



The Economic Value of the Grand Rapids Community College



GRAND RAPIDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE (GRCC) creates value in many ways. The college plays a key role in helping students increase their employability and achieve their individual potential. The college facilitates new research developments and draws students to the region, generating new dollars and opportunities for the GRCC Service Region.¹ GRCC provides students with the education, training, and skills they need to have fulfilling and prosperous careers. Furthermore, GRCC is a place for students to meet new people, increase their self-confidence, and promote their overall health and well-being.

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

This study measures the economic impacts created by GRCC 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:



THE GRCC SERVICE REGION

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

 **Economic impact analysis**

 **Investment analysis**

All results reflect employee, student, and financial data, provided by the college, for fiscal year (FY) 2020-21. Impacts on the GRCC Service Region 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 Michigan are reported under the investment analysis.

¹ For the purposes of this analysis, the GRCC Service Region is comprised of Kent and Ottawa Counties.

Economic impact analysis



GRCC promotes economic growth in the GRCC Service Region 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 and construction operations. The college's activities attract students from outside the GRCC Service Region, whose expenditures benefit regional vendors. In addition, GRCC is a primary source of higher education to the GRCC Service Region residents and a supplier of trained workers to regional industries, enhancing overall productivity in the regional workforce.

Operations spending impact



GRCC adds economic value to the GRCC Service Region as an employer of regional residents and a large-scale buyer of goods and services. In FY 2020-21, the college employed 1,338 full-time and part-time faculty and staff, all of whom lived in the GRCC Service Region. Total payroll at GRCC was \$91.6 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 \$57.3 million on day-to-day expenses related to facilities, supplies, and professional services.

GRCC's day-to-day operations spending added \$110.2 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 \$110.2 million in added income is equivalent to supporting 1,516 jobs in the region.

Construction spending impact



GRCC invests in construction each year to maintain its facilities, create additional capacities, and meet its growing educational demands. While the amount varies from year to year, these quick infusions of income and jobs have a substantial impact on the regional economy. In FY 2020-21, GRCC's construction spending generated \$7.3 million in added income, which is equivalent to supporting 106 jobs.

Student spending impact



Around 18% of credit students attending GRCC originated from outside the region in FY 2020-21, and some of these students relocated to the GRCC

Impacts created by GRCC in FY 2020-21



Operations spending impact

\$110.2 million

+



Construction spending impact

\$7.3 million

+



Student spending impact

\$31.9 million

+



Alumni impact

\$898.4 million



Total economic impact

\$1 billion

OR

Jobs supported

14,039



Service Region to attend GRCC. These students may not have come to the region if the college did not exist. In addition, some in-region students, referred to as retained students, would have left the GRCC Service Region if not for the existence of GRCC. While attending the college, these relocated and retained students spent money on groceries, accommodation, transportation, and other household expenses. This spending generated \$31.9 million in added income for the regional economy in FY 2020-21, which supported 567 jobs in the GRCC Service Region.

Alumni impact



The education and training GRCC provides for regional residents has the greatest impact. Since the establishment of the college, students have studied at GRCC and entered the regional workforce with greater knowledge and new skills. Today, hundreds of thousands of former GRCC students are employed in the GRCC Service Region. As a result of their education from GRCC, the students receive higher earnings and increase the productivity of the businesses that employ them. In FY 2020-21, GRCC alumni generated \$898.4 million in added income for the regional economy, which is equivalent to supporting 11,850 jobs.

Total impact

GRCC added \$1 billion in income to the GRCC Service Region economy during the analysis year, equal to the sum of the operations and construction spending impacts; the student spending impact; and the alumni impact. For context, the \$1 billion impact was equal to approximately 1.5% of the total gross regional product (GRP) of the GRCC Service Region. This contribution that the college provided on its own is larger than the entire Utilities industry in the region.

GRCC's total impact can also be expressed in terms of jobs supported. The \$1 billion impact supported 14,039 regional jobs, using the jobs-to-sales ratios specific to each industry in the region. This means that one out of every 50 jobs in the GRCC Service Region is supported by the activities of GRCC and its students. In addition, the \$1 billion, or 14,039 supported jobs, stemmed from different industry sectors. For instance, among non-education industry sectors, the spending of GRCC and its students and the activities of its alumni in the Health Care & Social Assistance industry sector supported 1,865 jobs in FY 2020-21. If the college did not exist, these impacts would not have been generated in the GRCC Service Region.

GRCC impacts by industry (jobs supported)



1,865

Health Care & Social Assistance



1,764

Retail Trade



1,092

Manufacturing



1,066

Administrative & Waste Services



1,063

Accommodation & Food Services

One out of every 50 jobs in the GRCC Service Region is supported by the activities of GRCC and its students.



Investment analysis



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 evaluates GRCC as an investment from the perspectives of students, taxpayers, and society in Michigan.

Student perspective



In FY 2020-21, GRCC served 19,836 credit and 11,394 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 GRCC's students in FY 2020-21 amounted to a present value of \$65 million, equal to \$43.5 million in out-of-pocket expenses (including future principal and interest on student loans) and \$21.5 million in forgone time and money.

In return for their investment, GRCC's students will receive a stream of higher future earnings that will continue to grow throughout their working lives. For example, the average GRCC associate degree graduate from FY 2020-21 will see annual earnings that are \$9,600 higher than a person with a high school diploma or equivalent working in Michigan. Over a working lifetime, the benefits of the associate degree over a high school diploma will amount to an undiscounted value of \$422.4 thousand in higher earnings per graduate. The present value of the cumulative higher future earnings that GRCC's FY 2020-21 students will receive over their working careers is \$576.3 million.

The students' benefit-cost ratio is 8.9. In other words, for every dollar students invest in GRCC in the form of out-of-pocket expenses and forgone time and money, they will receive a cumulative value of \$8.90 in higher future earnings. Annually, the students' investment in GRCC has an average annual internal rate of return of 28.3%, which is impressive compared to the U.S. stock market's 30-year average rate of return of 9.6%.

Students see a high rate of return for their investment in the GRCC



Average annual return for GRCC students
28.3%



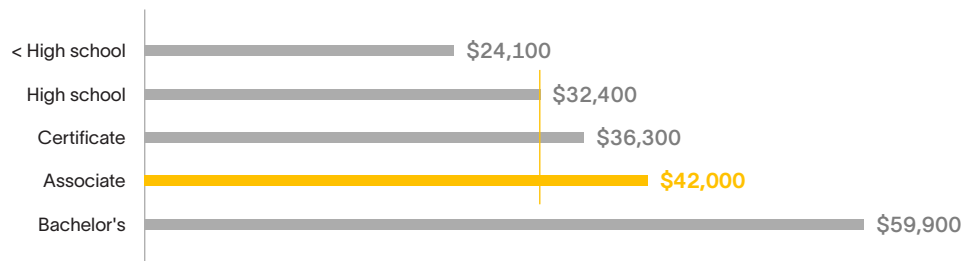
Stock market 30-year average annual return
9.6%



Interest earned on savings account (National Rate Cap)
0.4%

Source: Forbes' S&P 500, 1992-2021. FDIC.gov, 2-2022.

The average associate degree graduate from GRCC will see an increase in earnings of **\$9,600** each year compared to a person with a high school diploma or equivalent working in Michigan.



Source: Lightcast employment data.

Taxpayer perspective



GRCC generates more in tax revenue than it receives. 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 GRCC 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 2020-21 students' working lives, the state and local government will have collected a present value of \$230.6 million in added taxes.

Benefits to taxpayers will also consist of savings generated by the improved lifestyles of GRCC students and the corresponding reduced government services. Education is statistically correlated with a variety of lifestyle changes. The education that GRCC 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. GRCC 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 an education from GRCC will generate \$19.1 million in savings to state and local taxpayers.

Total taxpayer benefits amount to \$249.7 million, the present value sum of the added taxes and public sector savings. Taxpayer costs are \$75.4 million, equal to the amount of state and local government funding GRCC received in FY 2020-21. These benefits and costs yield a benefit-cost ratio of 3.3. This means that for every dollar of public money invested in GRCC in FY 2020-21, taxpayers will receive a cumulative present value of \$3.30 over the course of the students' working lives. The average annual internal rate of return for taxpayers is 7.5%, which compares favorably to other long-term investments in the public and private sectors.

For every dollar of public money invested in GRCC, taxpayers will receive a cumulative value of **\$3.30** over the course of the students' working lives.

Social perspective



Society as a whole in Michigan benefits from the presence of GRCC 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 Michigan.

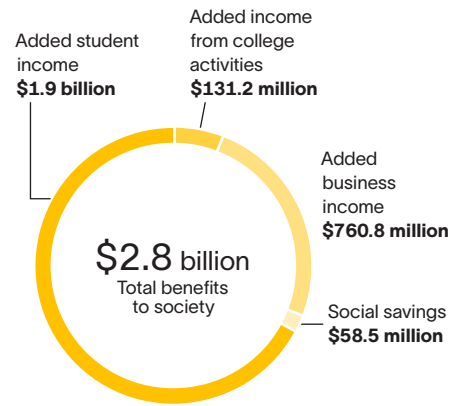
Benefits to society also consist of the savings generated by the improved lifestyles of GRCC students. As discussed in the previous section, education is statistically correlated with a variety of lifestyle changes that generate social savings. Note that

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 GRCC equal a present value of \$2.8 billion. These benefits include \$1.9 billion in added student income, \$760.8 million in added business income, \$131.2 million in added income from college activities, as well as \$58.5 million in social savings related to health, the justice system, and income assistance in Michigan. People in Michigan invested a present value total of \$192.2 million in GRCC in FY 2020–21. The cost includes all the college and student costs.

The benefit–cost ratio for society is 14.8, equal to the \$2.8 billion in benefits divided by the \$192.2 million in costs. In other words, for every dollar invested in GRCC, people in Michigan will receive a cumulative value of \$14.80 in benefits. The benefits of this investment will occur for as long as GRCC’s FY 2020–21 students remain employed in the state workforce.

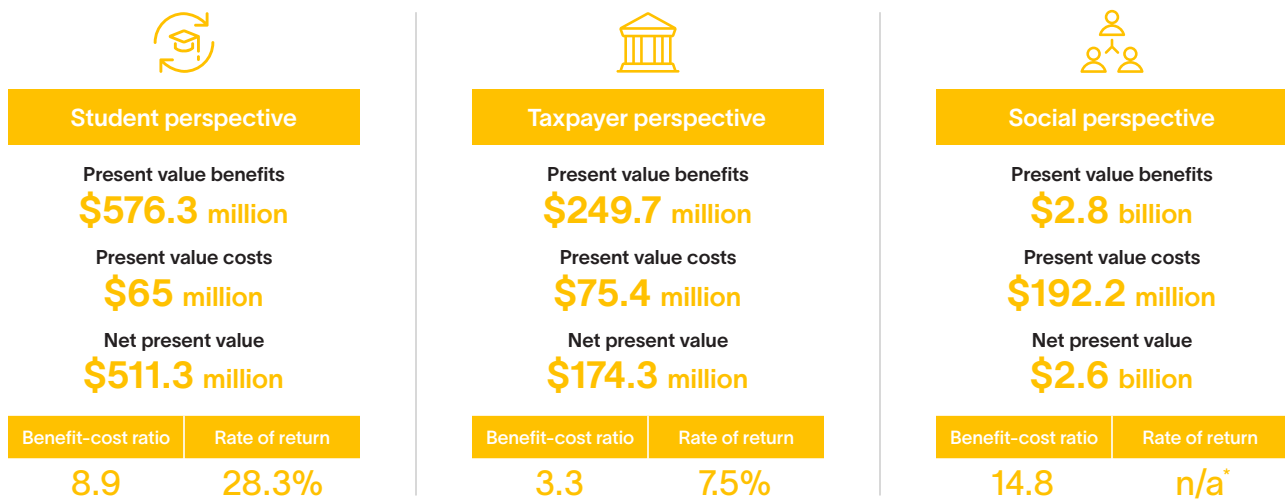
Social benefits in Michigan from GRCC



Source: Lightcast impact model.

Summary of investment analysis results

The results of the analysis demonstrate that GRCC 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 an education from GRCC. At the same time, taxpayers’ investment in GRCC returns more to government budgets than it costs and creates a wide range of social benefits throughout Michigan.



* 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 GRCC 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. GRCC 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, GRCC benefits society as a whole in Michigan 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 2020-21 academic and financial reports from GRCC, industry and employment data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and U.S. Census Bureau, outputs of Lightcast'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 GRCC creates value from **multiple perspectives.**



Lightcast provides colleges and universities with labor market data that help 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 Lightcast 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 lightcast.io/solutions/education to learn more or connect with us.