a wide variety of tools that enhance learning.

700+

HOMework HOTSPOTS

for students with limited access to high-speed internet at home. This effort was funded by Sprint's 1 Million Project in 2017 and is provided at no cost to families.

Asheville Area educators and business leaders collaborate to better engage young people in their learning. Teachers and leaders recognize the importance of equipping young students with the skills for success in a globalized era.

Students in middle and high schools build critical thinking and problem-solving techniques through hands-on learning and an innovative curriculum that emphasize Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) topics.



STEM School Programs

Buncombe County Schools opened the Nesbitt Discovery Academy in 2014 to provide opportunities for students to engage in innovative STEM curriculum. Also, Asheville City's School of Inquiry and Life Sciences at Asheville (SILSA), the #1 high school in the Asheville Metro (U.S. News & World Report, 2021), offers curriculum with a life science theme.

“

At Buncombe County Schools our mission statement echoes the state’s focus on preparing students to be ‘Career and College Ready,’ and we count on our community partners to help us in that endeavor. The experiences our students have can lead to a job right out of high school, with the impetus to secure further education for career advancement.

— DR. TONY BALDWIN  
Superintendent, Buncombe County Schools

Career and Technical Education

The mission of CTE is to offer dynamic 21st century programs to students based on the 16 national career clusters that align with the business and industry sectors in our area.

Both Asheville City and Buncombe County Schools provide **Career and Technical Education (CTE)** to prepare students for future careers and higher education. CTE provides students a way to earn college credits and credentials sought by local industries and businesses. The CTE curriculum also develops life and soft skills such as decision-making, communication, critical thinking, creative thinking, problem solving, leadership, and more.



## 4-YEAR COHORT GRADUATION RATES GRADUATING IN 2018-2019

- ASHEVILLE CITY  
344 — 91%
- BUNCOMBE COUNTY  
2,051 — 87%
- HAYWOOD COUNTY  
602 — 85%
- HENDERSON COUNTY  
1,034 — 92%
- MADISON CITY  
178 — 88%
- NORTH CAROLINA  
121,943 — 87%

Public Schools Mean SAT Scores (2019)					
	Number Tested	Percent Tested	ERW Score	Math Score	Total
Asheville City	214	70.4%	592	558	1,151
Buncombe County Schools	691	40.4%	571	561	1,133
Haywood County Schools	113	22.5%	554	536	1,080
Henderson County Schools	324	34.7%	565	550	1,114
Madison County Schools	27	14.4%	542	533	1,082
North Carolina	47,842	45.7%	549	542	1,091
United States	1,859,215	N/A	524	515	1,039

Note: Percent tested is the number of students taking the SAT divided by the final Average Daily Membership (ADM) for grades 12-13 + Extended Day 12-13.

# EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

	Asheville City	Buncombe	Haywood	Henderson	Madison	NC	US
Population 25 Years and Over	67,141	188,700	45,802	85,499	15,325	6,983,859	220,622,076
Less than 9th Grade	2.9%	3.0%	2.7%	3.2%	4.9%	4.5%	5.1%
9th to 12th Grade, no Diploma	5.4%	6.0%	9.3%	6.9%	8.1%	7.7%	6.9%
High School Graduate	16.9%	23.2%	26.4%	24.2%	31.3%	25.7%	27.0%
Some College, no Degree	17.2%	18.6%	23.1%	23.7%	19.1%	21.2%	20.4%
Associates Degree	8.6%	9.0%	12.5%	10.3%	8.1%	9.7%	8.5%
Bachelor's Degree	29.9%	24.8%	15.4%	20.5%	17.2%	20.0%	19.8%
Graduate or Professional Degree	19.0%	15.3%	10.6%	11.3%	11.4%	11.3%	12.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

## TALENT TRAINING & RETENTION



CAYLA gives Asheville's young people the opportunity to stay and work in Asheville, as well as to have valuable work experiences that will advance their future careers wherever they go. Learn more here: <https://www.ashevillenc.gov/departments/community-economic-development/community-development/cayla/>



NEXT AVL pairs local university students with working professionals who offer connection, mentorship, and professional development. Through NEXT AVL, students will expand their professional networks and opportunities in Asheville so that they can pursue the NEXT step in their life after graduation as a young professional here – in AVL. Learn more here: <https://www.ashevillechamber.org/business-environment/talent-workforce/next-avl>



### SCAN QR CODE

to learn about myFutureNC's Educational Attainment initiative. WNC is one of 15 Local Educational Attainment Collaboratives in the state.



Riverbird Research, located in beautiful Asheville, North Carolina and established by the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce, is an award-winning team with over 25 years of combined experience in data and systems analysis. Our team leverages well-informed expertise in labor market data, demographic and economic research, and economic impact analysis to communicate regional assets and opportunities. Our network has a national reach and our process is collaborative and creative. Check out more research reports at [RIVERBIRDRESEARCH.COM](http://RIVERBIRDRESEARCH.COM)

**ADDITIONAL SOURCES:** US Census Bureau, Education Superhighway, EMSI, NC Community College System (NCCCS), IPEDS, and schools' sources.

### PLEASE CONTACT US

**HEIDI REIBER** | Senior Director of Research  
828.258.6120, [hreiber@ashevillechamber.org](mailto:hreiber@ashevillechamber.org)

**MAGGIE SMITH** | Research Analyst  
828.257.4962, [msmith@ashevillechamber.org](mailto:msmith@ashevillechamber.org)



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