The University of Nebraska at Kearney contributes $115.1 million* to the local Kearney area economy (Buffalo and Kearney Counties) according to a study conducted by UNK Economist Dr. Bree Dority, using 2009-10 data, and released in 2011 by UNK’s Center for Rural Research and Development. Direct spending by the UNK academic community has multiplier effects which account for the successive circulation of money, creating additional sales and employment opportunities for local businesses. The estimated spending multiplier is 1.41. This means that, on average, every dollar of UNK-related spending generates an additional 41 cents for the local economy.

UNK is also a significant employer in the local Kearney area economy. UNK and its related organizations employed more than 1,600 full- and part-time employees in fiscal year 2009-2010. However, an estimated 730 jobs at Kearney area businesses are needed to support the UNK student and visitor spending. Hence, with an estimated employment multiplier of 1.3, the University's overall employment impact is more than 3,000 jobs. That is, one additional job is created in the local area for every 3 jobs directly created by UNK.

Buffalo County has typically ranked as one of the top 5 least economically stressed counties in the nation, according to the Associated Press Economic Stress Index. With about 9% of all jobs in the community tied directly or indirectly to UNK's presence, Buffalo County's largest non-profit employers like UNK and Good Samaritan Hospital provide strong stability during economic downturns.

Spending by UNK - $68.9 million
Faculty and staff payroll accounts for approximately 60 percent of this figure with the balance consisting of expenditures for repairs and maintenance, equipment and capital outlays.

Spending by students - $75.9 million
UNK student spending consists of the purchase of goods, services, food, and rent. The $75.9 million does not include on-campus student expenditures for room, board and books. The average student spent $6,500 locally, which means for every student recruited to UNK, about $6,500 is going to local businesses.

Spending by visitors - $13.6 million
Visitor spending accounts for expenditures by 1) visitors of UNK students, 2) visitors of UNK faculty and staff, 3) attendees of UNK events sponsored by a college, division or program, 4) out-of-town athletic teams, and 5) attendees of Alumni Association events.

The Economic Impact of the University of Nebraska-Kearney Fiscal Year 2009-2010
Final Report to the University of Nebraska Kearney
May 13, 2011
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*Total economic impact is less than total UNK spending because not all the dollars spent by the UNK academic community circulate into the local economy.