

## Subject: Information Paper – Annual College Rankings

1. The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the various college rankings. There are a number of agencies that rank colleges and universities on a variety of measures. The agencies discussed in this paper are:

- a. U.S. News and World Report
- b. Forbes
- c. Princeton Review
- d. American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA)



2. Now in their 33<sup>rd</sup> year, U.S. News Best College rankings are widely regarded as the most influential of all college rankings. The rankings are based upon data which U.S. News collects from each educational institution either from an annual survey or from the school's website. It also considers opinion surveys of university faculty and administrators outside the school. <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/rankings/national-liberal-arts-colleges>

- Faculty resources: average class size, faculty salaries, faculty degree level, student-faculty ratio, and proportion of full-time faculty (20%)
- Retention: six-year graduation rate and first-year student retention rate (22.5%)
- **Assessment of Excellence:** based on the combined assessment of Peers and Guidance Counselors (22.5%)
- Peer assessment: a survey of the institution's reputation among presidents, provosts, and admissions deans of other institutions (15%)
- Student selectivity: standardized test scores of admitted students, proportion of admitted students in upper percentiles of their high school class, and proportion of applicants accepted (12.5%)
- Financial resources: per-student spending (10%)
- Graduation rate performance: difference between expected and actual graduation rate (7.5%)
- Guidance Counselor assessment: a survey of the institution's reputation among approximately 1,800 high school guidance counselors (7.5%)
- Alumni giving rate (5%)

<i>U.S. News Best Colleges</i>	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Nat'l Liberal Arts Colleges - Top Public	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	1
Nat'l Liberal Arts Colleges - Overall	12	19	22	24	17	18	14	16
Engineering Programs Overall	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
Civil Engineering	1	4	2	2	2	*	2	*
Electrical Engineering	4	*	*	*	*	*	*	3
Mechanical Engineering	5	*	4	3	5	3	*	2



3. Now in its 10th year, the FORBES Top Colleges ranking has always placed its focus solely on the direct benefits a college or university provides its students. Favoring output over input, they eschew common metrics like acceptance rate, endowment and freshmen SAT scores – numbers that say far more about a school’s “prestige” than its actual effectiveness – and instead favor variables like alumni salary, graduation rate and student satisfaction. The ROI-centric logic behind this year’s ranking is no different, but part of the methodology and some of the data sources have been reexamined and revamped to better align this list with what FORBES values most: entrepreneurship, success and the consumer experience. <https://www.forbes.com/top-colleges/#215fca6b1987>

- Student satisfaction: Niche Professors, Niche Student Life, freshman-to-sophomore retention rate (20%)
- Post-graduate success: salary of alumni, number graduates on America’s Leaders List (35%)
- Student debt: federal student loan debt load, student loan default rates (20%)
- Four and Six year Graduation rate (12.5%)
- Academic Success: Nationally competitive awards- Rhodes, NSF, Fulbright scholarships, alumni receiving Ph.D. (12.5%)
- Pell Rank: Adjusted Pell grad rank

<i>Forbes Top Colleges</i>	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Top Colleges	24	14	11	9	7	7	3	4	1	6
Public Colleges	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Northeast	16	11	9	7	3	*	3	*	*	*
Top 25 Colleges	2	*	1	1	*	3	3	*	*	*



4. Unlike typical college ranking systems, these ‘rankings’ do not compare colleges overall against each other. Instead, this system compares colleges in each of 62 categories that relate to the following nine general areas: Academics/Administration, Quality of Life, Politics, Campus Life, Town Life, Social Life, Extracurricular activities, Social Scene and Schools by Type. Princeton Review uses a *student survey*, consisting of 80 questions, for feedback to make its rankings. <https://www.princetonreview.com/college-rankings/best-colleges>

The Princeton Review reports the top 20 schools (i.e., of the 378 total for its 2014 edition) in each of the 62 different ranking list categories, but it does not report ranks beyond the top 20 in any category (i.e., schools ranked 21 to 378). The total list of schools (in this case, 378) was selected by their collecting data on more than 2,000 schools, meeting with or talking to hundreds of college administrators, obtaining feedback from students, parents, educators and their own staff at Princeton Review locations across the country, and by consulting with their 35-member National College Counselor Advisory Board.

Princeton Review	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
Most Accessible Professors	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	1
Best Classroom Experience	1	12	5	14	11	4	1	4	8
Best College Library	5	2	3	3	6	2	8	10	*



**ACTA**  
 AMERICAN COUNCIL OF  
 TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI

5. American Council of Trustees and Alumni -

In 2009, the ACTA began their *What Will They Learn?* Project. Starting with the institution’s own stated rationale for its general education or core curricular requirements, the *What Will They*

*Learn?* Project carefully evaluates the extent to which the actual requirements match the school’s stated beliefs and principles. Thus, the ACTA rates colleges, not against each another but individually, based on whether the institution requires seven core subjects: Composition, Literature, Foreign Language, U.S. Government or History, Economics, Mathematics, and Natural or Physical Science. The college’s rating, a grade of ‘A’ through ‘F’, is based on a detailed examination of the latest publicly-available online course catalogs at the time of review.

2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A

USMA rates an ‘A’, as it meets the criteria for six of the seven core subjects. Fewer than 2% of the more than 1,000 institutions evaluated earned an A grade. USMA only falls short on Foreign Language, as it requires two semesters of study, short of the ACTA minimum standard of three.

6. The POC for this paper is the USMA Office of Institutional Research, x7370.