

Report: Clarion University makes big impact on region

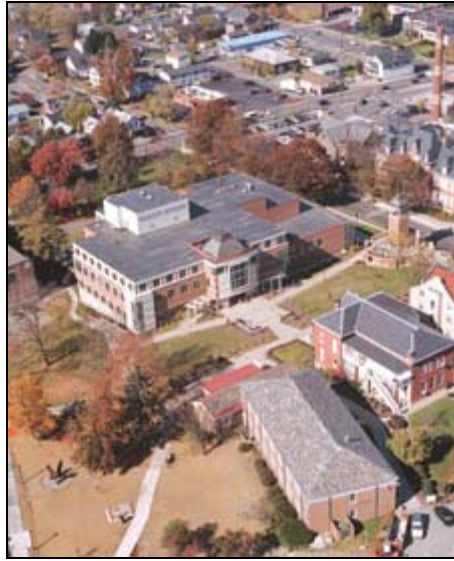


Photo by Dave Tedjeske - The college has the second highest in-county employment impact of 4.9 percent.

CLARION - Clarion University provides a total annual economic impact of nearly \$300 million, according to a recent report issued by the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.

How does Clarion's \$287,930,626 annual impact compare to other major activities in the region?

It's comparable to the impact of 36 Pittsburgh Steelers playoff games, more than three quarters of last year's Super Bowl or more than a year of the arts in Pittsburgh. Each Steelers playoff game is estimated at \$8 million in economic impact, the value of last year's Super Bowl was placed at \$372 million, and the impact of the arts in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County is estimated at \$251 million.

"We have a long and proud tradition of being part of this region," said Clarion University President Joseph Grunenwald. "This report documents our vital role in the economic, educational and cultural lives of this region. We take our mission of education and service seriously and continue to operate with that outlook."

For every \$1 invested in the State System by the state, Clarion and the other 13 universities return more than \$10 in economic impact. That includes total spending by the universities as well as spending by faculty and staff, students and their families, and other campus visitors.

The commissioned study shows the State System and its 14 universities have a \$4.47 billion annual economic impact on the state. The State System and the universities also are directly or indirectly responsible for more than 51,000 jobs across Pennsylvania.

The study estimates Clarion provides an annual direct economic impact of \$119,652,022 and an indirect economic impact of \$168,278,604. The university had the second highest in-county employment impact of 4.9 percent (1,002 countywide jobs out of Clarion County's labor force of 20,486) and was the top employer within Clarion County. The university's countywide employment impact was 5.2 percent of the employed labor force (19,332).

Clarion also has an impact on surrounding counties with Clarion University-Venango Campus in Oil City and various other extended programs.

Visiting impact

"Clarion University sporting events, sports camps, cultural programs and other activities bring a large number of visitors into the Clarion area," said Dave Morris, director of the Great Outdoors Visitors Bureau. "Some lodging facilities account for as much as 10 percent of their business on being generated by Clarion University programs."

Morris said a large number of those same visitors purchase food, gas and goods at area retail shops during their visit. Morris estimates that university visitors and visitors to Cook Forest and other area attractions collectively spend more than \$77 million annually while in Clarion County.

"It's very important," says Tracy Becker, executive director of the Clarion Area Chamber of Business and Industry, about the economic impact of the university. "During the summer the downtown merchants tell me they struggle without all the students. There is a direct financial impact because the merchants rely on the students and visiting parents and families. It makes a big difference in our community."

Foundation for the future

Clarion University is also playing the number one role in the future of the region, according to Brad Ehrhart, executive director of the Clarion County Industrial Development Corp.

"When you look at comparative advantages of this county with other areas in attracting businesses, the university is right there at the top," said Ehrhart. "Under Joe's (Grunenwald) leadership the university is also evolving into applied technology and that is helping attract businesses."

"It's not going to happen overnight, but those businesses will create other businesses and offer good jobs," Ehrhart added. "The Clarion County you see 20 years from now will be the direct result of what Clarion University is doing today."

Large employer in Pennsylvania

The State System ranks as the 15th largest employer in Pennsylvania with 12,212 salaried employees as of fall 2004. Indirectly, the universities are responsible for another approximately 39,000 jobs statewide.

"The universities are key players in Pennsylvania's economy," said Kenneth M. Jarin, chairman of the State System's board of governors. "Not only do they provide an educated workforce for Pennsylvania employers, they are major employers themselves."

Gov. Ed Rendell hailed the State System's significant contributions, saying, "It is clear that the state universities have an impact far beyond the boundaries of the campus communities."

Nine State System universities rank among the top 10 employers in their respective home counties. Bloomsburg, Clarion and Indiana are the top employers in their counties.

The universities are actively involved in local and regional economic development efforts in virtually every corner of the state, offering workforce development and training opportunities to employers and their employees as well as small business development assistance to both budding and established entrepreneurs.

All the universities participate in the state's workforce development and job training initiatives. Clarion and three other universities operate Small Business Development Centers, and Clarion and four other universities operate business incubators.

The direct impact of institutional, faculty, staff, student and visitor spending from the universities totaled \$1.86 billion in fiscal year 2003-04. Indirect spending totaled another \$2.61 billion.

The State System's economic impact added \$42 million to the state's general fund in the form of sales and income taxes. The System's total economic impact has nearly doubled since 1995-96 - the last time such a study was conducted - far outpacing the nearly 24 percent inflation rate over that same time.

Additional information about the economic impact of Clarion University can be found at <http://www.clarion.edu/relations/index1.html>