



# Analysis of the **Economic Impact and Return on Investment** of Education

THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF  
BLUE RIDGE COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

August 2017

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



# Executive summary

Blue Ridge Community and Technical College (BRCTC) creates value in many ways. The college plays a key role in helping students increase their employability and achieve their individual potential. It provides students with the skills they need to have fulfilling and prosperous careers. Further, it supplies an environment for students to meet new people, increase their self-confidence, and promote their overall health and well-being.

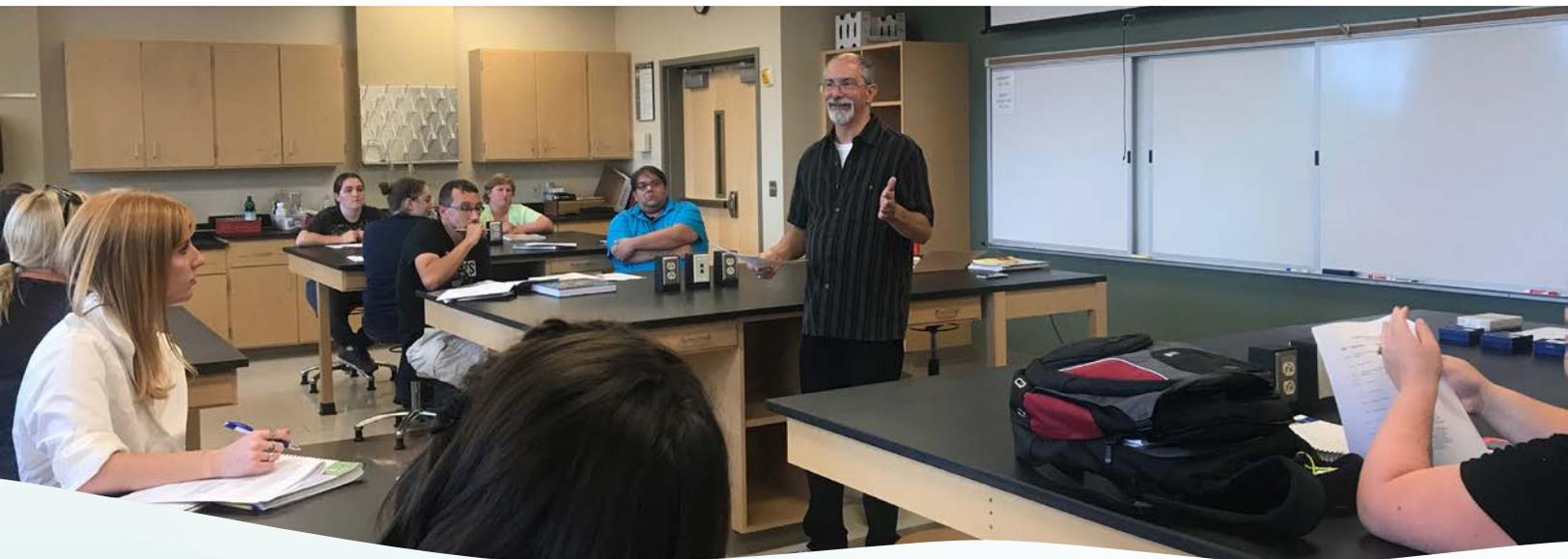
The value of BRCTC influences both the lives of students and the regional economy. The college serves a range of industries in the BRCTC Service Area, supports local businesses, and benefits society as a whole in West Virginia from an expanded economy and improved quality of life. The benefits created by BRCTC even extend to the state government through increased tax revenues and public sector savings.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the economic impacts created by BRCTC on the business community and the benefits that the college generates in return for the investments made by its key stakeholder groups—students, taxpayers, and society. The region the college serves is defined as the BRCTC Service Area and consists of Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan Counties in West Virginia; Frederick and Washington Counties in Maryland; and

Clarke, Frederick, and Loudoun Counties in Virginia. While BRCTC’s primary service area is the counties in the Eastern Panhandle, the adjacent counties were included in this analysis to capture the entire region where BRCTC’s impact takes place. The following two analyses are presented:

- **Economic impact analysis**
- **Investment analysis**

All results reflect student and financial data for fiscal year (FY) 2015-16. Impacts on the regional business community are reported under the economic impact analysis. Results are measured in terms of added income. The returns on investment to students, taxpayers, and society are reported under the investment analysis. Both analyses are described more fully in the following sections.



# About Blue Ridge Community and Technical College

Blue Ridge Community and Technical College has offered two-year programs since the early 70's, beginning with disciplines such as nursing and business. In the forty years since then, it has expanded to serve more than 5,000 students, a milestone it passed in 2014. According to the Community Times Weekly, this made it America's third-fastest growing community and technical college. It also received its accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission in 2005.

Until 2001, the college operated from the basement of Shepherdstown 's Gardiner Hall. At that time the city of Martinsburg offered to find the college a better location if it moved to their location; as a result, the college spent two years developing a new campus (the Dunn Building) in part of what had previously been the Blue Ridge Outlets Complex. Because of the college's rapid growth, the Dunn Building was supplanted in 2012 by the newly constructed main campus, on 46 acres of land on the edge of Martinsburg. The college also has a Technology Center in Martinsburg and the Pines Opportunity Center in neighboring Morgan County.

A significant part of Blue Ridge's impact is the extent of its connections with local business and industry. Procter & Gamble, for example, worked with Blue Ridge to train hundreds of skilled machine operators for a new facility. Ryan Moore, the HR Leader at the Talber Station facility said "Being partnered with a technical college expands our horizons dramatically.... We would not have a successful workforce that is trained, ready to go, to start this plant up without the partnership that we have with Blue Ridge. It just would not happen."

The relationship Blue Ridge has with Procter & Gamble is not unique; many other local employers, including First Energy, the Hollywood Casino at Charles Town Races, the WVU Medicine Berkeley Medical Center and Jefferson Medical Center, Community Alternatives to Violence, and the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources' Bureau For Children and Families all testified to the value of their partnerships with Blue Ridge. For more information on these partnerships, see the Main Report.



# Economic impact analysis

BRCTC promotes economic growth in the BRCTC Service Area in a variety of ways. The college is an employer and buyer of goods and services, and the living expenses of students benefit local businesses. In addition, BRCTC is a primary source of education to the BRCTC Service Area residents and a supplier of trained workers to regional industries.

## OPERATIONS SPENDING IMPACT

BRCTC is an important employer in the BRCTC Service Area. In FY 2015-16, the college employed 260 full-time and part-time faculty and staff. Of these, 89% lived in the BRCTC Service Area. Total payroll at BRCTC was \$10.1 million, much of which was spent in the region for groceries, rent, dining out, clothing, and other household expenses.

BRCTC is itself a large-scale buyer of goods and services. In FY 2015-16, the college spent \$8.4 million to cover its expenses for facilities, professional services, and supplies.

BRCTC added \$11.6 million in income to the region during the analysis year as a result of its day-to-day operations. This figure represents the college’s payroll, the multiplier effects generated by the spending of the college and its employees, and a downward adjustment to account for funding that the college received from state sources. The \$11.6 million in added income is equivalent to supporting 289 jobs.

## STUDENT SPENDING IMPACT

A number of in-region students would have left the area for other education opportunities if not for the existence of BRCTC. While attending the college, these retained students spent \$6.3 million to purchase groceries, rent accommodation, pay for transportation, and so on. A significant portion of these expenditures occurred in the region, generating \$2.1 million in added income in the regional economy during the analysis year, which is equivalent to supporting 57 jobs.

## ALUMNI IMPACT

The education and training BRCTC provides for regional residents results in the greatest impact. As shown in Figure 1, since the college was established, students have studied at BRCTC and entered the regional workforce with new skills. Today, thousands of former students are employed in the BRCTC Service Area.

**TABLE 1:** Impacts created by BRCTC in FY 2015-16\*

ADDED INCOME	JOBS
<b>\$11.6 million</b>	<b>289</b>
<b>Operations spending impact</b>	
<b>\$2.1 million</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Student spending impact</b>	
<b>\$41.6 million</b>	<b>587</b>
<b>Alumni impact</b>	
<b>\$55.4 million</b>	<b>934</b>
<b>Total impact</b>	

\* Numbers may not sum due to rounding.



During the analysis year, past and present students of BRCTC generated \$41.6 million in added income for the region. This figure represents the higher earnings that students earned during the year, the increased output of the businesses that employed the students, and the multiplier effects that occurred as students and their employers spent money at other businesses. This \$41.6 million in added income is equivalent to supporting 587 jobs.

**TOTAL IMPACT**

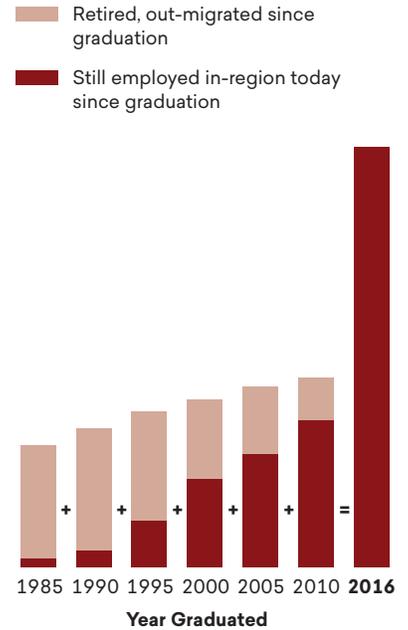
The overall impact of BRCTC on the local business community during the analysis year amounted to \$55.4 million in added income, equal to the sum of the operations spending impact, the student spending impact, and the alumni impact.

The total impact is also expressed in terms of the jobs supported by the added income; they are calculated by jobs-to-sales ratios specific to each industry. Overall, the \$55.4 million impact supports 934 jobs.

A portion of the total \$55.4 million is broken out into an industry-by-industry impact ordered by added income. Table 2 outlines the top industries impacted by BRCTC. Because industries have different jobs-to-sales ratios, the associated jobs supported by BRCTC impact differ by industry. Nonetheless, these are impacts that would not have been generated without the college's presence.



**FIGURE 1:** BRCTC alumni working in-region today



**TABLE 2:** Top industries impacted by BRCTC\*

TOTAL INCOME (MILLIONS)	JOBS
<b>\$9.8</b>	<b>97</b>
Government, Non-Education	
<b>\$6.3</b>	<b>80</b>
Professional & Technical Services	
<b>\$3.9</b>	<b>75</b>
Health Care & Social Assistance	
<b>\$3.2</b>	<b>19</b>
Manufacturing	
<b>\$2.4</b>	<b>11</b>
Information	
<b>\$29.7</b>	<b>653</b>
All other industries	
<b>\$55.4</b>	<b>934</b>
Total impact	

\* Numbers may not sum due to rounding.



# Investment analysis

Investment analysis is the process of evaluating total costs and measuring these against total benefits to determine whether or not a proposed venture will be profitable. If benefits outweigh costs, then the investment is worthwhile. If costs outweigh benefits, then the investment will lose money and is considered unprofitable. This study considers BRCTC as an investment from the perspectives of students, taxpayers, and society. The backdrop for the analysis is the entire West Virginia economy.

## STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

In FY 2015-16, BRCTC served 6,847 students. This figure represents an annualized, unduplicated head count. In order to attend college, students paid for tuition, fees, books, and supplies. Additionally, students gave up money that they would have otherwise earned had they been working instead of attending college. The total investment made by BRCTC's students in FY 2015-16 amounted to \$39.5 million, equal to \$7.2 million in out-of-pocket expenses plus \$32.3 million in forgone time and money.

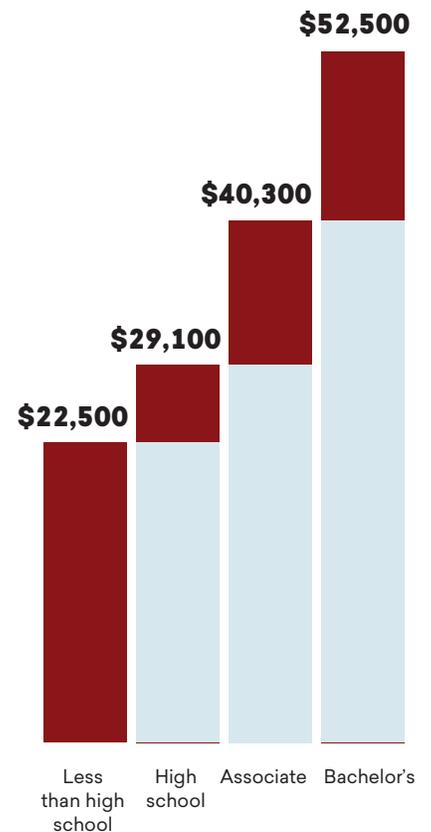
In return for their investment, BRCTC's students will receive a stream of higher future earnings that will continue to grow through their working lives. As shown in Figure 2, mean earnings levels at the midpoint of the average-aged worker's career increase as people achieve higher levels of education. For example, the average associate degree completer from BRCTC will see an increase in earnings of \$11,200 each year compared to someone with a high school diploma or equivalent working in West Virginia. Over a working lifetime, this increase in earnings amounts to an undiscounted value of approximately \$313,600 in higher earnings.

The present value of the higher future earnings that BRCTC's students will receive over their working careers is \$91.6 million. Dividing this value by the \$39.5 million in student costs yields a benefit-cost ratio of 2.3. In other words, for every \$1 students invest in BRCTC in the form of out-of-pocket expenses and forgone time and money, they receive a cumulative of \$2.30 in higher future earnings. The average annual rate of return for students is 11.9%. This is an impressive return, especially when compared to the 10-year average 7.2% return to the U.S. stock market (Figure 3).

## TAXPAYER PERSPECTIVE

BRCTC generates more in tax revenue than it takes. These benefits to taxpayers consist primarily of taxes that the state government will collect from the added

**FIGURE 2:** Average earnings by education level at career midpoint in West Virginia



Source: Emsi complete employment data.



revenue created in the state. As BRCTC students earn more, they will make higher tax payments. Employers will also make higher tax payments as they increase their output and purchase more supplies and services. By the end of the FY 2015-16 students' working careers, the state government will have collected a present value of \$26.1 million in added taxes.

Benefits to taxpayers consist of the savings generated by the improved lifestyles of students and the proportionally reduced government expenditures. Education is statistically correlated with a variety of lifestyle changes that generate taxpayer savings across three main categories: 1) health, 2) crime, and 3) unemployment. Improved health habits lower the students' demand for national health care services. Students are also less likely to commit crimes, so the demand for law enforcement and criminal justice services is reduced (study references are available in the main report). Students are also more employable, so the demand for welfare and unemployment benefits, such as earnings assistance and welfare benefits, is reduced. For a list of study references to these statistical benefits, please contact the college for a copy of the main report. All of these benefits will generate a present value of \$2.7 million in savings to state taxpayers.

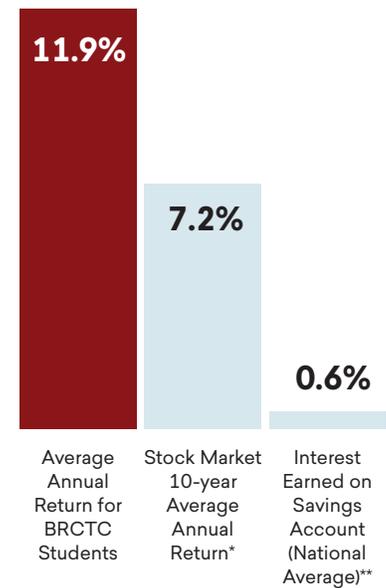
Total benefits to taxpayers equal \$28.8 million, equal to the sum of the added taxes and public sector savings. Comparing this to the taxpayer costs of \$6.6 million—equal to the funding that BRCTC received from the state government during the analysis year—yields a benefit-cost ratio of 4.3. This means that for every \$1 of public money invested in BRCTC, taxpayers receive a cumulative value of \$4.30 over the course of the students' working lives. The average annual rate of return is 16.5%, a solid investment that compares favorably with other long-term investments in both the private and public sectors.

## SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

Society as a whole within West Virginia benefits from the presence of BRCTC in two major ways. The first and largest benefit that society receives is an increased state economic base. As discussed in the previous section, the higher student earnings and increased business output occurs across the state. This raises prosperity in West Virginia and expands the economic base for society as a whole.

Benefits to society also consist of the savings generated by the improved lifestyles of students. Similar to the taxpayer section above, education is statistically correlated with a variety of lifestyle changes that generate social savings. Note that these costs are avoided by the consumers, and are distinct from the costs avoided by taxpayers outlined above. Health savings include avoided medical costs associated with smoking, alcoholism, obesity, drug abuse, and mental disorders. Crime savings include reduced security expenditures and insurance administration, lower victim costs, and reduced criminal justice system expenditures. Unemployment savings include the reduced employer contributions towards unemployment claims. For a list of study references to these statistical benefits, please contact the college for a copy of the main report.

**FIGURE 3:** Student rate of return



\* Forbes' S&P 500, 1994-2014.

\*\* FDIC.gov 12-2016.

**FIGURE 4:** Present value of higher earnings and social savings in West Virginia

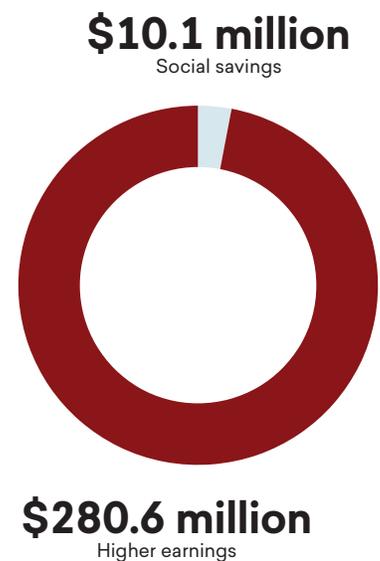


Figure 4 shows the present value of the higher earnings and social savings that will occur in West Virginia over the working lifetime of the FY 2015-16 student population at BRCTC. Higher earnings amounts to a present value of \$280.6 million due to the increased lifetime earnings of students and associated increases in business output. Social savings amount to \$10.1 million, the sum of health, crime, and unemployment savings in West Virginia. Altogether, total benefits to society equal \$290.7 million (in present value terms).

Society invested \$53.2 million in BRCTC educations during the analysis year. This includes all expenditures by BRCTC, all student expenditures, and all student opportunity costs. For every dollar of this investment, society as a whole in West Virginia will receive a cumulative value of \$5.50 in benefits, equal to the \$290.7 million in benefits divided by the \$53.2 million in costs. These benefits will occur for as long as BRCTC’s FY 2015-16 students remain employed in the state workforce.

### SUMMARY OF INVESTMENT ANALYSIS RESULTS

Table 3 presents the results of the investment analysis for all three of BRCTC’s major stakeholder groups—students, taxpayers, and society. As shown, students receive great value for their educational investment. At the same time, the investment made by state taxpayers to the college creates a wide range of benefits to society and returns more to government budgets than it costs.

**TABLE 3:** Summary of investment analysis results

	STUDENT PERSPECTIVE	TAXPAYER PERSPECTIVE	SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE
Present value benefits	<b>\$91,607,701</b>	<b>\$28,435,855</b>	<b>\$290,447,957</b>
Costs	<b>\$39,486,175</b>	<b>\$6,562,364</b>	<b>\$53,208,017</b>
<b>Net present value</b>	<b>\$52,121,526</b>	<b>\$21,873,491</b>	<b>\$237,239,940</b>
Benefit-cost ratio	<b>2.3</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>5.5</b>
Rate of return	<b>11.9%</b>	<b>16.5%</b>	<b>N/A*</b>

\* 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 BRCTC creates value from multiple perspectives. The college benefits local businesses by increasing consumer spending in the region and supplying a steady flow of qualified, trained workers into the workforce. It enriches the lives of students by raising their lifetime earnings and helping them achieve their individual potential. It benefits state taxpayers through increased tax receipts across the state and a reduced demand for government-supported social services. Finally, it benefits society as a whole in West Virginia 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 2015-16 academic and financial reports from the college, industry and employment data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and U.S. Census Bureau, outputs of Emsi'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 investment effectiveness and economic impact. For a full description of the data and approach used in the study, please contact the college for a copy of the main report.



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