Central Washington University’s growth plays a significant role in driving economic activity throughout Ellensburg and Kittitas County. Much of that activity is directly attributable to recent increases in student enrollment.

**Students generate business activity for CWU as well as for the greater regional economy**

Student payments for everything from housing and dining to tuition and fees accounts for more than 70 percent of CWU’s total budget. The increasing enrollment is good for the economy, too, generating a $112-million payroll and more than $20 annually million in business-to-business commerce for retail, food, housing, and entertainment. In addition, students are an important part of the local workforce.

CWU camps, conferences, arts, academic, and recruitment events boost county tourism, with more than 50,000 visitors filling restaurants, hotels, and retail businesses each year. CWU construction and renovation projects—from residence halls to science buildings—support local government services through permits, sales tax, utilities and other payments. The $62 million Science Phase II construction project alone generated more than $1.2 million in city and county fees.

**Students directly benefit the community by supporting local business.** CWU students represent 1 of every 2 customers for all kinds of services and retail in the Ellensburg area, according to local economic development analysis by the City of Ellensburg. Students also strengthen our community by volunteering in K-12 schools and raising money for the arts. They volunteer at the food bank, donate blood, and stencil storm drains. They clean up Olmstead State Park and the Yakima River Canyon. In short, they help to sustain many of the most important institutions and resources within our community.

**One of the most significant revenue streams students create within the community is through housing.** CWU records show about 2700 student addresses off campus for fall 2016. This is a low estimate, since many students live in the community, but indicate their hometown as place of residence.

The real number may be much closer to 4500 students. Assuming each student pays rent of at least $400 per month, their payments generate as much as $24 million a year for local property owners, from houses to duplexes and apartments. See side two for location map of student residences in Ellensburg.

**This revenue number likely has risen significantly in recent years** as CWU has enjoyed record success in growing enrollment. Freshmen enrollment rose 21 and 15 percent in 2015 and 2016, respectively. This fall we are again expecting another double-digit increase in freshmen, who are required to live on campus. **We will begin the school year with a university residence occupancy rate of greater than 100 percent.**

**Future growth – what’s on the map?**

- **Enrollment targets.** CWU values and will maintain the intimate feel of education on the residential campus in Ellensburg. We have always believed and continue to believe that enrollment in Ellensburg **should not grow beyond 12,000 students** over the next 10 years. CWU will develop strategies to concentrate growth in online programs and at University Centers throughout the state.

- **New student housing.** In July, CWU trustees authorized the development of a project plan and pro forma for a new, 400-bed residence hall. This project will come to the board for official approval in November 2017. If approved, the facility would open no later than fall 2019, slightly after the anticipated opening of a 900-bed apartment complex, east of East Helena Street and immediately north of the CWU campus. Together, these two facilities should significantly reduce pressure by CWU students on the local housing market.

- **Faculty and staff housing.** CWU employees are experiencing the same difficulties finding housing that other area residents experience; some prospective employees have turned down CWU employment offers due to the lack of local housing choices. As CWU’s student body grows, so must the number of staff and faculty required to support them. In order to ensure these employees’ needs can be accommodated, CWU is beginning to develop alternatives to provide short-term housing on the Ellensburg campus with the construction of six duplex units.

As the County’s top employer and a key driver of economic activity, CWU is keenly interested in helping to inform growth planning and welcomes additional requests for information and the opportunity to discuss related issues.

*One who gets the gist of a subject matter and knows enough to be dangerous with that subject in conversation or writing. ([www.urbandictionary.com](http://www.urbandictionary.com))