1. UNIVERSITIES CREATE JOBS AND HIGH QUALITY EMPLOYMENT

Universities provide business support and help SMEs to grow. For example, the Black Country Growth Hub, located within the University of Wolverhampton’s Science Park, aims to support over 3,900 businesses in the area, particularly in the fast-growing high-value manufacturing sector.

Universities provide the higher level skills to meet the job requirements of the future. The manufacturing giant Unipart and Coventry University have jointly established the Institute for Advanced Manufacturing, which ensures graduate engineers are industry-ready by providing hundreds of hours of live manufacturing training.

Since 2012–13, graduates from universities in the West Midlands have created nearly 1,000 new start-ups or social enterprises, supporting nearly 1,140 full-time jobs in 2015–16 alone. In the same year, universities and their staff created 77 new businesses supporting over 500 full-time jobs.

2. UNIVERSITIES INVEST IN WEST MIDLANDS

The University of Worcester has led the regeneration of the city centre, investing £60 million alongside the local county and city councils into the Hive, Britain’s first joint university and public library offering a wealth of learning resources and leisure and meeting facilities accessible to everyone. Universities in the West Midlands have already contracted for future capital projects worth over £400 million, providing long-term investment in local economic priority sectors such as high value manufacturing, medical and life sciences, environmental technologies and the digital and creative industries.

Universities are long-term partners for the West Midlands. Together, the universities in the West Midlands have 390 years of experience working with the region, and are invested in its future.
3. UNIVERSITIES ATTRACT MONEY FROM CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Universities are rooted locally, but they represent their region nationally. They perform 15% of the West Midlands’s research and development, often using funds drawn from outside of the region. They provide the necessary match funding to unlock investment spending for local projects from European Structural and Investment Funds and the UK government’s Local Growth Fund.

Universities are deeply embedded in the West Midlands’s local growth infrastructure that helps the region to prosper, while being nationally and internationally connected. They sit on Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) boards and second staff to work with LEPs, work with councils, and provide evidence and analysis to support the development of strategic economic plans.

With further devolution from central government to come, it is becoming increasingly important to have such capacity and expertise locally.

4. UNIVERSITIES REACH AREAS OTHER INSTITUTIONS CAN’T

Universities are working through local consortia such as the Aim Higher West Midlands programme to improve higher education participation in disadvantaged areas and to drive social mobility. Through work such as the University of Birmingham’s Access to Birmingham Programme, which over the last five years helped over 2,600 pupils from deprived areas prepare for the transition from school to university, they are central to addressing disparities at local level.

Universities also utilise international connections and expertise to benefit their local areas. Birmingham City University has a memorandum of understanding with the government’s Department for International Trade to help West Midlands businesses thrive in the global trading environment. International students from Staffordshire University business school have also supported local SMEs with market research, translation and cultural advice.

Finally, universities in the West Midlands have stepped up to help communities hit by the collapse of large local industries. The West Midlands Combined Universities initiative, launched by Birmingham City University, Coventry University and the University of Wolverhampton, will help fill skills gaps and shortages in the region (particularly in the health and automotive industries) and retrain those in other industry sectors with new skills and in new technologies.

5. UNIVERSITIES ATTRACT SKILLED PEOPLE TO THE AREA

The universities in the West Midlands attract 75,505 students from the rest of the UK, and a further 37,070 international students who spent £478 million in the local economy in 2014–15.

In many cases, they are also among the largest employers in the region. For example, universities in Birmingham are five of only 140 businesses with over 250 employees located in the city of Birmingham, and together provide jobs for nearly 12,400 people.

Businesses looking for skilled workers or access to research and business support often set up close to universities, or in incubation centres managed by universities. One example is the University of Wolverhampton’s Science Park, which provides 10,000 square metres of space and business support services (including incubation) for companies in all stages of development and growth.

A skilled local population is also vital for attracting inward investment. Tata Motors and Jaguar Land Rover partnered with the University of Warwick to create the £150 million National Automotive Innovation Centre, which has brought inward investment into the area and boosted the West Midlands’s manufacturing base with new jobs, facilities and skills.
YOUR LOCAL UNIVERSITIES HELP...

LOCAL BUSINESSES
Universities in the West Midlands work with thousands of – mostly small – businesses. Last year they signed over 15,800 research, consultancy or facility contracts with businesses and charities. Forms of collaboration include co-owned apprenticeships, development of curricula, internships and placements for students, and innovation and business support to help firms grow. All universities in the West Midlands also offer bespoke company training. For example, Keele University and Staffordshire University have partnered with the local councils and NHS trust to launch the Keele New Deal. This £70 million initiative aims help tackle low productivity and grow a positive culture of innovation and research within the region, create high quality local jobs, improve local health and healthcare, and promote business competitiveness through innovation.

BIG BUSINESSES
Capgemini and Aston University have developed two degrees in software engineering and information systems, to be taught and delivered almost entirely in the workplace. These include a range of bespoke modules designed specifically to help produce the software engineers and information system specialists of the future.

COMMUNITIES
Coventry and Keele universities work together on the ‘On the town’ initiative, which aims to bring together local communities by focusing on improving people’s lives through community-building activities led by and for young local groups. Harper Adams University has recently opened up its Veterinary Services Centre to the public, providing local dog owners with affordable pet rehabilitation therapies on their doorstep.

SCHOOL-LEAVERS
Universities in the West Midlands are planning to provide 790 degree apprenticeship places in 2017–18 (up from 281 in 2015–16), giving students the benefit of industry experience with a leading company and a globally recognised degree.

LOCAL SERVICES
The jobs that West Midlands communities rely on – the teachers, doctors and nurses – are trained at university. Universities in the West Midlands are currently training around 3,600 nurses, 4,805 doctors and dentists and 5,935 teachers.

Universities in the West Midlands are also at the forefront of transforming health and social care for local residents, through initiatives such as the Start toolkit. This toolkit has been developed by Keele University and local partners to help health professionals match patients with back pain with the most appropriate treatment, and is being rolled out to GP practices across the West Midlands.

All universities in the region work closely with local schools to raise attainment and aspiration among children and young people. For example, the University of Birmingham has established a comprehensive free school to meet the needs of pupils from a range of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, in line with the university’s aspirations to contribute to the city.
‘Major investments by our universities are supporting growth in our key sectors. Our universities are committed to working collaboratively with industry and other institutions across the Midlands to maximise the potential of our world-leading expertise in key technologies.’

GREATER BIRMINGHAM & SOLIHULL LEP STRATEGIC ECONOMIC PLAN

HIGHER EDUCATION PROVIDERS IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

Aston University  
Birmingham City University  
Coventry University  
Harper Adams University  
Keele University  
Newman University  
Staffordshire University  
The University of Birmingham  
The University of Warwick  
The University of Wolverhampton  
University College Birmingham  
University of Worcester

FURTHER INFORMATION

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