

The Economic Value of Blue Ridge Community College



B LUE RIDGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE (BLUE RIDGE) creates value in many ways. The college plays a key role in helping students increase their employability and achieve their individual potential. The college retains students in the region, generating new dollars and opportunities for the Blue Ridge Service Area.* Blue Ridge provides students with the education, training, and skills they need to have fulfilling and prosperous careers. Furthermore, Blue Ridge is a place for students to meet new people, increase their self-confidence, and promote their overall health and well-being.

Blue Ridge influences both the lives of its students and the regional economy. The college supports a variety of industries in the Blue Ridge Service Area, serves regional businesses, and benefits society as a whole in North Carolina from an expanded economy and improved quality of life. Additionally, the benefits created by Blue Ridge extend to the state and local government through increased tax revenues and public sector savings.

This study measures the economic impacts created by Blue Ridge on the business community and the benefits the college generates in return for the investments made by its key stakeholder groups—students, taxpayers, and society. The following two analyses are presented:



Economic impact analysis



Investment analysis

All results reflect employee, student, and financial data, provided by the college, for fiscal year (FY) 2019-20. Impacts on the Blue Ridge Service Area economy are reported under the economic impact analysis and are measured in terms of added income. The returns on investment to students, taxpayers, and society in North Carolina are reported under the investment analysis.

* For the purposes of this analysis, the Blue Ridge Service Area is comprised of Henderson and Transylvania Counties.



BLUE RIDGE SERVICE AREA, NC

Blue Ridge influences both the **lives of its students** and the **regional economy**.



Blue Ridge promotes economic growth in the Blue Ridge Service Area through its direct expenditures and the resulting expenditures of students and regional businesses. The college serves as an employer and buyer of goods and services for its day-to-day operations. The college's activities retain students in the Blue Ridge Service Area, whose expenditures benefit regional vendors. In addition, Blue Ridge is a primary source of higher education to the Blue Ridge Service Area residents and a supplier of trained workers to regional industries, enhancing overall productivity in the regional workforce.

Operations spending impact



Blue Ridge adds economic value to the Blue Ridge Service Area as an employer of regional residents and a large-scale buyer of goods and services. In FY 2019-20, the college employed 436 full-time and part-time faculty and staff, 70% of whom lived in the Blue Ridge Service Area. Total payroll at Blue Ridge was \$21.5 million, much of which was spent in the region for groceries, mortgage and rent payments, dining out, and other household expenses. In addition, the college spent \$4.8 million on day-to-day expenses related to facilities, supplies, and professional services.

Blue Ridge's day-to-day operations spending added \$22.1 million in income to the region during the analysis year. This figure represents the college's payroll, the multiplier effects generated by the in-region spending of the college and its employees, and a downward adjustment to account for funding that the college received from regional sources. The \$22.1 million in added income is equivalent to supporting 421 jobs in the region.

Student spending impact



Some in-region students, referred to as retained students, would have left the Blue Ridge Service Area if not for the existence of Blue Ridge. While attending the college, these retained students spent money on groceries, accommodation, transportation, and other household expenses. This spending generated \$4.5 million in added income for the regional economy in FY 2019-20, which supported 102 jobs in the Blue Ridge Service Area.

IMPACTS CREATED BY BLUE RIDGE IN FY 2019-20



Operations spending impact

\$22.1 million



Student spending impact

\$4.5 million



Alumni impact

\$101.6 million



TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

\$128.1 million

OR

Jobs supported

2,416

Alumni impact



The education and training Blue Ridge provides for regional residents has the greatest impact. Since its establishment, students have studied at Blue Ridge and entered the regional workforce with greater knowledge and new skills. Today, thousands of former Blue Ridge students are employed in the Blue Ridge Service Area. As a result of their education from Blue Ridge, the students receive higher earnings and increase the productivity of the businesses that employ them. In FY 2019-20, Blue Ridge alumni generated \$101.6 million in added income for the regional economy, which is equivalent to supporting 1,894 jobs.

Total impact

Blue Ridge added \$128.1 million in income to the Blue Ridge Service Area economy during the analysis year, equal to the sum of the operations spending impact, the student spending impact, and the alumni impact. For context, the \$128.1 million impact was equal to approximately 2.5% of the total gross regional product (GRP) of the Blue Ridge Service Area. This contribution that the college provided on its own was larger than the entire Transportation & Warehousing industry in the region.

Blue Ridge's total impact can also be expressed in terms of jobs supported. The \$128.1 million impact supported 2,416 regional jobs, using the jobs-to-sales ratios specific to each industry in the region. This means that one out of every 31 jobs in the Blue Ridge Service Area is supported by the activities of Blue Ridge and its students. In addition, the \$128.1 million, or 2,416 supported jobs, stemmed from different industry sectors. Among non-education industry sectors, Blue Ridge's spending and alumni in the Retail Trade industry sector supported 231 jobs in FY 2019-20. If the college did not exist, these impacts would not have been generated in the Blue Ridge Service Area.

BLUE RIDGE IMPACTS BY INDUSTRY (JOBS SUPPORTED)



One out of every 31 jobs in the Blue Ridge Service Area is supported by the activities of Blue Ridge and its students.



An investment analysis evaluates the costs associated with a proposed venture against its expected benefits. If the benefits outweigh the costs, then the investment is financially worthwhile. The analysis presented here considers Blue Ridge as an investment from the perspectives of students, taxpayers, and society in North Carolina.

Student perspective



In FY 2019-20, Blue Ridge served 3,149 credit and 8,588 non-credit students. In order to attend the college, the students paid for tuition, fees, books, and supplies. They also took out loans and will incur interest on those loans. Additionally, students gave up money they would have otherwise earned had they been working instead of attending college. The total investment made by Blue Ridge's students in FY 2019-20 amounted to a present value of \$24.6 million, equal to \$6 million in out-of-pocket expenses (including future principal and interest on student loans) and \$18.6 million in forgone time and money.

In return for their investment, Blue Ridge's students will receive a stream of higher future earnings that will continue to grow throughout their working lives. For example, the average Blue Ridge associate degree graduate from FY 2019-20 will see annual earnings that are \$7,400 higher than a person with a high school diploma or equivalent working in North Carolina. Over a working lifetime, the benefits of the associate degree over a high school diploma will amount to an undiscounted value of \$236.8 thousand in higher earnings per graduate. The present value of the cumulative higher future earnings that Blue Ridge's FY 2019-20 students will receive over their working careers is \$120.2 million.

The students' benefit-cost ratio is 4.9. In other words, for every dollar students invest in Blue Ridge in the form of out-of-pocket expenses and forgone time and money, they will receive a cumulative value of \$4.90 in higher future earnings.

STUDENTS SEE A HIGH RATE OF RETURN FOR THEIR INVESTMENT IN BLUE RIDGE



Average annual return for Blue Ridge students

28.0%



Stock market 30-year average annual return

10.6%

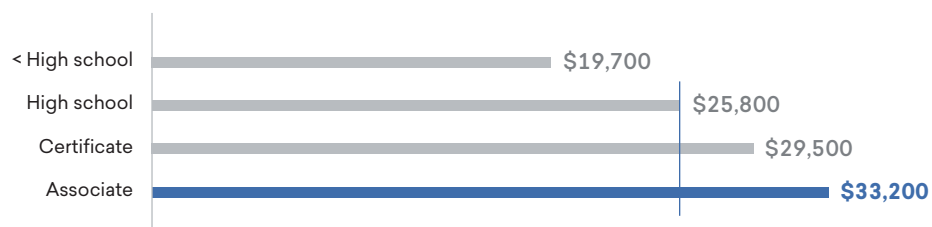


Interest earned on savings account (National Rate Cap)

0.8%

Source: Forbes' S&P 500, 1991-2020. FDIC.gov, 6-2021.

The average associate degree graduate from Blue Ridge will see an increase in earnings of **\$7,400** each year compared to a person with a high school diploma or equivalent working in North Carolina.



Source: Emsi Burning Glass employment data.

Annually, the students' investment in Blue Ridge has an average annual internal rate of return of 28.0%, which is impressive compared to the U.S. stock market's 30-year average rate of return of 10.6%.

Taxpayer perspective



Blue Ridge generates more in tax revenue than it takes. These benefits to taxpayers consist primarily of taxes that the state and local government will collect from the added revenue created in the state. As Blue Ridge students will earn more, they will make higher tax payments throughout their working lives. Students' employers will also make higher tax payments as they increase their output and purchases of goods and services. By the end of the FY 2019-20 students' working lives, the state and local government will have collected a present value of \$34.7 million in added taxes.

Benefits to taxpayers will also consist of savings generated by the improved lifestyles of Blue Ridge students and the corresponding reduced government services. Education is statistically correlated with a variety of lifestyle changes. The education that Blue Ridge students receive will generate savings in three main categories: 1) healthcare, 2) justice system, and 3) income assistance. Improved health will lower students' demand for national health care services. In addition, costs related to the justice system will decrease. Blue Ridge students will be more employable, so their reduced demand for income assistance such as welfare and unemployment benefits will benefit taxpayers. For a list of study references, contact the college for a copy of the main report. Altogether, the present value of the benefits associated with a Blue Ridge education will generate \$2.5 million in savings to state and local taxpayers.

Total taxpayer benefits amount to \$37.2 million, the present value sum of the added taxes and public sector savings. Taxpayer costs are \$19.2 million, equal to the amount of state and local government funding Blue Ridge received in FY 2019-20. These benefits and costs yield a benefit-cost ratio of 1.9. This means that for every dollar of public money invested in Blue Ridge in FY 2019-20, taxpayers will receive a cumulative present value of \$1.90 over the course of the students' working lives. The average annual internal rate of return for taxpayers is 6.4%, which compares favorably to other long-term investments in the public and private sectors.

Social perspective



Society as a whole in North Carolina benefits from the presence of Blue Ridge in two major ways. Primarily, society benefits from an increased economic base in the state. This is attributed to the added income from students' increased lifetime earnings (added student income) and increased business output (added business income), which raise economic prosperity in North Carolina.

Benefits to society also consist of the savings generated by the improved lifestyles of Blue Ridge students. As discussed in the previous section, education

For every dollar of public money invested in Blue Ridge, taxpayers will receive a cumulative value of **\$1.90** over the course of the students' working lives.

is statistically correlated with a variety of lifestyle changes that generate social savings. Note that these costs are avoided by the consumers but are distinct from the costs avoided by the taxpayers outlined above. Healthcare savings include avoided medical costs associated with smoking, alcohol dependence, obesity, drug abuse, and depression. Justice system savings include avoided costs to the government and society due to less judicial activity. Income assistance savings include reduced welfare and unemployment claims. For a list of study references, contact the college for a copy of the main report.

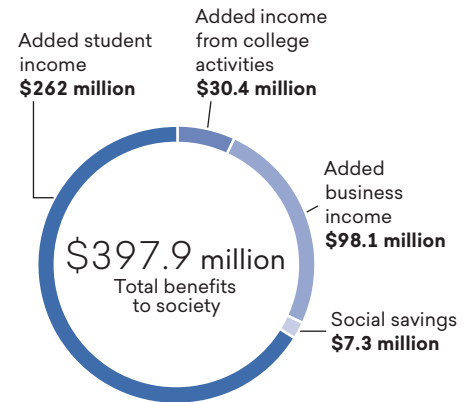
Altogether, the social benefits of Blue Ridge equal a present value of \$397.9 million. These benefits include \$262.0 million in added student income, \$98.1 million in added business income, \$30.4 million in added income from college activities, as well as \$7.3 million in social savings related to health, crime, and income assistance in North Carolina. People in North Carolina invested a present value total of \$49.1 million in Blue Ridge in FY 2019-20. The cost includes all the college and student costs.

The benefit-cost ratio for society is 8.1, equal to the \$397.9 million in benefits divided by the \$49.1 million in costs. In other words, for every dollar invested in Blue Ridge, people in North Carolina will receive a cumulative value of \$8.10 in benefits. The benefits of this investment will occur for as long as Blue Ridge's FY 2019-20 students remain employed in the state workforce.

Summary of investment analysis results

The results of the analysis demonstrate that Blue Ridge is a strong investment for all three major stakeholder groups—students, taxpayers, and society. As shown, students receive a great return for their investments in a Blue Ridge education. At the same time, taxpayers' investment in Blue Ridge returns more to government budgets than it costs and creates a wide range of social benefits throughout North Carolina.

SOCIAL BENEFITS IN NORTH CAROLINA FROM BLUE RIDGE



Source: Emsi Burning Glass impact model.



STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

Present value benefits
\$120.2 million

Present value costs
\$24.6 million

Net present value
\$95.6 million



TAXPAYER PERSPECTIVE

Present value benefits
\$37.2 million

Present value costs
\$19.2 million

Net present value
\$18 million



SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

Present value benefits
\$397.9 million

Present value costs
\$49.1 million

Net present value
\$348.8 million

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE		TAXPAYER PERSPECTIVE		SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE	
Benefit-cost ratio	Rate of return	Benefit-cost ratio	Rate of return	Benefit-cost ratio	Rate of return
4.9	28.0%	1.9	6.4%	8.1	n/a*

* The rate of return is not reported for the social perspective because the beneficiaries of the investment are not necessarily the same as the original investors.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study demonstrate that Blue Ridge creates value from multiple perspectives. The college benefits regional businesses by increasing consumer spending in the region and supplying a steady flow of qualified, trained workers to the workforce. Blue Ridge enriches the lives of students by raising their lifetime earnings and helping them achieve their individual potential. The college benefits state and local taxpayers through increased tax receipts and a reduced demand for government-supported social services. Finally, Blue Ridge benefits society as a whole in North Carolina by creating a more prosperous economy and generating a variety of savings through the improved lifestyles of students.

About the study

Data and assumptions used in the study are based on several sources, including the FY 2019-20 academic and financial reports from Blue Ridge, industry and employment data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and U.S. Census Bureau, outputs of Emsi Burning Glass's Multi-Regional Social Accounting Matrix model, and a variety of studies and surveys relating education to social behavior. The study applies a conservative methodology and follows standard practice using only the most recognized indicators of economic impact and investment effectiveness. For a full description of the data and approach used in the study, please contact the college for a copy of the main report.

The results of this study demonstrate that Blue Ridge creates value from **multiple perspectives**.



Emsi Burning Glass provides colleges and universities with labor market data that helps create better outcomes for students, businesses, and communities. Our data, which cover more than 99% of the U.S. workforce, are compiled from a wide variety of government sources, job postings, and online profiles and résumés. Hundreds of institutions use Emsi Burning Glass to align programs with regional needs, drive enrollment, connect students with in-demand careers, track their alumni's employment outcomes, and demonstrate their institution's economic impact on their region. Visit economicmodeling.com/higher-education to learn more or connect with us.