The University of Nevada, Las Vegas’s Economic Contribution
As a Top-Tier University

Executive Summary

Founded in 1957, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) is the only graduate research institution in Southern Nevada. This report quantifies the university’s economic impact within the local economy from 2017 through its reaching top-tier status in 2025. The university employed 3,334 individuals in February 2017, ranking it as one of the ten largest employers in Clark County. UNLV also contributes to the local economy via its purchases from local businesses in support of its operations. We estimate that the university spent approximately $117 million in Southern Nevada during fiscal year 2017. UNLV also generates economic activity in Southern Nevada through the purchases by its students and visitors on local goods and services.

The primary economic impact of UNLV on the Southern Nevada economy is summarized in the figure below. In total, UNLV’s primary quantitative economic impact equals an estimated $1,231 million, split between the university, employees, students, and visitors.

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University Expenditures
$117 million

Employee Compensation
$407 million

Student Expenditures
$275 million

Visitor Expenditures
$432 million

= Total Primary Expenditures
$1,231 million

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1 The full report is available at: https://cber.unlv.edu/publications/UNLV_Econ_Impact_FY2017.pdf
In addition, the university’s direct economic impact generates spinoff expenditures that ripple through the local economy. Spinoff expenditures result from additional rounds of spending that take place after the direct spending has occurred. We employ a structural model of Clark County’s economy developed by Regional Economic Models, Inc. (REMI) to calculate these spinoff impacts. The table below summarizes the total quantitative economic impact of UNLV on the Southern Nevada economy. We estimate that UNLV generated a total of $2,510 million of expenditure in the Southern Nevada economy during Fiscal Year (FY) 2017. This estimate does not include any purchase of capital assets such as expenditures for building the Hospitality Hall or the additional economic contributions from UNLV graduates in 2016-17 academic years from any incremental wages and salaries due to UNLV-earned degrees. UNLV’s state appropriations amounted to $201 million in 2017. Hence, UNLV’s Economic Impact Ratio (EIR) for 2017 is 12.5. That is, for every dollar of state-appropriated funds, the university generated an additional $12.5 of economic activity in the Southern Nevada community. In addition, we find that each dollar of student spending generates approximately 2.04 dollars of economic activity in Southern Nevada.

We also find that by the year 2025, UNLV will supply the valley with nearly 19,240 direct and indirect jobs and roughly $3,329 million in economic activity when the university achieves a top-tier status as a public university. These quantitative estimates are, nonetheless, conservative as they do not include the numerous positive qualitative impacts of UNLV on Southern Nevada: the spillover effects of research and development, advanced science, and technology; a better trained workforce that can compete globally; UNLV’s role in attracting new industries that help to diversity the Nevada’s economy; and UNLV’s contribution to an improved quality of life for local residents.
provide valuable resources in helping the Southern Nevada community to reach its full potential.

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