

The local economic impact of Northland Community & Technical College, Thief River Falls Campus

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Summary

- **The Thief River Falls Campus adds an estimated \$30,527,066 per year in activity to the local economy; and**
- **The Thief River Falls Campus adds an estimated 427 jobs to the local economy.**

These estimates are based on data from the 2005-2006 fiscal year and reflect the contribution the Thief River Falls Campus of Northland Community & Technical College makes to the local economy. A companion report details the economic impact of the East Grand Forks Campus.

Overview

A college has economic impact on the community in which it is located in several ways:

- First, there is the direct spending of the college itself, including funds spent for wages and salaries, contracted services, supplies, repairs, and the like;
- Second, there is spending by students, many of whom are residents of the local area; and
- Third, the college has a multi-faceted impact on the local labor market. The college employs local residents; college and student spending creates jobs; many students work part-time while going to school; and some students stay in the local area after completing their studies.

Spending, either by the college or by its students, is not a one-time event. A portion of initial spending by one party becomes income to someone else in the local economy, who then also spends a portion of that income, so that the total spending impact is a multiple of the initial spending. Multipliers vary by location and by the initial source of the spending. The best estimate of multipliers is prepared by RIMS II (Regional Impact Multipliers). The appropriate multiplier for spending by colleges, universities and professional schools in Thief River Falls is 1.825. Thus, the economic impact of the college on Thief River Falls is the sum of the college's direct spending and spending by students in Thief River Falls times the multiplier. The total annual impact of the Thief River Falls Campus on Thief River Falls is \$30,527,066. Spending is summarized in Figure 1 below, and explained in some detail in the next few pages.

The additional impact on the local labor market includes direct jobs of people working for the college and additional jobs generated by the overall increase in economic activity.

The total jobs impact of Northland Community & Technical College, Thief River Falls Campus is 427 full-time equivalent jobs in the local economy.

1. Estimated annual local economic impact of the Thief River Falls Campus

College direct spending	\$6,794,414
Plus student spending	\$9,932,746
Equals total direct spending	\$16,727,160
Times multiplier	1.825
Equals total spending impact	\$30,527,066
Jobs impact of spending	427 jobs

Direct spending by the Thief River Falls Campus

While salaries account for the Thief River Falls Campus’s largest single expense, not all of that amount is spent locally and so cannot be included as part of college direct spending. The amount the college reported spending on salaries and benefits, \$10,038,260, has been reduced 60 percent in order to account for income taxes, benefits, and personal savings and spending outside the area. The portion of college spending on salaries that has local impact is estimated to be \$4,015,304.

Other spending by the school injects additional dollars into the local economy. Additional spending categories that have local impact include purchases of services, repairs and maintenance, and miscellaneous other expenses. These totaled \$1,998,440 in 2006. Spending on supplies is another category of spending that has significant local impact. This was \$780,670 in 2006. Figure 2 below shows total direct local spending by the Thief River Falls Campus was \$6,794,414.

2. Direct spending in Thief River Falls by the Thief River Falls Campus in 2006

Salaries (adjusted)	\$4,015,304
Services, repairs, maintenance, misc. expenses	\$1,998,440
Supplies	\$780,670
Total direct spending	\$6,794,414

Spending by students

To obtain information on student spending, Wilder Research surveyed students at each of the participating colleges. The spending reported below is the spending reported by full- and part- time Thief River Falls Campus students.

Students were surveyed in May, 2007. They were asked questions about their spending on meals away from home, their shopping in the local area, and their rent and living arrangements. In addition, we included questions about their jobs, cars, education and career objectives and whether or not they planned to stay in the area once their studies were completed. The surveys were conducted online. There was no way to verify that the students responding to the survey mirrored the entire college, but the number of responses (54) was large enough that the sample could be considered to be representative of the student body.

Students were separated into two groups: full-time students and part-time students. Average spending by students in each of these groups was multiplied by the actual number of students in each of these groups during the 2005-2006 school year.

Three types of student spending were considered: spending on books and supplies, weekly spending on food away from home, and other shopping per month. To obtain annual spending, reported spending on books and supplies per term was multiplied by two (the number of school terms), weekly spending on food away from home was multiplied by 34 (the number of weeks in the school year), and monthly shopping was multiplied by 8 (the number of months in the school year). Estimates of spending by each of these groups is reported in Figure 3 below. Spending on rent or mortgage payments has been excluded from the figure since neither has any substantive impact on local spending.

The pattern of student spending at the Thief River Falls Campus was similar to most of the colleges surveyed. Part-time students spent less on books and supplies and food away from home than full-time students. They also tended to work longer hours and a larger share of them lived with their spouse and/or children.

Unlike most other colleges surveyed, part-time students did not have higher average spending than full-time student. We do not have sufficient data at this time to explain this difference.

3. Estimated local spending by students at the Thief River Falls Campus

	Full-time students	Part-time students
Average annual \$ per student		
Books and supplies	\$1,033	\$693
Food away from home	\$1,016	\$387
Other shopping	\$3,659	\$3,424
Total	\$5,708	\$4,504
Times:		
Number of students	951	1,000
Equals:		
Average annual spending	\$5,430,006	\$4,502,740
Total student spending (both groups)		\$9,932,746

Automobile expenses were a large share of student spending in all groups. A significant share of students bought their automobiles outside of Thief River Falls. However, their spending on auto operations occurred largely in the local economy.

4. Estimated automobile-related spending by students

	Full-time students	Part-time students
Own a car	95.2%	83.3%
Average monthly spending on auto operation	\$146	\$140
Auto purchased in Thief River Falls	22.5%	0.0%

Labor market impact

The presence of the Thief River Falls Campus has a number of important impacts on the local labor market. The first of these, of course, is that the school brings jobs to the community. It does so both directly, through its employment of faculty and staff, and indirectly, as its spending and the spending of its students support additional jobs in the community. Based on standard multiplier analysis, we estimate that the Thief River Falls Campus brings a total of 427 to Thief River Falls, jobs that would not be there if the school were not a part of the community.

The second way in which the school affects the local labor market is by adding to the local workforce because many students work part-time while in school. A high percent of the student body works in addition to attending classes. The economic effect of these part-time student workers is easy to overlook. However, student workers can be a reliable and flexible source of labor for local companies. Taken together, the students make a significant contribution to the local labor force as the survey results in the Figure 5 show.

5. Thief River Falls Campus Students in Thief River Falls workforce

	Full-time students	Part-time students
Number of students	951	1,000
Percent employed	78.6%	75.0%
Average weekly hours	23.2	28.6
Total number of student workers in local labor force		1,497
Full-time equivalent student workers		969

Based on survey results, 78.6 percent of full-time and 75.0 percent of part-time students hold jobs in the community. The full-time students work an average of 23.2 hours while the part-time students work an average of 28.6 hours per week. Thus, there are 1,497 student workers in Thief River Falls. Given the average hours worked, this student workforce is the equivalent of 969 full-time workers.

The third and most important way that the Minnesota state colleges and universities contribute to the labor market is by providing a pool of graduates whose higher skill level enhances the productivity of the local workforce and the profitability of local companies. A recent study by Wilder Research of the statewide economic impact of the system reports that the ongoing economic contribution of the graduates of its schools is approximately \$2.4 billion per year. That figure represents the added wages graduates who work in Minnesota earn as a result of the training they received.

It is not possible to calculate a corresponding figure to estimate to the enhancement to the productivity of the local labor force generated by Northland Community & Technical College graduates. Sufficient data for such an estimate are not available. Moreover, since workers are highly mobile, Northland Community & Technical College graduates may end up working in other Minnesota cities just as some graduates of other institutions in the system may fill jobs in Thief River Falls.

Nevertheless, it is reasonable to expect that having a Minnesota state college or university located in a community adds to the skill level of the workforce for two reasons. Workers who have already settled in the community can seek additional training while working and some of the students who come to the community for school will choose to stay and take jobs in the area. The results of the student survey support this idea. When students were asked whether or not they intended to stay in this area after their studies were completed, 56 percent indicated they planned to stay in Thief River Falls. Clearly the local economy will benefit from their doing so.