

JASON A. PIERCE, PH.D.

ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATION EXPERIENCE

Provost & Executive Vice President, Young Harris College, Young Harris, GA, 2018-present

- Oversight areas: Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management, Student Development, Information Technology, Library Services, Dual Enrollment, Disability Services, Policy & Compliance, Accreditation/IE/IR, Communications & Marketing, Human Resources
- Achieved record student enrollment by improving persistence (largest ever FTIC returning cohort), expanding dual enrollment, and adding in-demand degree programs
- Secured a \$2 million grant from the Lettie Pate Evans Foundation for college-wide career-mindedness initiative featuring a work-mentoring program for students with financial need
- Coordinator for partnership with McAllister & Quinn, firm specializing in federal grant support for IHEs; submitted institution's first CDS request, first NSF Noyce Scholars application
- Proposed and secured revision of Appalachian College Association bylaws to include Georgia IHEs, led process of gaining membership for YHC as first new ACA member since 2007
- Restructured department-division structure and led annual review of program offerings, including elimination of undersubscribed programs
- Reconceptualized general education program to focus on eliminating access barriers and led faculty in its development and implementation
- Reinstated faculty sabbaticals, created fellowship program for pre-tenure faculty, and established merit-based compensation enhancement system for all full-time faculty and staff
- Founded circle of Omicron Delta Kappa leadership honor society and served as its first coordinator
- Led Pandemic Recovery Task Force and served as primary author of all pandemic-related policies
- Primary staff liaison to trustees' Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management Committees, secondary staff liaison to all other committees
- Awarded sabbatical for fall 2025 to support ACA's membership expansion initiative

Vice President of Academic Affairs, Tusculum College/University, Greeneville, TN, 2017-2018

- Oversight areas: Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Student Support/Success, Bonner Leaders
- Reorganized academic calendar, replacing modified block model with traditional semesters to improve persistence and reduce challenges related to federal aid distribution
- Rewrote faculty handbook and all published academic policies in preparation for SACSCOC reaffirmation
- As SACSCOC liaison, led two substantive change initiatives, including level change (III to V) and development of a new graduate program in Sports Administration, and successfully concluded fifth-year interim review
- As Title IX Coordinator, revised all policies and procedures related to sexual discrimination, harassment, and violence in line with federal guidance and ATIXA-recommended practices
- Led grant proposal team soliciting funding from the Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women to expand on-campus and develop in-community education programs
- Served as senior staff member and only senior administrator on the 2017 Presidential Search Committee

Assistant/Associate/Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs, Mars Hill College/University, Mars Hill, NC, 2010-2016

- Oversight areas: Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management, Information Technology, Accreditation/IE/IR, Title IX, Bonner Scholars

- Led development of evidence-based student persistence incentivization program, with results presented at regional and national conferences
- Partnered with leading textbook services company to develop region's first books-in-tuition model to lower access barriers for low-income and first-generation students
- Restructured honor scholarships program into new Honors Program along best practices principles of National Collegiate Honors Council and served as its first director
- Co-chair of grant-writing team that secured \$2 million Title III grant to enhance network infrastructure, invest in faculty development, and improve institutional effectiveness systems
- As SACSCOC Liaison, led institution through successful reaffirmation and six substantive changes including level change (II to III); coordinated programmatic accreditations with CAATE, NCATE/CAEP, CCNE, CSWE, NASM, and NAST
- As Title IX Coordinator (ATIXA Coordinator Two certified), overhauled investigation procedures to comply with updated guidance, expanded investigator pool, and developed new training

EDUCATION

- Ph.D., English, University of South Carolina, 1999
M.A., English, University of Maine, 1995
M.Litt., Scottish Literature, University of Saint Andrews, 1995
B.A. *with highest distinction*, English, University of Maine, 1993

ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- Senior Consultant, Appalachian College Association, 2025
Co-Director, Small College Academic Leadership Experience (SCALE), 2024-present
Co-Director, Leadership Development Program, Appalachian College Association Teaching & Leadership Institute, 2018 (Emory, VA), 2024 (Maryville, TN), 2025 (Maryville, TN)
Director, Assessment Workshop & SACSCOC Compliance Audit, Union College, Barbourville, KY, 2014
Director, Title III "Strengthening Institutions" Grant, Mars Hill College/University, Mars Hill, NC, 2010-2013
Director of Institutional Effectiveness, Mars Hill College/University, Mars Hill, NC, 2009-2016
Director, Honors Program, Mars Hill College, Mars Hill, NC, 2009-2012
Chair, Division of Humanities, Mars Hill College, Mars Hill, NC, 2007-2011
Chair, Department of English, Mars Hill College, Mars Hill, NC, 2005-2007
Webmaster, Mars Hill College, Mars Hill, NC, 2001-2003
Assistant/Associate/Full Professor of English, Mars Hill College/University, Mars Hill, NC, 1999-2016
Web Consultant, Department of Rare Books & Special Collections, Thomas Cooper Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, 1999-2001

SELECT PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS

- "Leading During Disruption: Variability as Constant," Appalachian College Association (ACA) Teaching & Leadership Institute, Maryville, TN, June 2025
"Leading During (and for) Change," Appalachian College Association (ACA) CAOs Orientation & Mentorship Program, virtual, January 2025

- “Comprehensive Institutional Reviews: Deep in the Heart of Compliance,” Southern Association of College and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Annual Meeting, Austin, December 2024 (with Keith DeFoor)
- “Prioritizing the Ongoing Academic (and Other) Programs Mix,” Appalachian College Association (ACA) Annual Summit, Knoxville, TN, September 2024
- “Navigating Permanent Whitewater: Anticipating What’s Around the Next Bend,” Appalachian College Association (ACA) Teaching & Leadership Institute, Maryville, TN, June 2024
- “Imagine Success in Compliance Certification: Thru-Hiking the Long Trail,” Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Annual Meeting, Orlando, December 2023 (with Keith DeFoor)
- “Addressing the Demographic Cliff: Strategies for Initiating and/or Eliminating Academic Programs,” Appalachian College Association (ACA) Annual Summit, Knoxville, September 2023
- “The Long Trail: Thru-Hiking Compliance Certification,” Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Annual Meeting, Atlanta, December 2022 (with Keith DeFoor)
- “Standard by Standard: More Instructions for Writing for SACSCOC,” Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Annual Meeting, online, December 2020 (with Keith DeFoor)
- “Standard by Standard: Some Instructions for Writing for SACSCOC,” Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Annual Meeting, Houston, December 2019 (with Keith DeFoor)
- “Compliance Heatmaps: Dynamic Audits for Prioritization and Progress,” Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commissions on Colleges (SACSCOC) Annual Meeting, New Orleans, 10 December 2018 (with Tricia Hunsader)
- “Incentivizing ‘Belonging’ for all First-Year Students,” Annual Conference on the First Year Experience, Atlanta, 14 February 2017 (with Ryan Bell, Suzanne Klonis, Amy Carraux Price, & Lisa Wachtman)
- “Enhancing Students’ Success by Improved Access to Course Materials,” Council of Independent Colleges’ Institute for Chief Academic Officers, New Orleans, 7 November 2016 (with Charlie McCormick & Catherine O’Connell)
- “A New Program to Support First-Year Student Persistence: Preliminary Results,” North Carolina Association for Institution Research Conference, Wilmington, 15 April 2016 (with Suzanne Klonis)
- “Retain Low-Income, First-Generation Students by Making Good Habits Mandatory,” Interview in *Dean & Provost: Practical Advice and Strategies for Academic Leaders* 17.7 (2016): 1-7; also published in *Enrollment Management Report* 20.1 (2016): 1-5
- Student Success & Books-in-Tuition Panel Discussion, Rafter Student Success Workshop, Baltimore, 5 November 2015 (with Charlie McCormick & Liz Tobin)
- “From Haves-&-Have-Nots to Have-It-Alls: Overcoming Invisible Barriers,” Rafter Student Success Workshop, Napa, CA, 1 October 2015 & Baltimore, 5 November 2015 (with G. Grainger Caudle)
- “Affordable Books and Innovative First-Year Programs,” *eCampus News* 8.8 (October/November 2015): 9-10
- “Developing a New Program to Support First-Year Student Persistence,” North Carolina Association for Institutional Research Conference, Asheville, 14 April 2015 (with Suzanne Klonis)
- “IE & the ACA: Opportunities for Collaboration,” Appalachian College Association Summit XV, Knoxville, 11 October 2012
- “LEAP Outcomes & Honors: Developing Mars Hill’s Program,” National Collegiate Honors Council Assessment & Evaluation Institute, Atlanta, 10 July 2010

- “Models for Honors Programs,” Appalachian College Association Summit XII, Abingdon, VA, 15 October 2009 (with Virginia Bower)
- “Incorporating Service-Learning Opportunities into the Honors Classroom,” Appalachian College Association Honors Program Conference, Greeneville, TN, 17 April 2009 (with Virginia Bower)
- “Old Methods, New Tools: An Evolutionary Approach to Using Technology in (not instead of) the Classroom,” Appalachian College Association Summit XI, Abingdon, VA, 16 October 2008
- “Enhancing the Appalachian College Association International Studies Program: A Proposal for Improving Berger Funds Distribution,” Salzburg Seminar ISP 15: Colleges and Universities as Sites of Global Citizenship, Salzburg, Austria, 2 August 2006

Full list of presentations & publications available upon request

SELECT PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT

- Appalachian College Association (ACA) — Teaching & Learning/Leadership Institute, 2000, 2018, 2024, 2025; Annual/Technology Summit, 2000-2002, 2007-2009, 2012-2014, 2016-2018, 2022-2024; Deans/Chief Academic Officers Council, 2016-2018, 2022-2024; Annual Meeting, 2016-2018, 2022-2024; Honors Program Conference, 2008, 2009; Teaching with Technology Workshop, 2001
- Southern Association of Colleges & Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) — Annual Meetings, 2008-2024; Committee Chair Orientation Workshop, 2019; Small College Initiative, 2010, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2019; Leadership Team Orientation, 2009, 2017, 2018; Substantive Change Workshop, 2009, 2017; Summer Institute on Quality Enhancement & Accreditation, 2010, 2015, 2016
- Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) — Institute for Chief Academic Officers, 2012-2021, 2023-2024; Presidential Vocation & Institutional Mission Program, 2023-2024; Securing America’s Future Workshop, 2017; Department & Division Chairs Workshop, 2008
- Georgia Independent Colleges Association (GICA) — Chief Academic Officers Meeting, 2018-2024; Executive Committee & Board Training, 2018
- Tennessee Independent Colleges & Universities Association (TICUA) — Annual Meeting, 2018
- National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition — Annual Conference on the First-Year Experience, 2017; National Conference on Students in Transition, 2013, 2014
- North Carolina Independent Colleges & Universities (NCICU) — Chief Academic Officers Workshop, 2012, 2016; Assessment Workshop, 2012, 2014; Technology in the College English Classroom: Literature, Culture, Pedagogy, 2002; English Faculty Workshop, 2000
- North Carolina Association for Institutional Research (NCAIR) — Annual Conference, 2015, 2016
- Stetson University College of Law — Annual National Conference on Law and Higher Education 2016
- Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) — Annual Meeting, 2016; Network for Academic Renewal Conference: General Education and Assessment, 2011, 2013, 2014; Institute on General Education, 2007
- Legal Issues in Higher Education (UVM) — Annual Conference, 2013, 2015
- Association of Title IX Administrators (ATIXA) — ATIXA/SCOPE Annual Joint National Conference, 2015; Civil Rights Investigator Training & Certification, 2014
- National Association of Independent Colleges & Universities (NAICU) — Annual Meeting & Advocacy Day, 2015
- International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement (IARSLCE) — Annual Conference, 2014
- Society for Ethics Across the Curriculum (SEAC) — International Conference, 2011

Center for Applied Research, Central Piedmont Community College — Institute on Best Practices in Institutional Effectiveness, 2007, 2011

U.S. Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education — Title III/V Project Directors Meeting, 2011

National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) — Annual Meeting 2008-2010; Assessment & Evaluation Institute, 2010

Salzburg Global Seminar — International Study Program, 2006

Wharton School of Business/Institute for Research on Higher Education (IRHE) — Executive Education Workshop, 2002

Full list of professional engagement & development experiences available upon request

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Southern Association of Colleges & Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) — Chair, On-Site Reaffirmation Committee, 2026 (VA); CAO Representative, Special Committee, 2025 (NC); Cluster Coordinator/ Chair, Fifth-Year Cluster, 2024 (10 institutions); CAO Representative, Off-Site Reaffirmation Committees (x2), 2019 (5 institutions); CAO Representative, On-Site Reaffirmation Committee, 2018 (TX); College Delegate Assembly, 2017; IE Representative, Off-site Reaffirmation Committee, 2016 (3 institutions); IE Representative, On-Site Reaffirmation & Substantive Change Committee, 2014 (AL)

Appalachian College Association (ACA) — Executive Committee, ACA Council of CAOs, 2023-present; Member, CAO Orientation/Mentoring Task Force, 2023-present; Member, Teaching & Learning Committee, 2022-present (Chair 2023-present); Member, Consortium Repository Working Group, 2023-2024; Member, Ledford Scholarship Review Committee, 2017-2018; Member, Annual/Technology Summit Steering Committee, 2000-2001, 2017-2018; Co-Chair, Institutional Effectiveness Working Group, 2012-2014 (with Ginger Bishop); Co-Chair, Honors Program Working Group, 2008-2010 (with Nancy Thomas); Web Developer/Technology Consultant, “Feminism for Everyone: An Introduction to Women’s Studies” collaborative online course (Mars Hill, Warren Wilson, Wheeling Jesuit), 2001-2002; Member, *Nantahala Review* Development Committee, 2000

Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) — Facilitator, Workshop for CAOs in Their Third or Fourth Year of Service, Institute for Chief Academic Officers, 2024; Session Chair, Institute for Chief Academic Officers, 2017, 2018, 2023

National Resource Center for the First Year Experience and Students in Transition — Proposal Reviewer, Annual Conference on the First Year Experience, 2015, 2017, 2018

Textbook Reviewer — *Compose, Design, Advocate* 2/e by Anne Frances Wysocki & Dennis A. Lynch (New York: Longman/Pearson, 2008); *Rhetorical Visions: Reading and Writing in a Visual Culture* by Wendy S. Hesford & Brenda Brueggemann (New York: Allyn & Bacon/Pearson, 2005); *Convergences: Message, Method, Medium* by Robert Atwan (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2002)

AWARDS & HONORS

Mars Hill University Student Government Association Recognition for Outstanding Service, 2011, 2016

Appalachian College Association Faculty Fellowships, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2009

Mars Hill College Faculty Enrichment & Renewal Grants, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2006, 2007, 2009 (x2)

Salzburg Global Seminar Fellowship, 2006

State of Arkansas “Arkansas Traveler” awarded by Arkansas State Legislature & Gov. Mike Huckabee, 2000

Member of Phi Beta Kappa, Phi Kappa Phi, Sigma Tau Delta, Omicron Delta Kappa, Alpha Chi, Golden Key

JASON A. PIERCE, PH.D.

27 September 2025

AVPAA Search Committee
Arkansas Tech University
215 West O Street
Russellville, AR 72801

Dear members of the search committee:

It is my privilege to apply to serve as the next Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs at Arkansas Tech University. I am an accomplished academic administrator, team-builder, and accreditation liaison with over twenty-five years of experience developing academic programs, policies, and professionals. I am confident that my experiences as the provost at three small colleges in the rural South, where I oversaw all aspects of academic affairs, student success, and institutional effectiveness, have made me well prepared to take on all the duties of the AVPAA role and to support the work of Dr. Santos and other administrators in carrying out the mission of ATU.

My approach to academic leadership is informed by Peter Vaill's "permanent whitewater" metaphor. Successful education leaders are those who recognize the ever-changing nature of the industry and help their institutions adapt not to current challenges but to those that are around the next bend and further downstream. Myriad sorts of disruption — the pandemic and its aftermath, the implacable demographic cliff, skepticism about the value of a college degree, shifting federal regulations and guidance — challenge us at every turn. But colleges are nothing if not adaptable, thanks in large part to the inquisitiveness of their faculty and staff. Though there may be some members of the professoriate who are out-of-touch Dryasdusts, more concerned with their esoteric alcoves than with human experience, my experience has been quite the opposite. Everywhere I have worked, I have found faculty and staff members eager to use their experience as scholars, creators, and professionals to adapt to the needs of today's learners and improve the human condition. I am confident that this is the spirit in which the members of the Arkansas Tech community approach their calling, and I believe I have the experience to support them meaningfully and effectively as they continue to improve and develop programs that will meet the needs of tomorrow's students and employers.

Effective leaders must be articulate, creative consensus-builders who strengthen their community's sense of shared purpose. This has been a hallmark of my administrative career. As Mars Hill's accreditation liaison, I organized a diverse group of employees with competing interests and, in some cases, significant and longstanding antipathy into a functioning institution-wide planning and assessment committee that secured reaffirmation and the approval of multiple substantive changes, including the institution's first graduate programs and first health sciences programs. When I moved to Tusculum, I found low employee morale and a modified block calendar that was inadvertently disrupting federal aid distribution, thereby jeopardizing the entire institution. I immediately set about reorganizing the faculty, including the development of a new constitution and bylaws to reinforce the faculty's contribution to shared governance, and worked to deconstruct the calendar that, for some, had become central to Tusculum's identity. Despite at times hearty disagreements, the campus community came to understand why these changes were needed and supported them almost universally.

When I arrived at Young Harris as Provost, I found an institution that seemed to be experiencing a golden age, with beautiful new facilities, near-record undergraduate enrollment, and plans for expansion. But beneath the gilded veneer were harsh realities: massive debt, a decade of deficit budgets, endowment draws without meaningful returns, a soaring discount rate, accelerating student attrition, and employee infighting that was quietly pulling the institution apart. President Van Horn, who had taken office a half-year earlier, invited me to

Pierce Cover Letter

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partner with him to reorganize YHC around the principles of the New American College. I began with the Faculty Senate, which had become a directionless body, unable to form a quorum, fill leadership positions, or otherwise conduct business. Today, monthly meetings, featuring regular Provost updates, attract 80% or more of the voting members, and all elected positions are filled. Working both with the restructured Academic Council and with the Faculty Senate's new Executive Committee, we have raised adjunct and overload pay while reducing overall instructional costs, developed and delivered new degree programs while eliminating those that are no longer in demand, reinstated sabbaticals for the first time in over fifteen years, and established a fellowship program to provide pre-tenure faculty with release opportunities to pursue research and improve teaching and learning. Over the past several years, to achieve a strategic goal of increased employee retention, I have led the development of a multi-phase compensation enhancement initiative for all full-time employees. This began with an inverted-scale Christmas bonus program, with the largest bonuses going to the lowest-paid hourly employees who were most affected by post-pandemic inflation. It was followed by an institution-wide pay increase for all but senior administrators and, beginning last year, an institution-wide compensation enhancement program with CPI-based escalators. Both retention and morale have improved measurably.

Having led the academic enterprises of three small, tuition-dependent colleges, I have developed extensive experience with program development and implementation. At Mars Hill, I led the development of the institution's first graduate degree program, an M.Ed., and its transition from a SACSCOC level II institution to level III. I subsequently led six substantive changes and the development of additional in-demand master's degrees in management and criminal justice. But our most resource-intensive effort was the addition of the College's BSN and RN-to-BSN programs, which necessitated the building of an entirely new facility and the pursuit of accreditation with CCNE. Though I spent only three semesters at Tusculum, in that time I led two substantive change initiatives and was beginning the process of adding an optometry program when I was called to Georgia. In my seven years at Young Harris, I have led another transition from level II to level III, this time by adding an M.A.T. focused on serving rural teachers with provisional licensure. At the undergraduate level, I have led the expansion of our dual enrollment program so that we are now one of the largest private providers of DE credits in the state; added baccalaureate programs in graphic design, marketing, finance, environmental science, and kinesiology; completely overhauled our general education program to make it more flexible and transfer-friendly; and secured SACSCOC reaffirmation in the midst of the pandemic without monitoring reports.

I hope this letter has provided you with some sense of my background as an academic leader, my passion for program development and assessment, my commitment to investing in professional development, and my experience supporting the continuous improvement of higher education. I believe my time at Young Harris, and at Tusculum and Mars Hill beforehand, has helped me become an accomplished, considerate administrator who is well prepared to serve as AVPAA at ATU. I would welcome the opportunity to speak with you further.

Sincerely yours,



Jason A. Pierce, Ph.D.