

# The Economic Value of Southeast Missouri State University



**S**OUTHEAST MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY (SEMO) is an engine for economic growth throughout all Missouri through economic engagement efforts, workforce development initiatives, spending practices, arts and cultural events, and its NCAA Division-I athletics program. SEMO creates value in many ways, and it greatly influences both the lives of its students and the state economy. It also draws visitors to the state, generating new dollars and opportunities for Missouri. The university supports a variety of industries, serves state businesses, and benefits society as a whole in Missouri from an expanded economy and improved quality of life.

Founded in 1873 as a teacher's college, SEMO is a dynamic and competitive comprehensive master's-level university located in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. The university provides student centered education, with a foundation of liberal arts and sciences, experiential and service-learning opportunities, cutting-edge technology, and exceptional instruction that prepares students for civic responsibility and professional careers.

SEMO has been accredited by the Higher Learning Commission since 1915 and 55 academic programs hold program-specific accreditations and certifications from 30 accrediting agencies.

With over 11,000 students from 45 states and more than 50 countries, and campuses in Cape Girardeau, Sikeston, and Kennett, SEMO makes significant contributions to the workforce needs of Missouri and beyond.

SEMO's alumni contribute greatly to Missouri in serving their local communities as educators, businesspeople, entrepreneurs, healthcare professionals, computer science and cybersecurity professionals, public servants, artists, and more.

This study measures the economic impacts created by SEMO on the business community and the benefits the university 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 university, for fiscal year (FY) 2023–24. Impacts on the Missouri 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 Missouri are reported under the investment analysis.



SEMO influences both the **lives of its students** and the **state economy**.



# Economic impact analysis



SEMO promotes economic growth in Missouri through its direct expenditures and the resulting expenditures of visitors, students, and state businesses. The university serves as an employer and buyer of goods and services for its day-to-day operations. The university's reputation and activities attract visitors and students from outside Missouri, whose expenditures benefit local, regional, and state vendors. In addition, SEMO is a primary source of higher education to Missouri residents and a supplier of trained workers to state industries, enhancing overall productivity in the state workforce. SEMO's alumni contribute greatly to Missouri in serving their local communities as educators, businesspeople, entrepreneurs, healthcare professionals, computer science and cybersecurity professionals, public servants, artists, and more.

## Operations spending impact



SEMO adds economic value to Missouri as an employer of state residents and a large-scale buyer of goods and services. In FY 2023-24, payroll at SEMO was \$81.3 million, much of which was spent in the state for groceries, mortgage and rent payments, dining out, and other household expenses. In addition, the university spent \$69.4 million on expenses related to facilities, supplies, and professional services.

SEMO's operations spending added \$90.2 million in income to the state during the analysis year. This figure represents the university's payroll, the multiplier effects generated by the in-state spending of the university and its employees, and a downward adjustment to account for funding that the university received from state sources. The \$90.2 million in added income is equivalent to supporting 1,075 jobs in the state.

## Visitor spending impact



Thousands of visitors from outside the state were attracted to SEMO during the analysis year to attend commencement, sports events, and other activities sponsored by the university. While in the state, visitors spent money for lodging, food, transportation, and other personal expenses. The off-campus expenditures of the university's out-of-state visitors generated a net impact of \$8.7 million in added income for the state economy in FY 2023-24. This \$8.7 million in added income is equivalent to supporting 167 jobs.

Impacts created by  
SEMO in FY 2023-24



Operations spending impact

**\$90.2 million**

+



Visitor spending impact

**\$8.7 million**

+



Student spending impact

**\$36.1 million**

+



Alumni impact

**\$1.3 billion**



Total economic impact

**\$1.4 billion**

OR



Jobs supported

**14,725**





## Student spending impact



Around 27% of students attending SEMO originated from outside the state in FY 2023-24, and some of these students relocated to Missouri to attend SEMO. These students may not have come to the state if the university did not exist. In addition, some in-state students, referred to as retained students, would have left Missouri if not for the existence of SEMO. While attending the university, these relocated and retained students spent money on groceries, accommodation, transportation, and other household expenses. This spending generated \$36.1 million in added income for the state economy in FY 2023-24, which supported 624 jobs in Missouri.

## Alumni impact



The education and training SEMO provides for state residents has the greatest impact. Since the establishment of the university, students have studied at SEMO and entered the state workforce with greater knowledge and new skills. Today, thousands of former SEMO students are employed in Missouri. According to Lightcast's Alumni Pathways, many SEMO alumni are employed in the state workforce in industry sectors such as Educational Services; Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services; Ambulatory Health Care Services; Financial Services; Hospitals; and Insurance Carriers & Related Activities, with their top occupations being general & operations managers; chief executives; managers, all other; registered nurses; and first-line supervisors of office & administrative support workers.

As a result of their education from SEMO, the students receive higher earnings and increase the productivity of the businesses that employ them. In FY 2023-24, SEMO alumni generated \$1.3 billion in added income for the state economy, which is equivalent to supporting 12,859 jobs.

## Total impact

SEMO added \$1.4 billion in income to the Missouri economy during the analysis year, equal to the sum of the operations spending impact, the visitor and student spending impacts, and the alumni impact. For context, the \$1.4 billion impact was equal to approximately 0.4% of the total gross state product (GSP) of Missouri. This contribution that the university provided on its own roughly twice the size of the Veterinary Services industry in the state.

SEMO's total impact can also be expressed in terms of jobs supported. The \$1.4 billion impact supported 14,725 state jobs, using the jobs-to-sales ratios specific to each industry in the state. In addition, the \$1.4 billion, or 14,725 supported jobs, stemmed from different industry sectors. For instance, among non-education industry sectors, the activities of SEMO and its alumni in the Health Care & Social Assistance industry sector supported 1,605 jobs in FY 2023-24. If the university did not exist, these impacts would not have been generated in Missouri.

### SEMO impacts by industry (jobs supported)




The **\$1.4 billion** impact supported **14,725 jobs** in the state.

# Investment analysis



*An investment analysis evaluates the costs associated with a proposed venture against its expected benefits. The analysis presented here evaluates SEMO as an investment from the perspectives of students, taxpayers, and society in Missouri. As with the economic impact analysis, this analysis considers only FY 2023-24 activities.*

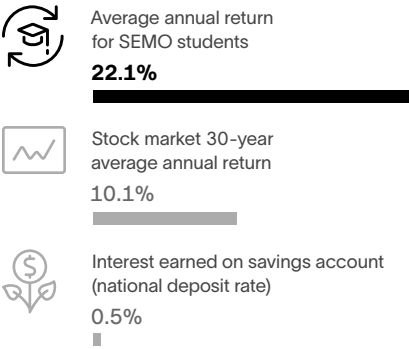
## Student perspective

 In FY 2023-24, SEMO served 9,284 degree-seeking and 1,737 non-degree-seeking students. In order to attend the university, 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 SEMO's students in FY 2023-24 amounted to a present value of \$103.5 million, equal to \$58.2 million in out-of-pocket expenses (including future principal and interest on student loans) and \$45.3 million in forgone time and money.

In return for their investment, SEMO's students will receive a stream of higher future earnings that will continue to grow throughout their working lives. For example, the average SEMO bachelor's degree graduate from FY 2023-24 will see annual earnings that are \$31,000 higher than a person with a high school diploma or equivalent working in Missouri. Over a working lifetime, the benefits of a bachelor's degree over a high school diploma will amount to an undiscounted value of \$1.4 million in higher earnings per graduate. The present value of the cumulative higher future earnings that SEMO's FY 2023-24 students will receive over their working careers is \$673.4 million.

The students' benefit-cost ratio is 6.5. In other words, for every dollar students invest in SEMO in the form of out-of-pocket expenses and forgone time and money, they will receive a cumulative value of \$6.50 in higher future earnings. Annually, the students' investment in SEMO has an average annual internal rate of return of 22.1%, 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 SEMO



Source: Forbes' S&P 500, 1994-2023; FDIC.gov, March 2023



**Average earnings by education level at career midpoint**

The average bachelor's degree graduate from SEMO will see an increase in earnings of **\$31,000** each year compared to a person with a high school diploma or equivalent working in Missouri.

Source: Lightcast employment data and SEMO Alumni Pathways Data

## Taxpayer perspective



SEMO 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 SEMO 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 2023-24 students' working lives, the state and local government will have collected a present value of \$115.8 million in added taxes.

Benefits to taxpayers will also consist of savings generated by the improved lifestyles of SEMO students and the corresponding reduced government services. Education is statistically correlated with a variety of lifestyle changes. The education that SEMO 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. SEMO 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 university for a copy of the main report. Altogether, the present value of the benefits associated with an education from SEMO will generate \$37.6 million in savings to state and local taxpayers.

Total taxpayer benefits amount to \$153.4 million, the present value sum of the added tax revenue and public sector savings. Taxpayer costs are \$62.5 million, equal to the amount of state and local government funding SEMO received in FY 2023-24. These benefits and costs yield a benefit-cost ratio of 2.5. This means that for every dollar of public money invested in SEMO in FY 2023-24, taxpayers will receive a cumulative present value of \$2.50 over the course of the students' working lives. The average annual internal rate of return for taxpayers is 6.3%, which compares favorably to other long-term investments in the public sector.

For every dollar of public money invested in SEMO, taxpayers will receive a cumulative value of **\$2.50** over the course of the students' working lives.

## Social perspective



Society as a whole in Missouri benefits from the presence of SEMO 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 Missouri.

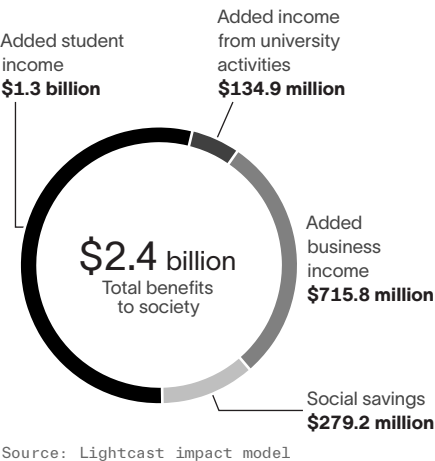
Benefits to society also consist of the savings generated by the improved lifestyles of SEMO students. As discussed in the previous section, education is statistically correlated with a variety of lifestyle changes that generate social savings. Note that these costs are avoided by the consumers but are 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 university for a copy of the main report.

Altogether, the social benefits of SEMO equal a present value of \$2.4 billion. These benefits include \$1.3 billion in added student income, \$715.8 million in added business income, \$134.9 million in added income from university activities, as well as \$279.2 million in social savings related to health, the justice system, and income assistance in Missouri. People in Missouri invested a present value total of \$209.3 million in SEMO in FY 2023-24. The cost includes all the university and student costs.

The benefit-cost ratio for society is 11.7, equal to the \$2.4 billion in benefits divided by the \$209.3 million in costs. In other words, for every dollar invested in SEMO, people in Missouri will receive a cumulative value of \$11.70 in benefits. The benefits of this investment will occur for as long as SEMO’s FY 2023-24 students remain employed in the state workforce.




Social benefits in Missouri from SEMO



Summary of investment analysis results

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

Summary of investment analysis results

 Student perspective		 Taxpayer perspective		 Social perspective	
Present value benefits \$673.4 million		Present value benefits \$153.4 million		Present value benefits \$2.4 billion	
Present value costs \$103.5 million		Present value costs \$62.5 million		Present value costs \$209.3 million	
Net present value \$569.9 million		Net present value \$90.8 million		Net present value \$2.2 billion	
Benefit-cost ratio	Rate of return	Benefit-cost ratio	Rate of return	Benefit-cost ratio	Rate of return
6.5	22.1%	2.5	6.3%	11.7	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 SEMO creates value from **multiple perspectives**.*

The university benefits state businesses by increasing consumer spending in the state and supplying a steady flow of qualified, trained workers to the workforce. SEMO enriches the lives of students by raising their lifetime earnings and helping them achieve their individual potential. The university benefits state and local taxpayers through increased tax receipts and a reduced demand for government-supported social services. Finally, SEMO benefits society as a whole in Missouri 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 2023-24 academic and financial reports from SEMO, SEMO alumni records matched to Lightcast's Alumni Pathways Database, 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 university 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](https://lightcast.io/solutions/education) to learn more or connect with us.