Public Institutions of Higher Education in Western North Carolina
state economic impact

Public higher education institutions in Western North Carolina are responsible for injecting at least $2 billion into the state and regional economy during the 2012-13 fiscal year through the combined impact of payroll, operational, construction and research expenditures by universities and community colleges, and the spending habits of their students, visitors and alumni. Of this $2 billion, roughly 75 percent or $1.52 billion stays right here in the 11 counties of WNC (Buncombe, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, Swain and Transylvania).

Those are among the findings of a comprehensive study conducted by Economic Modeling Specialists International (EMSI) to examine the impact of higher education on North Carolina.

Total Economic Impact: at least $2 billion (the equivalent of 40,134 new jobs)

$1.6 billion Alumni Impact
(the equivalent of 30,962 jobs)

$315.7 million Operations Spending Impact
(the equivalent of 7,640 jobs)

$3.7 million Research Spending Impact*
(the equivalent of 59 jobs)
*from UNC Asheville and WCU only

$3.9 million Construction Spending Impact
(the equivalent of 157 jobs)

$33.9 million Student Spending Impact
(the equivalent of 673 jobs)

$25.1 million Visitor Spending Impact*
(the equivalent of 643 jobs)
*from UNC Asheville and WCU only

In 2012-13, North Carolina taxpayers paid $218.1 million to support the operations of public universities and community colleges in this 11-county area. In return, these institutions generated at least $2 billion in statewide economic impact in that year.