



Loyola University Chicago 2020-21 U.S. News & World Report Ranking Update

Preparing people to lead extraordinary lives

Prepared by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness

The 2020-21 U.S. News rankings shows that Loyola University dropped from 104th to 112th in their survey of national universities. Table 1 (below) shows Loyola's scores in the different categories used by US News to rank national universities. This year, Loyola was ranked 112th with an overall score of 59 (Loyola's score last year was 51). In most categories, Loyola's metrics and rankings this year are close to their values last year, with the two largest decreases in faculty resources rank (136th to 155th) and social mobility rank (84th to 154th). Table 2 shows Loyola's rank as a percentage of national universities.

Here we look more deeply into each of the metrics used to compute the US News rankings. At the end of this document is a much more detailed description of the methodology employed by US News to determine rankings.

The overall numerical score: US News uses a number of parameters to rank schools; they publish the weights assigned to each factor, but they do not provide details how they convert these factors into a numerical score. This year, Loyola's numerical score increased from 51 last year to 59 this year. This is the highest score Loyola has achieved. Many other universities experienced this level of increase this year, suggesting that at least a part of this increase results from a change in the algorithm used to determine numerical scores.

Peer Assessment/Expert Opinion: There are a number of positive results in this year's survey. One of the significant ones is the peer assessment ranking. US News surveys presidents, chief academic officers and deans of admissions who rank universities on a 1-5 scale. Loyola's peer assessment score this year (a category which represents 20% of the overall score) is 3.3, the highest in history (this score was 3.2 last year, the previous high value.). This peer assessment score is higher than 24 of the schools which are above Loyola in the overall rankings (including Santa Clara, LMU, Marquette and Gonzaga); there is only one school ranked below Loyola with a higher peer assessment score (University of Kansas).

Social Mobility Score: Recently the US News has included a social mobility score (5% weight) in their rankings. The score is based on the graduation rates of students receiving Pell grants, and also by comparing the graduation rates of students receiving Pell grants to the graduation rates of non-Pell recipients. Even though the graduation rate of Pell students increased (67% compared to 66%), our ranking fell from 84th last year to 154th this year.

Graduation and Retention rate: Comprising 22% of the total scoring, US News uses a four year rolling average of the first to second year retention rate and six year graduation rate to calculate

their graduation/retention rate rank. Our metrics in these areas held constant since last year, and our ranking in this area dipped slightly from 112 to 115.

Table 1
Loyola University Chicago Ten-Year Trend

Category	Weight	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Change 1-Yr.	10- Yr.
National Rank		119	106	101	106	99	99	103	89	104	112	-8	7
Overall Total Score	100.0%	44	46	48	44	44	48	49	52	51	59	8	15
Expert Opinion	20.0%												
Peer Assessment Score	20.0%	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.2	3.3	0.1	0.4
HS Counselor Score	NA			3.9	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.8	3.9	----	----	----	----
Outcomes	40.0%												
Social Mobility	5.0%												
Pell Grant Graduation Rates	2.5%								75%	66%	67%	1%	----
Pell Grant Grad Rates Compared with all Other Students	2.5%								78%	77%	77%	0%	----
Graduation and Retention	22.0%												
Graduation/Retention Rank		110	106	101	99	99	100	102	74	112	115	-3	-5
Freshmen Retention	4.4%	85%	85%	86%	86%	86%	86%	85%	84%	84%	84%	0%	-1%
Predicted Graduation Rate		70%	69%	70%	73%	71%	71%	71%	69%	70%	70%	0%	0%
Actual Graduation Rate	17.6%	67%	70%	70%	71%	73%	74%	75%	77%	74%	74%	0%	7%
Over/Underperformance	8.0%	-3.0	1.0	0.0	-2.0	2.0	3.0	4.0	8.0	4.0	4.0	0.0	7.0
Graduate Indebtedness	5.0%												
Graduate Indebtedness Rank	NA										213	----	----
Graduate Indebtedness Average	3.0%										\$23,710	----	----
Graduate Indebtedness Proportion	2.0%										61%	----	----
Faculty Res./Compensation	20.0%												
Faculty Resources Rank		159	115	102	118	116	108	106	109	136	155	-19	4
% of Classes < 20	NA	31%	38%	39%	38%	39%	45%	42%	42%	38%	35%	-3%	4%
% of Classes > 50	8.0%	10%	8%	7%	7%	7%	7%	6%	6%	6%	6%	0%	4%
Faculty Compensation	7.0%												
% Faculty with Terminal Degree	3.0%								93%	93%	92%	-1%	----
Student Faculty Ratio	1.0%	15/1	15/1	14/1	14/1	14/1	14/1	14/1	14/1	14/1	14/1	0	-1
% Full-Time Faculty	1.0%	74%	75%	74%	75%	74%	73%	77%	77%	75%	75%	0%	1%
Student Excellence	7.0%	82	87	87	92	88	106	96	94	113	116	-3	-34
Average ACT	5.0%	25-29	29	29	29	29	29	29	29	30	25-30	0-0	0-1
Fresh Top 10% of HS Class	2.0%	34%	32%	35%	37%	34%	34%	34%	37%	37%	35%	-2%	1%
Acceptance Rate	NA	60%	55%	81%	91%	63%	71%	73%	71%	68%	67%	1%	-7%
Financial Resources	10.0%												
Financial Resources Rank		133	141	130	117	113	112	121	128	140	142	-2	-9
Alumni Giving	3.0%												
Alumni Giving Rank	NA	157	132	112	114	139	175	184	168	220	224	-4	-67
Alumni Giving Rate	3.0%	9%	10%	12%	11%	9%	6%	6%	6%	6%	5%	-1%	-4%

Numbers in Red=Negative Trend

Numbers in Blue=Positive Trend

Numbers in Black=No Trend

Table 2
Loyola Percentile Rank Among National Universities,
2006-20

Year of Ranking	Loyola Rank	Number of Schools	Percentile
2020	112	389	71.2
2019	104	399	73.9
2018	89	301	70.4
2017	103	300	65.6
2016	99	298	66.8
2015	99	268	63.1
2014	106	268	60.5
2013	101	270	62.6
2012	106	270	60.8
2011	119	268	55.6
2010	117	260	55.0
2009	119	260	54.2
2008	116	260	55.4
2007	112	258	56.6
2006	112	248	54.8

Over/under performance (with respect to graduation rate): Based on the profile of each entering class, US News computes an “expected” six year graduation rate and compares the observed rate with the predicted rate. Loyola has routinely overperformed on this index in the last several years, graduating students at a rate four percentage points higher than predicted. This category accounts for 8% of the total score.

Graduate Indebtedness: A new area this year, US News ranks schools on the basis of the amount of indebtedness of their graduates and the proportion of students graduating with debt. With a reported average indebtedness of \$23,710 (3% of the weight) and 61% of students graduating with debt (2% of the weight), Loyola’s ranking of graduate indebtedness overall was 213.

Faculty resource rank: An area where Loyola’s scores decreased, faculty resources (20% of the weight) is based on class size (particularly how many classes have enrollments < 20 or > 50), faculty salary, percentage of faculty who hold the terminal degree in their field, student/faculty ratio, and proportion of faculty who are full time. Loyola’s rank in this area decreased to 155 from 136 last year and from 109 the prior year.

The financial resources rank (10% weight) decreased to 142 from 140; this parameter measures spending per student on instruction, research, student services and related educational expenditures. Spending on sports, dorms, and hospitals is not included in this computation.

Student Excellence (formerly selectivity): Including SAT/ACT scores and percentage of students in the top 10% (accounting for 7% weight), Loyola’s ranking decreased slightly to 116 from 113 last year.

Alumni Giving: An area in which Loyola has always lagged, the percentage of our alumni who donated to the school dipped from 6% to 5%. Fortunately, US News reduced the weight of this category from 5% to 3%.

While the overall rankings dominate attention and discussion, US News produces other lists that are important to consider

A+ Schools for B students: To qualify for this list, schools must be in the top $\frac{3}{4}$ of their category, have a 75th percentile ACT score less than or equal to 30, a 25th percentile ACT score greater than or equal to 20, and not more than 50% of the class in the top 10% of their high school class and at least 40% of the class in the top 25% of their high schools. This year, Loyola ranked 112th out of 284 schools on the list.

Best Undergraduate Teaching: US News also asks a series of supplemental questions of presidents, chief academic officers and deans of admissions who are asked to nominate up to 15 schools in several categories. To be ranked in the best undergraduate teaching category, a school had to receive at least seven nominations. Of the 389 national universities only 73 qualified for this accolade. Among this select group of universities, Loyola ranks 49th (our same ranking as last year).

Most Innovative Schools: For the first time, Loyola was included on the Most Innovative Schools list. As with the other special categories, schools needed to receive at least seven nominations to be included in this category. Loyola ranked 58th among the 83 schools that received sufficient nominations.

Service Learning: One of the supplemental questions focused on schools with strong service learning programs. Only 27 schools received at least 15 nominations to be placed on this list. Out of 389 national universities, Loyola placed 21st in terms of most nominations (1/3 of the schools on this list are Jesuit universities).

Best Value Schools: To determine which colleges and universities offer the best value for students, U.S. News takes into account both quality and cost. Only schools ranked in the top half of their 2020 College ranking categories were considered for this list. Loyola ranked 81st on this list.

Business School Rankings: US News also included rankings of undergraduate business schools as well as subfields within business. The Quinlan School ranks 81st out of 511 undergraduate business schools, consistent with last year's rank of 79th out of 504. Although not included in several subfields from last year (accounting, finance, and supply chain management), Loyola was added to the marketing subfield list this year and ranked 17th. Loyola also ranked 19th in management information systems, an increase from 29th last year.

Top Schools for Veterans: For schools to be considered for the Best Colleges for Veterans list they had to meet several criteria. Among them, they had to be certified for the GI Bill and they had to participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program. Loyola placed in the top half (percentile rank - 80.5), 76th out of the 389 national universities.

Changes in Methodology this year: As described above, there were three changes made to the methodology this year. Two areas had their weights reduced (student excellence from 10% to 7%) and alumni giving (from 5% to 3%). A new area, student indebtedness, was added with a weight of 5%.

The next set of tables shows how Loyola compares to our peer institutions across a variety of parameters. **Table 3** shows the ten year trend of data of national rankings. Note that some schools (e.g., Villanova and Santa Clara) do not present data for the full ten years; those schools were added to the national universities rankings during the past decade.

Table 3
Loyola University Peer Group National Rankings

Peer Institution Name	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2011-20	2019-20
Tulane University	50	51	52	54	41	39	40	44	40	41	9	-1
Villanova						50	46	49	46	53	----	-7
Santa Clara									54	53	----	1
Loyola Marymount									64	66	----	-2
Fordham University	53	58	57	58	66	60	61	70	74	66	-13	8
American University	82	77	75	71	72	74	69	78	77	76	6	1
University of Denver	82	83	91	88	86	86	87	96	97	80	2	17
Marquette University	82	83	75	76	86	86	90	89	84	88	-6	-4
Univ. of San Diego	97	92	91	95	89	86	90	85	91	88	9	3
Univ. of San Francisco	119	106	117	106	108	107	110	96	97	103	16	-6
St. Louis University	90	92	101	99	96	96	94	106	97	103	-13	-6
Loyola University	119	106	101	106	99	99	103	89	104	112	7	-8
Creighton University									104	112	----	-8
Rochester Inst. Of Tech.						107	97	102	104	112	----	-8
Ill Institute of Tech.	111	113	109	116	108	103	103	96	117	124	-13	-7
DePaul University	132	134	121	121	123	124	120	119	125	124	8	1
Drexel	88	83	97	95	99	96	94	102	97	133	-45	-36
Dayton	101	115	112	103	108	111	124	127	132	133	-32	-1
Duquesne University	119	120	121	116	115	124	120	119	132	143	-24	-11
St. John's University	152	147	152	145	153	164	165	152	179	170	-18	9

Numbers in Red=Negative Trend

Numbers in Blue=Positive Trend

Numbers in Black=No Trend

Note: ‘---’ indicates institutions that were in different ranking categories in previous years.

Table 4 shows Loyola’s U.S. News Peer Group total score results for the past ten years. Notice that every school experienced an increase between 2019 and 2020 (range 4-12 points). This suggests that at least some (and likely a significant amount) of the increase was due to a change in the algorithm used by US News to compute total overall scores.

Table 4
Peer Group Total Score

Peer Institution Name	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Change	
											2011-20	2019-20
Tulane University	62	61	61	58	61	64	66	65	67	73	11	6
Santa Clara									62	69	---	7
Villanova						62	64	63	65	69	---	4
Fordham University	60	58	60	57	54	59	60	57	57	66	6	9
Loyola Marymount									59	66	---	7
American University	52	52	53	52	51	54	57	55	56	64	12	8
University of Denver	52	51	50	48	47	51	53	51	52	63	11	11
Marquette University	52	51	53	50	47	51	52	52	54	62	10	8
Univ. of San Diego	48	49	50	47	46	51	52	53	53	62	14	9
St. Louis University	50	49	48	46	45	49	51	49	52	60	10	8
Univ. of San Francisco	44	46	45	44	41	46	48	51	52	60	16	8
Creighton University									51	59	---	8
Loyola University	44	46	48	44	44	48	49	52	51	59	15	8
Rochester Inst. Of Tech.						46	50	50	51	59	---	8
DePaul University	41	40	43	41	38	43	46	47	48	57	16	9
Ill Institute of Tech.	46	45	47	42	41	47	49	51	50	57	11	7
Dayton	47	44	46	45	41	45	45	45	46	56	9	10
Drexel	51	51	49	47	44	49	51	50	52	56	5	4
Duquesne University	44	43	43	42	40	43	46	47	46	55	11	9
St. John's University	37	38	37	35	31	35	37	40	40	52	15	12

Numbers in Red=Negative Trend

Numbers in Blue=Positive Trend

Numbers in Black=No Trend

Note: ‘---’ indicates institutions that were in different ranking categories in previous years.

Table 5 shows Loyola’s U.S. News Peer Group Assessment score results for the past ten years. Loyola’s peer assessment score has increased by 0.3 (out of 5) points in the last two years compared to an increase of 0.1 points in 7 years, suggesting that our national reputation has been enhanced in recent years.

**Table 5
Peer Assessment Score**

Peer Institution Name	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Change		
											2011-20	2019-20	
Tulane University	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.6	0.2	0.0	
Rochester Inst. Of Tech.							3.3	3.3	3.3	3.4	3.5	---	0.1
Villanova							3.2	3.2	3.2	3.4	3.4	---	0.0
American University	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.0	3.1	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.3	0.3	0.1	
Fordham University	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.1	3.1	3.3	0.1	0.2	
Loyola University	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.2	3.3	0.4	0.1	
Marquette University	3.0	3.0	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.0	3.1	3.2	0.2	0.1	
Santa Clara									3.1	3.2	---	0.1	
Drexel	N/A	N/A	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	---	0.0	
Loyola Marymount									3.1	3.1	---	0.0	
St. Louis University	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	3.0	3.1	0.2	0.1	
Univ. of San Diego	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.9	3.0	3.1	0.4	0.1	
University of Denver	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.9	3.0	3.1	0.3	0.1	
Creighton									3.0	3.0	---	0.0	
DePaul University	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.9	3.0	3.0	0.2	0.0	
Univ. of San Francisco	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.9	3.0	3.0	0.2	0.0	
Ill Institute of Tech.	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.9	0.1	0.1	
Duquesne University	2.6	2.7	2.5	2.6	2.6	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.7	2.8	0.2	0.1	
St. John's University	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	0.1	0.0	
Dayton	N/A	N/A	2.5	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.7	2.7	---	0.0	

Numbers in Red=Negative Trend

Numbers in Blue=Positive Trend

Numbers in Black=No Trend

Note: ‘---’ indicates institutions that were in different ranking categories in previous years.

The peer assessment score comprises a substantial portion of the total weight – 20%. The assessment factor is based on the university’s perceived reputation. Loyola has little to no control over how others perceive its reputation. However, it is clearly a factor that can make a difference in determining Loyola’s overall rank.

Table 6 shows Loyola’s U.S. News Peer Group Graduation and Retention Rank results for the past ten years. This rank is based on a four year rolling average of retention and six year graduation rates. Our highest rank of 74 in 2018 was fueled by the highest graduation rate in our recent history. The most recent graduation rate (76%) was higher than the recent mean, so we predict that we will increase in this metric in next year’s rankings.

Table 6
Graduation and Retention Rank

Peer Institution Name	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Change	
											2011-20	2019-20
Santa Clara									33	28	---	5
Villanova University						31	30	31	30	28	---	2
Tulane University	76	85	83	86	74	72	66	74	58	52	24	6
Fordham University	56	63	65	67	70	68	70	85	78	73	-17	5
Loyola Marymount									73	81	---	-8
Marquette University	66	62	59	67	70	60	73	93	78	81	-15	-3
American University	71	69	74	73	74	72	70	66	82	87	-16	-5
Univ. of San Diego	82	82	83	82	80	82	83	85	88	87	-5	1
Dayton	71	78	77	79	80	80	83	112	92	92	-21	0
Creighton University									95	93	---	2
St. Louis University	90	91	91	94	99	100	97	112	103	93	-3	10
Duquesne University	82	85	87	86	87	92	93	74	103	98	-16	5
University of Denver	78	75	77	79	80	89	90	112	98	98	-20	0
Loyola University	110	106	101	99	99	100	102	74	112	115	-5	-3
Univ. of San Francisco	104	98	101	103	106	113	110	104	122	115	-11	7
Ill Institute of Tech.	104	106	101	108	111	102	110	74	112	120	-16	-8
DePaul University	117	119	114	108	106	106	104	95	127	131	-14	-4
Drexel	121	119	118	114	117	125	125	136	127	131	-10	-4
Rochester Inst. Of Tech.						130	127	122	137	136	---	1
St. John's University	152	155	163	166	165	177	180	155	209	209	-57	0

Numbers in Red=Negative Trend

Numbers in Blue=Positive Trend

Numbers in Black=No Trend

Note: ‘---’ indicates prior ranking in terms of Tiers with no rank

Table 7 shows Loyola’s U.S. News Peer Group Student Excellence (formerly Selectivity) Rank results for the past ten years. This year, Loyola’s ranking decreased slightly to 116 from 113. The weight of this category also decreased this year from 10% to 7%.

**Table 7
Selectivity Rank**

Peer Institution Name	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Change	
											2011-20	2019-20
Tulane University	42	42	61	76	45	42	37	34	33	32	10	1
Villanova University						54	45	38	40	32	---	8
Fordham University	71	69	64	69	72	71	67	66	70	69	2	1
Santa Clara									65	72	---	-7
Ill Institute of Tech.	66	67	61	64	66	63	60	68	74	79	-13	-5
Loyola Marymount									83	79	---	4
Rochester Inst. Of Tech.						85	80	80	83	79	---	4
St. Louis University	75	78	77	71	69	74	76	71	74	85	-10	-11
American University	59	64	64	64	58	79	71	94	90	91	-32	-1
Univ. of San Diego	80	69	72	71	72	85	80	80	95	94	-14	1
University of Denver	75	75	81	83	78	76	76	89	83	94	-19	-11
Creighton University									101	98	---	3
Drexel	94	98	103	113	117	98	104	112	107	98	-4	9
Marquette University	80	87	72	81	88	92	96	89	101	110	-30	-9
Loyola University	82	87	87	92	88	106	96	94	113	116	-34	-3
Univ. of San Francisco	152	136	140	113	128	131	148	151	125	141	11	-16
Duquesne University	145	136	137	142	137	151	140	130	143	154	-9	-11
St. John's University	169	213	172	165	164	198	199	177	190	167	2	23
DePaul University	121	118	121	113	128	140	136	143	173	182	-61	-9
Dayton	116	118	94	107	100	106	172	177	198	211	-95	-13

Numbers in Red=Negative Trend

Numbers in Blue=Positive Trend

Numbers in Black=No Trend

Note: ‘---’ indicates prior ranking in terms of Tiers with nor rank

Table 8 below shows the 2019-20 results for AJCU members.

**Table 8
AJCU Peer Group**

Category/Institution	Year/Rank	Number of Institutions	Year/Rank	Number of Institutions
<u>National Universities</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>399</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>389</u>
Georgetown	24		23	
Boston College	37		35	
Santa Clara	54		53	
Loyola Marymount	64		66	
Fordham	74		66	
Gonzaga	79		80	
Marquette	84		88	
University of San Francisco	97	-	103	
Saint Louis	97		103	
Loyola University Chicago	104		112	
Creighton	104		112	
Seattle	139		124	
University of Detroit Mercy*	40		187	
Loyola University New Orleans	197		196	
Regis	202		217	
<u>Regional Universities (Midwest)</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>153</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>156</u>
John Carrol	2		2	
Xavier	5		5	
Rockhurst	13		13	
<u>Regional Universities (North)</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>170</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>176</u>
Fairfield	3		3	
Loyola College in Maryland	4		4	
University of Scranton	6		6	
St. Joseph's	10		8	

Le Moyne	14		17	
Canisius	19		19	
Saint Peters	86		75	
<u>Regional Universities (South)</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>122</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>133</u>
Wheeling	47		59	
<u>National Liberal Arts Colleges</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>215</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>221</u>
Holy Cross	27		36	
Spring Hill	Tier 2		Tier 2	

* Institutions Moved to National Universities Rankings List in 2021 Edition.

Table 9 shows additional ranking categories U.S. News uses to supplement the overall rankings. Loyola did well in a number of rankings specifically in the undergraduate business programs. In the overall Best Undergraduate Business Programs ranking Loyola was 81st out of 511 (84.1 percentile).

Table 9
Undergraduate Rankings 2019-20 VS. 2020-21

Ranked Categories	2019			2020		
	LUC Rank	Total Number of Institutions	Percentile Rank	LUC Rank	Total Number of Institutions	Percentile Rank
National Universities Overall Rank	104	399	73.9	112	389	71.2
Best Online Bachelors Degree Program	12	348	96.6	8	345	97.7
Best Undergraduate Business Programs	79	504	84.3	81	511	84.1
Accounting	47	Top 73	---	---	Top 69	---
Finance	21	Top 54	---	---	Top 39	---
Marketing	---		---	17	Top 39	---
MGMT Information Systems	29	Top 35	---	19	Top 27	---
Supply Chain Management	15	Top 24	---	---	Top 24	---
Most Debt	92	Top 125	---	102	Top 125	---
Best Value Schools	80	399	80	81	389	79.2
Campus Ethnic Diversity	109	399	72.7	120	360	66.7
Freshmen Retention rate	161	399	59.7	160	389	58.9
Economic Diversity (% receiving Pell Grants)	235	399	41.1	228	374	39
Best Undergraduate Teaching	49	399	87.7	49	389	87.4
Highest 4-Year Grad Rate (all Schools)	209	399*	47.6*	228	1208*	81.1*
A+ Schools for B Students	13	322	95.6	112	284	60.1
Service Learning	19	399	95.2	21	389	94.6
Social Mobility	84	399	79	154	389	60.4
Top Schools for Veterans	69	399	82.7	76	389	80.5
Most Innovative Schools	---	Top 87	---	58	Top 83	---

* In 2019 the comparison was based on 399 national universities; in 2020 U.S. News combined all schools, not just national universities, into one ranking.

APPENDICES

2020-21 U.S. News and World Report Rankings Results Factors and Weights 2020-21

Factor & Sub Factors	Factor Weight	Sub-Factor Weight	Item Weight
<u>EXPERT OPINION</u>			
	<u>20%</u>		
Peer Assessment Score (out of 5) (2-Year Average)		100%	20
<u>OUTCOMES</u>			
	<u>40%</u>		
<u>Social Mobility</u>			
	<u>5%</u>		
Pell Grant Graduation Rates		50%	2.5
Pell Grant Grad Rates compared with All Other Students		50%	2.5
<u>Grad & Retention Rates</u>			
	<u>22%</u>		
Average Freshman Retention Rate		20%	4.4
6-year Graduation Rate		80%	17.6
<u>Graduation Rate Performance</u>			
	<u>8%</u>		
Graduation Rate Performance (Relative to the Predicted Graduation Rate)		*	8
<u>Graduate Indebtedness</u>			
	<u>5%</u>		
Graduate Indebtedness Total		60%	3
Graduate Indebtedness Proportion		40%	2
<u>FACULTY RESOURCES</u>			
	<u>20%</u>		
Classes with under 50 Students		40%	8
Student to Faculty Ratio		5%	1
Percent of Faculty who are Full-time		5%	1
Faculty Compensation		35%	7
% Faculty with Terminal Degrees		15%	3
<u>STUDENT EXCELLENCE</u>			
	<u>7%</u>		
Fall Acceptance Rate		N/A	N/A

Freshmen in Top 10% of High School Class	28.6%	2
SAT/ACT 25th-75th Percentile	71.4%	5

FINANCIAL RESOURCES	10%	
Financial Resources Rank	*	10
ALUMNI GIVING	3%	
Alumni Giving Rate (2-year Average)	*	3
	100%	100%

How U.S. News Calculated the 2021 Best Colleges Rankings

Here is a breakdown of the key data that goes into the annual rankings.

By [Robert Morse](#) and [Eric Brooks](#)

DECIDING WHERE TO APPLY is tough. But the U.S. News & World Report Best Colleges rankings, now in their 36th year, can help. Our latest edition assesses 1,452 U.S. bachelor's degree-granting institutions on 17 measures of academic quality. The comparisons are useful for crafting a shortlist of institutions to examine more closely and may also highlight new options.

To further explore the rankings and data, U.S. News' college profile pages benchmark each school's relative performance across different ranking indicators and include many of the latest statistics used in the calculations – such as the student-faculty ratio and the average federal loan debt of graduates. We also list information schools reported directly to U.S. News on their application requirements, tuition and financial aid policies, student body demographics, and campus life. The college's individual profile pages have post-graduate earning data by undergraduate focus and user ratings and reviews submitted by alumni.

In conjunction with the rankings and school profiles, the usnews.com search filter allows users to explore what schools have certain characteristics. The My Fit College Search, a premium-level search accessible only to Compass subscribers, goes further by building customized rankings on personalized factors.

A new feature this year for those with free U.S. News accounts is access to our College Admissions Calculator. Among other things, this tool enables users to see how their high school GPA, SAT and ACT scores stack up against other individuals who were reportedly accepted, waitlisted and rejected at different schools.

Taken together, the rankings, directory and search tools – combined with interviews, virtual tours, college visits and your own intuition – can be a powerful resource in your quest for the best fit college.

How the Rankings Methodology Works

Although the methodology is the product of years of research, we continuously refine our approach based on user feedback, discussions with schools and higher education experts, literature reviews, trends in our own data, availability of new data, and engaging with deans and institutional researchers at higher education conferences. Our detailed methodology is transparent in part for use by schools and

academics, but mostly because we believe prospective students will find our rankings more useful if they know what the rankings measure.

Only thoroughly vetted academic data from our surveys and reliable third-party sources are used to calculate each ranking factor. This means for better or for worse, we do not factor nonacademic elements like social life and athletics; we do not conduct unscientific straw polls for use in our computations; and schools' ranks are not manipulated to coddle business relationships.

The data used in these rankings pertain to fall 2019 and earlier. Consequently, the COVID-19 pandemic could not impact the data schools submitted to U.S. News. Nonetheless, to account for the huge disruption to higher education, we re-introduced test-blind schools in the rankings and placed reduced emphasis in the rankings on admissions data and alumni giving data, described below.

We group schools into 10 ranking categories based on their academic missions. Within each category, the sum of weighted, normalized values across 17 indicators of academic quality determine each school's overall score and, by extension, its overall rank.

For display purposes, we transformed overall scores so the top performer scores 100 on a zero-to-100 scale. In effect, a school's overall score reflects its distance from the top-performing school in its ranking. Among schools placing outside the top 75% of their rankings, U.S. News made an editorial decision to only display their rankings' bottom quartile ranges.

Grouping Ranked Colleges

To make valid comparisons, we group schools by academic mission into 10 distinct rankings.

- National Universities offer a full range of undergraduate majors, plus master's and doctoral programs, and emphasize faculty research or award professional practice doctorates.
- National Liberal Arts Colleges focus almost exclusively on undergraduate education and award at least 50% of their degrees in the arts and sciences.
- Regional Universities offer a broad scope of undergraduate degrees and some master's degree programs but few, if any, doctoral programs. We ranked them in four geographical groups: North, South, Midwest and West.
- Regional Colleges focus on undergraduate education but grant fewer than 50% of their degrees in liberal arts disciplines. They sometimes predominantly award two-year associate degrees. We ranked them in four geographical groups: North, South, Midwest and West.

To place each school in its ranking, U.S. News strictly mapped its categories to The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education's Basic Classification system – using its 2018 update for the second consecutive year. The U.S. Department of Education and many higher education associations use the Carnegie system to organize and label their data, among other uses. In short, the Carnegie categories are the accepted standard in U.S. higher education. That is why U.S. News has been using them since the first Best Colleges rankings was published in 1983.

The Ranking Factors

Changes to the rankings methodology this year include the introduction of two outcome measures pertaining to graduate indebtedness, for a total of 17 factors. To make room, we gave less weight in the rankings to SAT/ACT scores, high school class standing and alumni giving rates. Below are the factors and weights used in the Best Colleges rankings. For more granular descriptions, see Ranking Criteria and Weights and Morse Code: Inside the College Rankings.

Outcomes (40%, previously 35%)

Forty percent of a school's rank comes from its success at retaining and graduating students within 150% of normal time (six years), graduate indebtedness, and social mobility factors. Graduation rates themselves have the highest weight in outcomes and in our rankings because degree completion is necessary to receive the full benefits of undergraduate study from employers and graduate schools. We approach outcomes from angles of graduation and retention (22%), graduation rate performance (8%), social mobility (5%) and, new this year, graduate indebtedness (5%).

Graduation and retention rates:

This has two components.

- A four-year rolling average of the proportion of each entering class (fall 2010-2013) earning a degree in six years or less (17.6%)
- A four-year rolling average of the proportion of first-year entering students (fall 2015-fall 2018) who returned the following fall (4.4%)

Graduation rate performance: We compared each college's actual six-year graduation rate with what we predicted for its fall 2013 entering class. For the first time this year, we averaged two years of graduate rate performance data for the graduation rate performance calculations to reduce the volatility of this indicator. So this indicator contains data from the fall 2012 and fall 2013 entering classes. The predicted rates were modeled from admissions data, the proportion of undergraduates awarded Pell Grants, school financial resources, the proportion of federal financial aid recipients who are first-generation college students, and National Universities' math and science orientations.

Social mobility: This indicator measures how well schools graduated students who received federal Pell Grants. Students receiving these grants typically come from households whose family incomes are less than \$50,000 annually, though most Pell Grant money goes to students with a total family income below \$20,000. For the second consecutive year, U.S. News published a distinct social mobility ranking for all ranked schools. The social mobility ranking was computed by aggregating the two ranking factors assessing graduation rates of Pell-awarded students.

- **Pell Grant graduation rates** incorporate six-year graduation rates of Pell Grant students, adjusted to give much more credit to schools with larger Pell student proportions. This is computed as a two-year rolling average.
- **Pell Grant graduation rate performance** compares each school's six-year graduation rate among Pell recipients with its six-year graduation rate among non-Pell recipients by dividing the former into the latter, then adjusting to give much more credit to schools with larger Pell student proportions. The higher a school's Pell graduation rate relative to its non-Pell graduation rate up to the rates being equal, the better it scores. This, too, is computed as a two-year rolling average.

The two graduate indebtedness figures added to the rankings this year were collected by U.S. News during the spring and summer 2020 on our financial aid survey. Federal loans made to students who borrowed while enrolled at the institutions and co-signed loans make up these figures. They exclude students who transferred in, money borrowed at other institutions, parent loans and students who did not graduate with a bachelor's degree. The two new indicators are:

Graduate indebtedness total: Average amount of accumulated federal loan debt among the 2019 bachelor's degree graduating class that took out federal loans (weighted 3%). For nonresponders to U.S. News' financial aid survey, the College Scorecard's most recent cohort of institutional median graduate indebtedness was adjusted and used in its place.

Graduate indebtedness proportion: Percentage of graduates from the 2019 bachelor's degree graduating class who borrowed federal loans (2%). For nonresponders to U.S. News' financial aid survey,

the College Scorecard's most recent institutional cohort of the proportion of undergraduates borrowing was adjusted and used in its place.

New this year, U.S. News calculated a **graduate indebtedness rank**, which is the combination of the two indebtedness indicators for ranked schools. They indicate how schools compare in terms of total graduate indebtedness among those with debt and the proportion of graduates with debt. Schools that ranked the highest had the lowest average amount of debt accrued by their the most recent graduates and a relatively small proportion of students graduating with debt compared with other schools in their U.S. News ranking category. This graduate indebtedness rank is available on each school's Ranking Factor section on [usnews.com](https://www.usnews.com).

These two indicators were introduced because it has been estimated that U.S. college debt stands at \$1.6 trillion of outstanding federal and private student debt, which is held by 45 million student loan borrowers. Affordability of college and the value of that degree after graduation, in terms of being able to earn enough money to be able to make the loan payments, are prime concerns of prospective students and their families. Those vital issues are accounted for in graduate indebtedness. Student debt can have a long-lasting impact. Incorporating this outcome measure into the rankings is a step to holding institutions accountable for the cost of college and the sources of funding available from that school to help students pay for their education.

Faculty Resources (20%)

Research shows the greater access students have to quality instructors, the more engaged they will be in class and the more they will learn and likely graduate. U.S. News uses five factors from the 2019-2020 academic year to assess a school's commitment to instruction: class size (8%), faculty salary (7%), faculty with the highest degree in their fields (3%), student-faculty ratio (1%) and proportion of faculty who are full time (1%).

- At 8%, class size is the most highly weighted faculty resource measure. Schools score better the greater their proportions of smaller classes for fall 2019.
- Faculty salary is weighted at 7% and is the average full-time faculty salaries for assistant, associate and full professors for 2019-2020, based on definitions from the American Association of University Professors. This is a change from previous rankings, which used a two-year average of both salaries and nonsalary compensation, i.e., benefits in the calculations. The salary data was once again adjusted for regional differences in the cost of living using the Bureau of Economic Analysis regional price parities indexes, published in May 2020.

Expert Opinion (20%)

Academic reputation matters because it factors things that cannot easily be captured elsewhere. For example, an institution known for having innovative approaches to teaching may perform especially well on this indicator, whereas a school struggling to keep its accreditation will likely perform poorly.

Each year, top academics – presidents, provosts and deans of admissions – rate the academic quality of peer institutions with which they are familiar on a scale of 1 (marginal) to 5 (distinguished). We take a two-year weighted average of the ratings. The 2021 Best Colleges ranking factors in scores from both 2020 and 2019.

U.S. News collected the most recent data by administering peer assessment surveys in spring and summer 2020 directly to schools. Of the 4,816 academics who were sent questionnaires in 2020, 36.4% responded – a decrease from the 43% response rate in 2019.

Schools interested in a breakdown of their peer assessment ratings by respondent type can access this information along with 29 million other data points with a subscription to U.S. News' Academic Insights.

Its web-based platform facilitates a deep dive for studying and benchmarking the rankings and is designed for colleges and universities only.

Financial Resources (10%)

Generous per-student spending indicates a college can offer a wide variety of programs and services. U.S. News measures financial resources by using the average spending per student on instruction, research, student services and related educational expenditures in the 2018 and 2019 fiscal years.

Student Excellence (7%, previously 10%)

A school's academic atmosphere is influenced by the selectivity of its admissions. Simply put, students who achieved strong grades and test scores during high school have the highest probability of succeeding at challenging college-level coursework, enabling instructors to design classes that have great rigor.

Standardized tests: U.S. News factors average test scores for all enrollees who took the mathematics and evidence-based reading and writing portions of the SAT and the composite ACT in fall 2019. Both SATs and ACTs were converted to their 0-100 test taker percentile distributions and weighted based on the proportions of new entrants submitting each exam.

We weighted standardized tests at 5% (7.75% previously) in the overall rankings.

Schools sometimes fail to report SAT and ACT scores for students in these categories: athletes, international students, minority students, legacies, those admitted by special arrangement and those who started in the summer term. For any school that did not report all scores or that declined to say whether all scores were reported, U.S. News reduced its combined SAT/ACT percentile distribution value used in the ranking model by 15%. If the combined percentage of the fall 2019 entering class submitting test scores was less than 75% of all new entrants, its combined SAT/ACT percentile distribution value used in the rankings was discounted by 15%.

U.S. News now ranks schools that report they don't use the SAT or ACT at all in admissions decisions. Previously, beginning with the 2008 edition of Best Colleges, these test-blind schools had been automatically excluded from the overall rankings and categorized as unranked. (These are different than schools that have test-optional or text-flexible admissions policies that have always been ranked and will continue to be ranked.) As a result of this change, more than 60 schools will be added to the overall rankings. The test-blind schools without SAT/ACT scores for fall 2019 were assigned values for ranking calculation purposes only equal to the lowest test score by a ranked school in their category; their test scores are published as N/A on usnews.com.

High school class standing: U.S. News incorporates the proportion of enrolled first-year students at National Universities and National Liberal Arts Colleges who graduated in the top 10% of their high school classes, and for Regional Universities and Regional Colleges, the proportion who graduated in the top quarter of their high school classes. It contributes 2% (2.25% previously) toward schools' overall scores.

Alumni Giving (3%, previously 5%)

This is the average percentage of living alumni with bachelor's degrees who gave to their school during 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. Giving measures student satisfaction and post-graduate engagement.

Data Sources

Most colleges report the data directly to U.S. News. This year, 85% of ranked institutions returned their statistical information during the spring and summer 2020 data collection window.

We use the most current information available for the rankings. Because we conduct our own data collection, much of what was analyzed and published is a year ahead of other sources. This also means much of our information on schools is not available anywhere else or, at least, would require navigating through variegated school websites.

The disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic means some of the information about "current" policies and procedures collected in spring 2020 has probably changed more often than in a typical year. In the summer of 2020, many institutions announced (temporary or indefinite) changes to their standardized test requirements for admissions and made adjustments to student expenses, as examples. But all data used for the rankings pertain to fall 2019 and earlier.

For quality assurance, rankings data that schools reported to U.S. News were algorithmically compared with previous years' submissions to flag large change statistical outliers. Respondents were required to review, possibly revise and verify any flagged data to submit their surveys. For the second year in a row, they were also instructed to have a top academic official sign off on the accuracy of the data. Schools that declined to do this step could still be ranked but display a footnote on their U.S. News profile on usnews.com.

After submitting, U.S. News assessed the veracity of data submitted on a factor-by-factor level and contacted select schools to confirm or revise data. Schools that did not respond or were unable to confirm their data's accuracy may have had the data in question unpublished and unused in the calculations.

We obtained missing data from the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (finances, faculty counts, student-teacher ratios, faculty salaries, SAT and ACT scores, Pell and non-Pell graduation rates, and overall graduation and first-year retention rates) and its College Scorecard (graduate indebtedness). In total, ranking indicators that constitute approximately 85% of each schools' overall score may use third-party data when survey data was not supplied.

U.S. News uses assigned values, which are not displayed, in the ranking calculation when schools fail to report on a ranking indicator and data is not available from these sources.

Missing data is reported as "N/A" on usnews.com, which means that specific data points (often the most recent cohort data that U.S. News could only obtain directly from schools) were missing. This does not indicate whether the school received an assigned value or was scored on historical data either submitted in a previous data collection cycle or obtained using a third-party source. Schools that refused to fill out the U.S. News survey altogether display a footnote on their profiles as nonresponders but incur no direct penalty in the ranking calculations.

In total, U.S. News has collected data on more than 1,800 institutions. While data for all schools appears on usnews.com, 1,452 schools were ranked.

Unranked Schools

In total, 377 colleges are listed as unranked, much fewer than 542 colleges in the 2020 edition. The reason for the decrease is because in previous editions dating back to 2008, schools that did not make use of ACT/SAT in admissions were unranked, but going forward, U.S. News has dropped this approach. (Note that test-optional schools were always ranked.)

The unranked designation now owes to one of the following reasons, in descending order of frequency:

- They are in a Carnegie Classification that U.S. News has not included in its ranking categories. These include 257 highly specialized schools in arts, business, engineering, health, medicine and technology.
- They received too few cumulative ratings in the 2019 and 2020 peer assessment survey to be scored on the indicator.
- The institution's total undergraduate and graduate enrollment is fewer than 200 students.
- A six-year graduation rate could not be found; this was most common with new and recently merged institutions.

Unlike schools that are on usnews.com as unranked, some U.S. schools that award bachelor's degrees are excluded from Best Colleges pages altogether. These include U.S. institutions that lack regional accreditation, that only award bachelor's degrees as degree completion programs or that only offer 100% distance education undergraduate degree programs, according to 2019 data from the federal government.

New Rankings and Indicators

Undergraduate rankings in computer science: U.S. News published undergraduate computer science program rankings for the first time. They were produced using data from a specialized computer science peer assessment survey administered in spring and summer 2020.

The overall computer science rankings were calculated solely from ratings of program quality on a 1-5 scale. Institutions most frequently nominated for having strength in any of nine computer science specialties could also be ranked in those specialties in descending order of ratings received.

For more details and a list of specialties, see the undergraduate computer science methodology.

Undergraduate business specialty: Business analytics is a new specialty in the undergraduate business rankings. All schools that were nominated by seven or more schools for having strength in business analytics were ranked in descending order of ratings received. For more details, see the undergraduate business methodology.

Best Value Schools Methodology: By design, the Best Value Schools rankings place significant emphasis on affordability for students who may be eligible for need-based aid. The 2021 edition introduced a new ranking indicator, contributing 20% toward a college or university's Best Value Schools rank, which incorporates the proportion of need-based aid in the form of grants and scholarships.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities rankings: For the 2021 edition of the HBCU ranking U.S. News added the two graduate indebtedness indicators. As a result, more weight was given to outcomes measures (40%, previously 30%) and slightly less to peer assessment, SAT/ACT scores, high school class standing and alumni giving.

More to Come...

Check out usnews.com in the coming year because we may add content to the Best Colleges rankings as we obtain additional information. And as you mine these tables for insights – where you might win some merit aid, for example, or where you will be apt to get the most attention from professors – keep in mind that they provide a launching pad, not an easy answer.

Searching for a college? Get our complete rankings of Best Colleges.

