

The Economic Value of Southwest Tennessee Community College





SOUTHWEST TENNESSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE (Southwest) creates value in many ways. The college plays a key role in helping students increase their employability and achieve their individual potential. The college draws students to the region, generating new dollars and opportunities for the Mid-South.^{*} Southwest provides students with the education, training, and skills they need to have fulfilling and prosperous careers. Furthermore, Southwest is a place for students to meet new people, increase their self-confidence, and promote their overall health and well-being.

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

This study measures the economic impacts created by Southwest 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) 2022-23. Impacts on the Mid-South 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 Tennessee are reported under the investment analysis.



The Mid-South, Tennessee

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

* Southwest serves Arkansas and Mississippi counties within a 30-mile radius; however, for the purposes of this analysis, the Mid-South is comprised of Fayette and Shelby Counties.



Economic impact analysis

Southwest promotes economic growth in the Mid-South 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 attract students from outside the Mid-South, whose expenditures benefit regional vendors. In addition, Southwest is one of the primary sources of higher education to the Mid-South residents and a supplier of trained workers to regional industries, enhancing overall productivity in the regional workforce.

Operations spending impact



Southwest adds economic value to the Mid-South as an employer of regional residents and a large-scale buyer of goods and services. In FY 2022-23, the college employed 870 full-time and part-time faculty and staff, 90% of whom lived in the Mid-South. Total payroll at Southwest was \$45.6 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 \$32.1 million on expenses related to facilities, supplies, and professional services.

Southwest's operations spending added \$71.0 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 \$71.0 million in added income is equivalent to supporting 1,096 jobs in the region.

Student spending impact



Some in-region students, referred to as retained students, would have left the Mid-South if not for the existence of Southwest. While attending the college, these retained students spent money on groceries, accommodation, transportation, and other household expenses. This spending generated \$8.7 million in added income for the regional economy in FY 2022-23, which supported 152 jobs in the Mid-South.

Alumni impact



Southwest's economic impact unique to higher education stems from the added human capital – the knowledge, creativity, imagination, and entrepre-

Impacts created by Southwest in FY 2022-23



Operations spending impact

\$71.0 million

+



Student spending impact

\$8.7 million

+



Alumni impact

\$427.6 million



Total economic impact

\$507.3 million

OR



Jobs supported

6,272



neurship – found in its alumni. Since the establishment of the college, students have studied at Southwest and entered the regional workforce with greater knowledge and new skills. Today, thousands of former Southwest students are employed in the Mid-South. As a result of their education from Southwest, the students receive higher earnings and increase the productivity of the businesses that employ them. In FY 2022-23, Southwest alumni generated \$427.6 million in added income for the regional economy, which is equivalent to supporting 5,024 jobs.

Total impact

Southwest added \$507.3 million in income to the Mid-South 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 \$507.3 million impact was equal to approximately 0.6% of the total gross region product (GRP) of the Mid-South. This contribution that the college provided on its own is nearly as large as the entire Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation industry in the region.

Southwest’s total impact can also be expressed in terms of jobs supported. The \$507.3 million impact supported 6,272 regional jobs, using the jobs-to-sales ratios specific to each industry in the region. In addition, the \$507.3 million, or 6,272 supported jobs, stemmed from different industry sectors. For instance, among non-education industry sectors, the spending of Southwest and its students and the activities of its alumni in the Health Care & Social Assistance industry sector supported 869 jobs in FY 2022-23. If the college did not exist, these impacts would not have been generated in the Mid-South.

Southwest impacts by industry (jobs supported)



The **\$507.3 million** impact supported **6,272 regional jobs**.

Investment analysis



An investment analysis evaluates the costs associated with a proposed venture against its expected benefits. The analysis presented here evaluates Southwest as an investment from the perspectives of students, taxpayers, and society in Tennessee. As with the economic impact analysis, this analysis considers only FY 2022-23 activities.

Student perspective



In FY 2022-23, Southwest served 9,499 credit and 2,616 non-credit students. In order to attend the college, the students paid for tuition, fees, books, and supplies. They also gave up money they would have otherwise earned had they been working instead of attending college. The total investment made by Southwest's students in FY 2022-23 amounted to a present value of \$48.0 million, equal to \$18.1 million in out-of-pocket expenses and \$29.9 million in forgone time and money.

In return for their investment, Southwest's students will receive a stream of higher future earnings that will continue to grow throughout their working lives. For example, the average Southwest associate degree graduate from FY 2022-23 will see annual earnings that are \$9,500 higher than a person with a high school diploma or equivalent working in Tennessee. Over a working lifetime, the benefits of an associate degree over a high school diploma will amount to an undiscounted value of \$399,000 in higher earnings per graduate. The present value of the cumulative higher future earnings that Southwest's FY 2022-23 students will receive over their working careers is \$348.6 million.

The students' benefit-cost ratio is 7.3. In other words, for every dollar students invest in Southwest in the form of out-of-pocket expenses and forgone time and money, they will receive a cumulative value of \$7.30 in higher future earnings. Annually, the students' investment in Southwest has an average annual internal rate of return of 22.8%, which is impressive compared to the U.S. stock market's 30-year average rate of return of 10.1%.

Students see a high rate of return for their investment in Southwest



Average annual return for Southwest students
22.8%



Stock market 30-year average annual return
10.1%

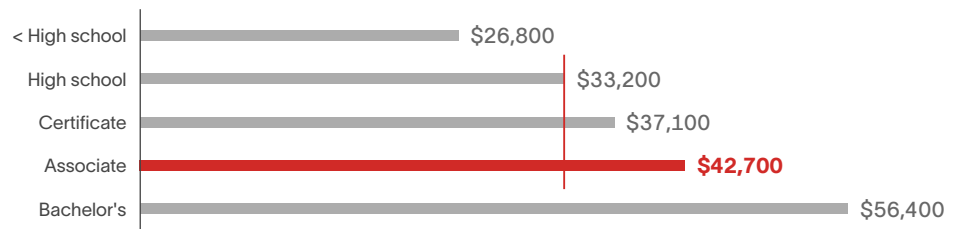


Interest earned on savings account (national deposit rate)
0.5%

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

Average earnings by education level at career midpoint

The average associate degree graduate from Southwest will see an increase in earnings of **\$9,500** each year compared to a person with a high school diploma or equivalent working in Tennessee.



Source: Lightcast employment data



Taxpayer perspective



Southwest 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 Southwest 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 2022-23 students' working lives, the state and local government will have collected a present value of \$63.1 million in added taxes.

Benefits to taxpayers will also consist of savings generated by the improved lifestyles of Southwest students and the corresponding reduced government services. Education is statistically correlated with a variety of lifestyle changes. The education that Southwest students receive will generate savings in three main categories: 1) health care, 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. Southwest 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 Southwest will generate \$10.3 million in savings to state and local taxpayers.

Total taxpayer benefits amount to \$73.5 million, the present value sum of the added tax revenue and public sector savings. Taxpayer costs are \$40.2 million, equal to the amount of state and local government funding Southwest received in FY 2022-23. These benefits and costs yield a benefit-cost ratio of 1.8. This means that for every dollar of public money invested in Southwest in FY 2022-23, taxpayers will receive a cumulative present value of \$1.80 over the course of the students' working lives. The average annual internal rate of return for taxpayers is 4.2%, which compares favorably to other long-term investments in the public sector.

For every dollar of public money invested in Southwest, taxpayers will receive a cumulative value of **\$1.80** over the course of the students' working lives.

Social perspective



Society as a whole in Tennessee benefits from the presence of Southwest 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 Tennessee.

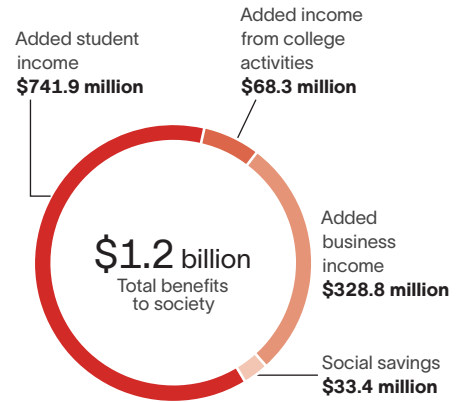
Benefits to society also consist of the savings generated by the improved lifestyles of Southwest students. As discussed in the previous section, education is statistically correlated with a variety of lifestyle changes that generate social savings. Note that these costs are avoided by the consumers but are distinct from the costs avoided by the taxpayers outlined above. Health care savings include avoided medical costs associated with smoking, obesity, substance 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 Southwest equal a present value of \$1.2 billion. These benefits include \$741.9 million in added student income, \$328.8 million in added business income, \$68.3 million in added income from college activities, as well as \$33.4 million in social savings related to health, the justice system, and income assistance in Tennessee. People in Tennessee invested a present value total of \$117.2 million in Southwest in FY 2022-23. The cost includes all the college and student costs. The benefit-cost ratio for society is 10.0, equal to the \$1.2 billion in benefits divided by the \$117.2 million in costs. In other words, for every dollar invested in Southwest, people in Tennessee will receive a cumulative value of \$10.00 in benefits. The benefits of this investment will occur for as long as Southwest's FY 2022-23 students remain employed in the state workforce.

Social benefits in Tennessee from Southwest






Source: Lightcast impact model

Summary of investment analysis results

The results of the analysis demonstrate that Southwest 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 Southwest. At the same time, taxpayers' investment in Southwest returns more to government budgets than it costs and creates a wide range of social benefits throughout Tennessee.

Summary of investment analysis results

 Student perspective		 Taxpayer perspective		 Social perspective	
Present value benefits	\$348.6 million	Present value benefits	\$73.5 million	Present value benefits	\$1.2 billion
Present value costs	\$48.0 million	Present value costs	\$40.2 million	Present value costs	\$117.2 million
Net present value	\$300.6 million	Net present value	\$33.3 million	Net present value	\$1.1 billion
Benefit-cost ratio	7.3	Benefit-cost ratio	1.8	Benefit-cost ratio	10.0
Rate of return	22.8%	Rate of return	4.2%	Rate of return	n/a*

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

Conclusion

*The results of this study demonstrate that Southwest 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. Southwest 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, Southwest benefits society as a whole in Tennessee 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 2022-23 academic and financial reports from Southwest, 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.



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.