2026 ECONOMIC IMPACT REPORT

The Economic Impact of Western Oregon University

Western Oregon UNIVERSITY

$766.2M
Total annual economic impact in Oregon

$490M
Generated annually by alumni in Oregon

$30.6M
Student tuition saved through the Willamette Promise

$434M
Generated in indirect & direct annual state tax

RETURN ON STATE INVESTMENT

21x return for every $1 of WOU's annual state appropriation

$36.5M WOU's FY2025 state appropriation

Why Western matters to its region and Oregon

A diverse student population

The first 4-year, public institution in the state to become a Hispanic Serving Institution.

- **27%** of students identify as Hispanic or Latino
- **41%** of students identify as students of color
- **HALF** of students are first-generation college students
- **84%** of students are Oregonians

Reach via The Research Institute

The Research Institute facilitates positive changes in education, health, and human services systems at local, state, and national levels through over **$23M** in external grants and contracts.

TRI's programs support child care referral in all 36 Oregon counties and runs Spark, the state's early learning center quality improvement system.

TRI administers all of the Oregon Department of Transportation's required training to become an ODOT-approved driving instructor through the state's Traffic Safety Education Grant.

Oregon teacher pipeline

- Western is Oregon's historic teacher college, since 1856.
- With over half of new Oregon teachers leaving the classroom within 5 years, WOU-prepared educators remain in classrooms: **81.7%** remain teaching after 3 years; **76%** remain teaching after 4 years; **68.7%** remain teaching after 5 years.

One of Oregon's most affordable public institutions

- Western is the 2nd most affordable public institution.
- **78%** of students are eligible for financial aid, underscoring the university's role in providing affordability and opportunity.
- Western has the highest number of Pell-eligible students at **48%**.

Enduring alumni value

- **77%** of alumni work in Oregon one year after graduation.
- Alumni earn a **$513.4M** annual wage premium, generating **$490M** in impact and **$39M** in state taxes each year.**

Annual impact

Impact source	Polk County	WOU Region	Oregon
Operations ($M)	$63.6	$119.1	$171.3
Capital investment ($M)	$12.7	$14.1	$16.1
Student & visitor spending ($M)	$58.3	$80.5	$88.8
Alumni wage premium ($M)	$37.6	$204.7	$490.0
Total impact ($M)	**$172.2**	**$418.4**	**$766.2**
Jobs supported (FTE)	**1,320**	**2,670**	**4,330**

WOU AT A GLANCE

3,626
Students served annually

875+
Employees

$121.7M
FY2025 operating expenses

64,860
Annual campus visitors

77%
Of alumni work in Oregon

$9.8M
Avg. annual capital investment

ESI ECONSULT SOLUTIONS INC.
economics | strategy | insight

ESI, Economic Impact of the Regional Public Universities of Oregon (June 2026); IMPLAN (2024). ROI: ESI calculation; FY2025 appropriation per audited financial report.

* Between 2014-2025, students saved $30.6M in tuition through the partnership with the Willamette Education Service District & OIT

** Wage premium represents the economic activity supported by the higher wages earned by alumni as a result of their education.