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April 26, 2023

### **Explanation for Excluding the Economic Impact Analysis of the Highland County Maple Festival**

One of the major components of my thesis is an economic impact analysis of the 2022 Highland County Maple Festival. This analysis was intended to quantify the educational impact of the event on visitors and the financial impact of the event on Highland County. Collecting the data for this analysis involved a lot of collaboration with the Highland County Chamber of Commerce, who are the organizers of the Maple Festival. As a gesture of appreciation for the Chamber of Commerce's willingness to support this research, I sent a preliminary report on the impacts of the festival to the Chamber's executive director and board. A pdf of this report was then uploaded to the Highland County Chamber of Commerce's website and is available at this link: <https://growthzonesitesprod.azureedge.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/1737/2022/12/Highland-County-Economic-Impact-Analysis-Virginia-Tech-FINAL-REPORT.pdf>

That link hosts the pdf, and a redirect to that link is available on the Chamber's website on this page: <https://www.highlandcounty.org/maple-festival/>

This report was never published as an article, but the pdf that is available on the Chamber's website gets flagged in the iThenticate system as if it was. Chapter 5 of my thesis is not the same report as the one that is uploaded to the Chamber's website, but it does have a lot of similarities. When I run my full thesis through the iThenticate system, I get a 31% score on the similarity index, with 29% of that similarity coming from this pdf that is hosted at the aforementioned link. Due to the iThenticate system flagging what is essentially a rough draft chapter of my thesis, I have removed that chapter from my thesis before running the iThenticate report that I have submitted to the Virginia Tech Graduate School.