



# Loyola University Chicago 2018-19 U.S. News & World Report Ranking Update

Preparing people to lead extraordinary lives

*Prepared by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness*

The 2018-19 U.S. News rankings shows that Loyola University improved from 103rd to 89th (Table 1). Loyola was ranked 89th with an overall score of 52 (last year 49). The table below shows Loyola improved in some important areas--graduation rate and graduation performance. Loyola also showed some declines. The financial resource rank dropped from 121 to 128 while retention rate dropped slightly to 84%. The alumni giving rank improved by 16 places despite no increase in the alumni giving rate.

**Table 1  
Loyola University Chicago Ten-Year Trend**

Category	Weight											Change	
		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	1-Yr.	10-Yr.
<b>National Rank</b>		<b>119</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Overall Total Score</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	36	39	44	46	48	44	44	48	49	52	<b>3</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Expert Opinion</b>	<b>20.0%</b>												
Peer Assessment Score	<b>15.0%</b>	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.0	<b>0</b>	<b>0.2</b>
HS Counselor Score	<b>5.0%</b>					3.9	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.8	3.9	<b>0.1</b>	
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>35.0%</b>												
<b>Social Mobility</b>	<b>5.0%</b>												
Pell Grant Graduation Rates	<b>2.5%</b>										75.0%	---	---
Pell Grant Grad Rates Compared with all Other Students	<b>2.5%</b>										78.0%	---	---
<b>Graduation and Retention</b>	<b>22.0%</b>												
Graduation/Retention Rank		102	102	110	106	101	99	99	100	102	74	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>
Freshmen Retention	<b>4.4%</b>	84%	84%	85%	85%	86%	86%	86%	86%	85%	84%	<b>-1%</b>	<b>0%</b>
Predicted Graduation Rate		67%	69%	70%	69%	70%	73%	71%	71%	71%	69%	<b>-2%</b>	<b>2%</b>
Actual Graduation Rate	<b>17.6%</b>	66%	68%	67%	70%	70%	71%	73%	74%	75%	77%	<b>2</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Over/Underperformance</b>	<b>8.0%</b>	-1.0	-1.0	-3.0	1.0	0.0	-2.0	2.0	3.0	4.0	8.0	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Faculty Res./Compensation</b>	<b>20.0%</b>												
Faculty Resources Rank		173	161	159	115	102	118	116	108	106	109	<b>-3</b>	<b>64</b>
% of Classes < 20	<b>NA</b>	29%	32%	31%	38%	39%	38%	39%	45%	42%	42%	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>
% of Classes > 50	<b>8.0%</b>	13%	9%	10%	8%	7%	7%	7%	7%	6%	6%	<b>0</b>	<b>7%</b>
Faculty Compensation	<b>7.0%</b>											----	----
% Faculty with Terminal Degree	<b>3.0%</b>										93%		
Student Faculty Ratio	<b>1.0%</b>	15/1	15/1	15/1	15/1	14/1	14/1	14/1	14/1	14/1	14/1	<b>0</b>	<b>-1</b>
% Full-Time Faculty	<b>1.0%</b>	70%	72%	74%	75%	74%	75%	74%	73%	77%	77%	<b>0</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Student Excellence</b>	<b>10.0%</b>												
Average ACT	<b>7.7%</b>	24-29	24-29	25-29	25-29	25-29	24-29	25-29	24-29	24-29	24-29	<b>0-0</b>	<b>0-0</b>
Fresh Top 10% of HS Class	<b>2.2%</b>	34%	32%	34%	32%	35%	37%	34%	34%	34%	37%	<b>3</b>	<b>3%</b>
Acceptance Rate	<b>NA</b>	74%	78%	60%	55%	81%	91%	63%	71%	73%	71%	<b>2%</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Financial Resources</b>	<b>10.0%</b>												
Financial Resources Rank		136	133	133	141	130	117	113	112	121	128	<b>-7</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Alumni Giving</b>	<b>5.0%</b>												
Alumni Giving Rank		154	156	157	132	112	114	139	175	184	168	<b>16</b>	<b>-14</b>
Alumni Giving Rate		10%	9%	9%	10%	12%	11%	9%	6%	6%	6%	<b>0</b>	<b>-4%</b>

Numbers in Red=Negative Trend    Numbers in Blue=Positive Trend    Numbers in Black=No Trend

U.S. News modified their factor weight distribution this year as can be seen in the Appendix. The weight for the Peer Assessment and High School Counselor Assessment scores ('Expert Opinion') dropped to 20% from 22.5%. The factor 'Outcomes' is composed of Social Mobility which takes into account the 6-year graduation rates of students who had Pell Grants and non-Pell Grant graduates separately. Grad and Retention Rates and Graduation Rate Performance are still indicators, but their weights have changed slightly. For the factor of 'Student Excellence', the variable Acceptance Rate was completely removed from the calculations, leaving Freshmen in top 10% and test score information. Financial Resource Rank and Alumni Giving were unchanged. For a more detailed description of the changes in the U.S. calculations please see the reference in the Appendix entitled 'How U.S. News Calculated the 2019 Best Colleges Rankings'.

Any declines in Loyola's scores had a relatively negligible effect on Loyola's overall score. In fact, Loyola's overall score (52), was the highest ever. The substantial gains in Graduation/Retention Rank outpaced the minimal decreases in Financial Resource Rank and Faculty Resource Rank.

The U.S. News 2018-19 ranking results shows some significant changes within Loyola's peer group. Table 2 below shows the U.S. News rankings trend for Loyola's peer members who were classified as "National Universities". Others Peer members classified as "Regional", Liberal Arts, etc. were not included.

**Table 2**  
Loyola University Peer Group National Rankings

Peer Institution Name	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Change	
											2009-18	2017-18
Tulane University	50	51	50	51	52	54	41	39	40	44	6	-4
Villanova								50	46	49	----	-3
Fordham University	61	56	53	58	57	58	66	60	61	70	-9	-9
American University	84	79	82	77	75	71	72	74	69	78	6	-9
Univ. of San Diego	110	94	97	92	91	95	89	86	90	85	25	5
<b>Loyola University</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>14</b>
Marquette University	84	75	82	83	75	76	86	86	90	89	-5	1
University of Denver	84	86	82	83	91	88	86	86	87	96	-12	-9
Illinois Institute of Tech.	106	111	111	113	109	116	108	103	103	96	10	7
Univ. of San Francisco	121	117	119	106	117	106	108	107	110	96	25	14
St. Louis University	88	86	90	92	101	99	96	96	94	106	-18	-12
Duquesne University	128	120	119	120	121	116	115	124	120	119	9	1
DePaul University	Tier 3	136	132	134	121	121	123	124	120	119	----	1
Catholic University	121	120	119	120	121	116	123	124	120	129	-8	-9
St. John's University	Tier 3	143	152	147	152	145	153	164	165	152	----	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 no rank

Marked drops since last year were experienced by Fordham, American, Catholic University (-9), and St. Louis (-12). Other universities that dropped by lesser degrees were Tulane (-4) and Villanova (-3). On the other hand, increases were experienced by the University of San Francisco (+14) and St. John's University (+13). The University of San Francisco and Loyola had the greatest increases in rankings of all of the Peer Group National Universities.

Loyola's 2018-19 overall rank of 89 places Loyola in the upper half of its peer group. In addition, the gap between Loyola and top ranked peer group school has decreased from 63 to 45. Last year Loyola was 9<sup>th</sup> in the list of peer group rankings. This year Loyola climbed to 6<sup>th</sup>.

Tables 3-6 shows Loyola's peer group scores for total score, peer assessment, graduation and retention, and selectivity. These tables are very consistent with the pattern found in Table 2. Nearly every table places Loyola in the upper half of its peer group

Table 3 shows Loyola's U.S. News Peer Group total score results for the past ten years. Every peer institution in Loyola's Peer Group increased their total score from 2009 to 2018. The range of improvement in total score was from 7 to 16 (average increase of 11.3). Loyola experienced a gain of 16, almost 5 more than the Peer average increase. Loyola, along with the University of San Francisco had the greatest improvement in ranking from 2009-18 (+16).

**Table 3**  
**Peer Group Total Score**

Peer Institution Name											Change	
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2009-18	2017-18
Tulane University	55	56	62	61	61	58	61	64	66	65	10	-1
Villanova								62	64	63	---	-1
Fordham University	50	53	60	58	60	57	54	59	60	57	7	-3
American University	43	47	52	52	53	52	51	54	57	55	12	-2
Univ. of San Diego	38	43	48	49	50	47	46	51	52	53	15	1
<b>Loyola University</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>3</b>
Marquette University	43	48	52	51	53	50	47	51	52	52	9	0
University of Denver	43	45	52	51	50	48	47	51	53	51	8	-2
Illinois Institute of Tech.	39	40	46	45	47	42	41	47	49	51	12	2
Univ. of San Francisco	35	39	44	46	45	44	41	46	48	51	16	3
St. Louis University	42	45	50	49	48	46	45	49	51	49	7	-2
Duquesne University	33	38	44	43	43	42	40	43	46	47	14	1
DePaul University	Tier 3	34	41	40	43	41	38	43	46	47	---	1
Catholic University	35	38	44	43	43	42	38	43	46	44	9	-2
St. John's University	Tier 3	32	37	38	37	35	31	35	37	40	---	3

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 4 shows Loyola's U.S. News Peer Group Assessment score results for the past ten years. All of Loyola's peer institutions showed little or no change from 2017 to 2018. Moreover, there was virtually no change for any institution from 2009-2018. Loyola did achieved the fifth highest Peer Assessment Score of all the National Peer Group institutions with a 3.0, but the range was small (2.6 to 3.5).

The peer assessment score along with graduation rates together comprise a substantial portion of the total weight – 15% for peer assessment and 18% for the graduation rate. 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. The current

weighting of the factors used by U.S. News suggests that significant shifts in overall rank may occur with changes in reputation scores and graduation rates (including under/over performance in graduation rates). Smaller changes are the result of the net total results from all other factors with less weight.

**Table 4**

Peer Institution Name	Peer Assessment Score										Change	
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2009-18	2017-18
Tulane University	3.3	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.5	0.2	0
American University	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.0	3.1	3.2	3.2	0.3	0
Villanova								3.2	3.2	3.2	---	0
Fordham University	3.1	3.1	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.1	0.0	-0.1
<b>Loyola University</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0</b>
Marquette University	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.0	0.1	-0.1
St. Louis University	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	0.1	0
DePaul University	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.9	0.1	0
Univ. of San Diego	2.6	2.8	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.9	0.3	0
Univ. of San Francisco	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.9	0.2	0
University of Denver	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.9	0.2	0
Illinois Institute of Tech.	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.8	0.1	0
St. John's University	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.8	0.1	0
Catholic University	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.7	-0.1	-0.1
Duquesne University	2.6	2.7	2.6	2.7	2.5	2.6	2.6	2.7	2.7	2.6	0.0	-0.1

Numbers in Red=Negative Trend; Numbers in Blue=Positive Trend

Numbers in Black=No Trend

Table 5 shows Loyola’s U.S. News Peer Group Graduation and Retention Rank results for the past ten years. For the past seven years Loyola’s improved graduation rates have increased Loyola’s graduation and retention rank from 110th to 74th. From 2017 to 2018 Loyola improved from 102nd to 74th. Showing substantial declines for 2017 to 2018 are Fordham (-15), Marquette (-20), University of Denver (-22), St. Louis (-15), and Catholic University (-39). The most improved rank was for the Illinois Institute of Technology (from 110th to 74th).

**Table 5**

**Graduation and Retention Rank**

Peer Institution Name											Change	
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2009-18	2017-18
Villanova University								31	30	31	---	-1
American University	76	76	71	69	74	73	74	72	70	66	10	4
<b>Loyola University</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>
Tulane University	73	76	76	85	83	86	74	72	66	74	-1	-8
Duquesne University	88	83	82	85	87	86	87	92	93	74	14	19
Illinois Institute of Tech.	99	100	104	106	101	108	111	102	110	74	25	36
Fordham University	53	59	56	63	65	67	70	68	70	85	-32	-15
Univ. of San Diego	76	76	82	82	83	82	80	82	83	85	-9	-2
Marquette University	60	65	66	62	59	67	70	60	73	93	-33	-20
DePaul University	120	120	117	119	114	108	106	106	104	95	25	9
Univ. of San Francisco	107	108	104	98	101	103	106	113	110	104	3	6
University of Denver	76	81	78	75	77	79	80	89	90	112	-36	-22
St. Louis University	76	83	90	91	91	94	99	100	97	112	-36	-15
St. John's University	138	148	152	155	163	166	165	177	180	155	-17	25
Catholic University	92	96	96	106	114	120	122	125	127	166	-74	-39

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 6 shows Loyola’s U.S. News Peer Group Selectivity Rank results for the past ten years. The selectivity factor is the combination of ACT scores (8% of total score), and top 10% of high school class (2% of total score). The majority of the peer group institutions showed an increase in Selectivity Rank over the past year. Loyola improved in Selectivity Rank moving from 96th last year to 94th this year.

**Table 6**  
**Selectivity Rank**

Peer Institution Name											Change	
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2009-18	2017-18
Tulane University	41	41	42	42	61	76	45	42	37	34	7	3
Villanova University								54	45	38	---	7
Fordham University	71	72	71	69	64	69	72	71	67	66	5	1
Illinois Institute of Tech.	70	66	66	67	61	64	66	63	60	68	2	-8
St. Louis University	90	79	75	78	77	71	69	74	76	71	19	5
Univ. of San Diego	81	72	80	69	72	71	72	85	80	80	1	0
University of Denver	74	74	75	75	81	83	78	76	76	89	-15	-13
Marquette University	84	82	80	87	72	81	88	92	96	89	-5	7
<b>Loyola University</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>-3</b>	<b>2</b>
American University	63	56	59	64	64	64	58	79	71	94	-31	-23
Duquesne University	148	146	145	136	137	142	137	151	140	130	18	10
DePaul University	121	127	121	118	121	113	128	140	136	143	-22	-7
Catholic University	163	172	201	171	159	157	169	178	165	143	20	22
Univ. of San Francisco	127	140	152	136	140	113	128	131	148	151	-24	-3
St. John's University	175	165	169	213	172	165	164	198	199	177	-2	22

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

Those with the greatest increases included Catholic University and St. John's each at 22, as well as Duquesne University (10) and Villanova (7). The 10-year trend shows American with the greatest decline in Selectivity Rank at -31 followed by the University of San Francisco at 24. Catholic University (20), St. Louis (19), and Duquesne (18) showed improvement.

The table below shows the 2018-19 results for AJCU members. The ranking results for the AJCU remains positive for this year. All but one (St. Louis) of the AJCU national universities was in the top 100. In the Regional Universities (Midwest) Creighton, Xavier, and John Carroll remained strong. In the North, Fairfield moved up to number 1 and Loyola Maryland and University of Scranton remained in the top 10. In the West, Santa Clara moved into the top spot and Loyola Marymount, Gonzaga, and Seattle remained strong as they maintained their rank for the most part. Overall, 6 AJCU schools remained the same, 9 showed positive gains, and 13 dropped in the rankings.

**Table 7**

## AJCU Peer Group

Category/Institution	Year/Rank	Number of Institutions	Year/Rank	Number of Institutions
<b><u>National Universities</u></b>	<b><u>2017</u></b>	<b><u>300</u></b>	<b><u>2018</u></b>	<b><u>301</u></b>
Georgetown	20		22	
Boston College	32		38	
Fordham	61		70	
<b>Loyola University Chicago</b>	<b>103</b>		<b>89</b>	
Marquette	90		89	
University of San Francisco	110	-	96	
St. Louis	94		106	
<b><u>Regional Universities (Midwest)</u></b>	<b><u>2017</u></b>	<b><u>165</u></b>	<b><u>2018</u></b>	<b><u>165</u></b>
Creighton	1		1	
Xavier	5		7	
John Carrol	6		4	
Rockhurst	11		23	
University of Detroit Mercy	19	-	25	
<b><u>Regional Universities (North)</u></b>	<b><u>2017</u></b>	<b><u>187</u></b>	<b><u>2018</u></b>	<b><u>187</u></b>
Fairfield	3		1	
Loyola College in Maryland	4		5	
University of Scranton	6		6	
Saint Josephs	11		12	
Le Moyne	17		17	
Canisius	22		23	
Saint Peters	97	-	81	
<b><u>Regional Universities (West)</u></b>	<b><u>2017</u></b>	<b><u>126</u></b>	<b><u>2018</u></b>	<b><u>127</u></b>
Santa Clara	2		1	
Loyola Marymount	3		3	
Gonzaga	4		4	
Seattle	7		8	
Regis	27	-	26	
<b><u>Regional Universities (South)</u></b>	<b><u>2017</u></b>	<b><u>142</u></b>	<b><u>2018</u></b>	<b><u>165</u></b>
Loyola University New Orleans	10		12	
Wheeling	41		38	
<b><u>National Liberal Arts Colleges</u></b>	<b><u>2017</u></b>	<b><u>229</u></b>	<b><u>2018</u></b>	<b><u>229</u></b>
Holy Cross	33	-	35	
Spring Hill	Tier 2		Tier 2	

Table 8 shows additional ranking categories U.S. News uses to supplement the overall rankings. Of note, Loyola's undergraduate rankings for Best Value School, A+ for B Students, Highest Amount of Need-Based Aid Awarded, On-line bachelor degree programs, High School Counselor Ratings, and Highest (4-Year) graduation rate.

**Table 8**  
**Undergraduate Rankings**

<b>Ranked Categories</b>	<b>LUC Rank/Total Number of Institutions</b>	<b>Percentile Rank</b>
National Universities Overall Rank	89/301	70.4
Best Online Bachelors Degree Program	14/357	96.1
Best Undergraduate Business Programs	79/503	84.3
Most Debt	33/120	72.5
Best Value Schools	60/145	58.6
Highest Amount of Need-based Aid Awarded	53/250	78.8
High School Counselor Rankings	73/281	74.0
Campus Ethnic Diversity	104/301	65.4
Freshmen Retention rate	140/301	53.5
Top 90 6-Year Graduation rates	75/90	----
Economic Diversity (% receiving Pell Grants)	163/297	45.1
Classes with Fewer than 20 Students	158/298	47.0
Highest 4-Year Grad Rate (all Schools)	181/1,251	85.5
A+ Schools for B Students	89/226	60.6
Top Schools for Veterans	53/105	49.5



## APPENDICES

### **2018-19 U.S. News and World Report Rankings Results Factors and Weights 2018-19**

Factor & Sub Factors	Factor Weight	Sub-Factor Weight	Item Weight	2018 Weight
<b><u>EXPERT OPINION</u></b>	<b><u>20%</u></b>			<b><u>22.5%</u></b>
Peer Assessment Score (out of 5) (2-Year Average)		75%	15	15
High School Counselor Assessment (out of 5) (3-Year Average)		25%	5	7.5
<b><u>OUTCOMES</u></b>	<b><u>35%</u></b>			<b><u>30%</u></b>
<b><u>Social Mobility</u></b>	<b><u>5%</u></b>			<b><u>Not included</u></b>
Pell Grant Graduation Rates		50%	2.5	N/A
Pell Grant Grad Rates compared with All Other Students		50%	2.5	N/A
<b><u>Grad &amp; Retention Rates</u></b>	<b><u>22%</u></b>			<b><u>22.5%</u></b>
Average Freshman Retention Rate		20%	4.4	4.5
6-year Graduation Rate		80%	17.6	18.0
<b><u>Graduation Rate Performance</u></b>	<b><u>8%</u></b>			<b><u>7.5%</u></b>
Graduation Rate Performance (Relative to the Predicted Graduation Rate)		*	8	7.5
<b><u>FACULTY RESOURCES</u></b>	<b><u>20%</u></b>			<b><u>20%</u></b>
Classes with under 50 Students		40%	8	8
Student to Faculty Ratio		5%	1	1
Percent of Faculty who are Full-time		5%	1	1
Faculty Compensation		35%	7	7
% Faculty with Terminal Degrees		15%	3	3
<b><u>STUDENT EXCELLENCE</u></b>	<b><u>10%</u></b>			<b><u>12.5%</u></b>
Fall Acceptance Rate		N/A	N/A	1.25
Freshmen in Top 10% of High School Class		22.5%	2.25	3.125
SAT/ACT 25th-75th Percentile		77.5%	7.75	8.125
<b><u>FINANCIAL RESOURCES</u></b>	<b><u>10%</u></b>			<b><u>10%</u></b>
Financial Resources Rank		*	10	10
<b><u>ALUMNI GIVING</u></b>	<b><u>5%</u></b>			<b><u>5%</u></b>
Alumni Giving Rate (2-year Average)		*	5	5
	<b>100%</b>		<b>100%</b>	

## How U.S. News Calculated the 2019 Best Colleges Rankings

Source: Morse, R., Brooks, E., & Mason, M. (2018, Sept 9). Retrieved from <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/how-us-news-calculated-the-rankings>

Deciding where to go to school is tough. Quality is more nebulous in higher education than goods like clothes and streaming music. But the 2019 edition of U.S. News's Best Colleges can at least make finding the right fit more manageable.

The rankings evaluate colleges and universities on 16 measures of academic quality. They allow you to compare at a glance the relative quality of U.S. institutions based on such widely accepted indicators of excellence as first-year student retention, graduation rates and the strength of the faculty. And as you check out colleges already on your short list, you may discover unfamiliar schools with similar metrics and thus broaden your options.

Along with the rankings is a searchable online directory of school profiles. Each one includes data used in the rankings, user reviews of schools, plus key characteristics on applying, academics, cost, student life, safety, services, post-graduate employment and salary outcomes. Because U.S. News surveys schools directly, much of these data are not readily accessible anywhere else.

Taken together, the rankings and profiles – combined with college visits, interviews and your own intuition – can be a powerful tool in your quest for the right college.

To make valid comparisons, schools are grouped by academic mission into 10 categories for 10 distinct rankings.

**National Universities** offer a full range of undergraduate majors, plus master's and doctoral programs, and emphasize faculty research. **National Liberal Arts Colleges** focus almost exclusively on undergraduate education. They award at least 50 percent 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. **Regional Colleges** focus on undergraduate education but grant fewer than 50 percent of their degrees in liberal arts disciplines; this category also includes schools that have small bachelor's degree programs but primarily grant two-year associate degrees. Regional Universities and Regional Colleges are further divided and ranked in four geographical groups: North, South, Midwest and West.

U.S. News followed the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education's Basic Classification system to determine schools' placement into the 2019 edition ranking categories. In February 2016, Carnegie released official updates – called the "2015 Update" – including the Basic system. U.S. News followed this 2015 Update starting with the 2017 Best Colleges rankings. No schools changed categories between last year's 2018 rankings and this year's 2019 edition.

The Carnegie classification, which higher education researchers use extensively, has been the basis of the Best Colleges ranking category system since the publication of our first rankings in 1983. The U.S. Department of Education and many higher education associations use the Carnegie system to organize or label their data. In some cases, the Carnegie classifications are

used to determine colleges' eligibility for grant money. In short, the Carnegie categories are the accepted standard in U.S. higher education.

### **How the Methodology Works**

Hard objective data alone determine each school's rank. We do not tour residence halls, chat with recruiters or conduct unscientific student polls for use in our computations.

The rankings formula uses exclusively statistical quantitative and qualitative measures that education experts have proposed as reliable indicators of academic quality. To calculate the overall rank for each school within each category, up to 16 metrics of academic excellence below are assigned weights that reflect U.S. News' researched judgment about how much they matter. For display purposes, we group these measures into the following indicators: outcomes, faculty resources, expert opinion, financial resources, student excellence and alumni giving.

U.S. News changed the weights of multiple indicators and dropped one indicator compared with the 2018 edition. The indicators, their weights in the ranking formula and an explanation of each are below.

### **Outcomes (35 percent, up from 30 percent in 2018)**

More than one-third of a school's rank comes from its success at retaining and graduating students within 150 percent of normal time (six years). It receives the highest weight 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 social mobility (5 percent), graduation and retention (22 percent), and graduation rate performance (8 percent).

**Social mobility:** New this year, we factored a school's success at promoting social mobility by graduating students who received federal Pell Grants (those typically coming 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). See below the two measures that factor into social mobility.

- Pell Grant graduation rates are weighted at 2.5 percent. This new ranking indicator measures the success of Pell Grant students on an absolute basis. To calculate this indicator, we use a school's six-year graduation rate among new fall 2011 entrants receiving Pell Grants. This assesses each school's performance graduating students from low-income backgrounds. A higher Pell Grant graduation rate scores better than a lower one.
- Pell Grant graduation rates compared with all other students are weighted at 2.5 percent. This additional new ranking factor compares each school's six-year graduation rate among Pell recipients who were new fall 2011 entrants graduating in 2017 with the six-year graduation rate among non-Pell recipients at the same school by dividing the former into the latter. The minority of schools whose Pell graduation rates are equal to or greater than non-Pell graduation rates score the highest. Altogether, this metric assesses each school's performance at supporting students from underserved backgrounds relative to all of its other students. The lower a school's Pell graduation rate relative to its non-Pell graduation rate, the lower it scores on this indicator.

Scores for the new social mobility indicators were then adjusted by the proportion of the entering class that was awarded Pell Grants because achieving a higher low-income student graduation rate is more challenging with a larger proportion of low-income students.

As a result of adding indicators for social mobility into the 2019 Best Colleges rankings, when combined with the graduation rate performance, U.S. News takes economic diversity into account in indicators that comprise 13 percent of the rankings.

Our other outcome measures include:

**Graduation and retention rates:** The higher the proportion of first-year students who return to campus for sophomore year and eventually graduate, the better a school is apt to be at offering the classes and services that students need to succeed. This has two components:

- The average six-year graduation rate is 17.6 percent, down from 18 percent in 2018.
- The average first-year retention rate is 4.4 percent, down from 4.5 percent in 2018.

The graduation rate indicates the average proportion of a graduating class earning a degree in six years or less; we considered first-year student classes that started from fall 2008 through fall 2011. First-year retention indicates the average proportion of first-year students who entered the school in the fall 2013 through fall 2016 and returned the following fall. Graduation is given four times more weight than retention. We weighted it at 22 percent total, down from 22.5 percent in 2018.

**Graduation rate performance:** We compared each college's actual six-year graduation rate to what we predicted for its fall 2011 entering class. The predicted rates were modeled from admissions data, proportion of undergraduates awarded Pell Grants, school financial resources, and national universities' math and science, or STEM, orientations. We weighted it at 8 percent, up from 7.5 percent in 2018.

The graduation and retention rate numerical ranking published on usnews.com for the 2019 Best Colleges is based on a school's total score in the following four ranking indicators: average six-year graduation rates, average first-year retention rates, Pell Grant graduation rates and Pell Grant graduation rates compared all other students. Previously, the graduation and retention rate numerical ranking published on usnews.com was based on a school's total score in these two ranking indicators: average six-year graduation and average first-year retention rates.

### **Faculty Resources (20 percent)**

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 2017-2018 academic year to assess a school's commitment to instruction: class size, faculty salary, faculty with the highest degree in their fields, student-faculty ratio and proportion of faculty who are full time.

- **Class size** is the most highly weighted faculty resource measure, at 8 percent. Schools score better the greater their proportions of smaller classes. Schools receive the most credit in this index for the proportion of their fall 2017 term undergraduate classes with fewer than 20 students. Classes with 20 to 29 students score second highest, 30 to 39

students third highest and 40 to 49 students fourth highest. Classes that have 50 or more students receive no credit.

- **Faculty salary** is weighted at 7 percent and is the average faculty pay, plus benefits, during the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic years, adjusted for regional differences in the cost of living using indexes from the consulting firm Runzheimer International.
- U.S. News also factors the **proportion of full-time faculty with the highest degree in their fields** (3 percent), **student-faculty ratio** (1 percent) and the **proportion of faculty who are full time** (1 percent).

### **Expert Opinion (20 percent, down from 22.5 percent in 2018)**

We survey top academics – presidents, provosts and deans of admissions – asking them to rate the academic quality of peer institutions with which they are familiar on a scale of 1 (marginal) to 5 (distinguished). To get another set of important opinions, U.S. News also surveyed nearly 24,400 counselors at public, private and parochial high schools from all 50 states and Washington, D.C, via emails provided to U.S. News by MDR, a division of Dun & Bradstreet.

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.

- The **peer assessment** survey averages results from spring 2017 and 2018. It is weighted at 15 percent for National Universities and National Liberal Arts Colleges; 20 percent for Regional Universities and Colleges (down from 22.5 percent in 2018). Of the 4,589 academics who were sent questionnaires, 35.5 percent responded. This response rate is down from the 40.4 percent response rate in spring 2017 and the 39 percent response rate to the surveys conducted in spring 2016.
- The **high school counselor assessment** survey averages results from spring 2016, 2017 and 2018. It is weighted at 5 percent (down from 7.5 percent in 2018) and only applies toward National Universities and National Liberal Arts Colleges. For the high school counselor survey, approximately half of the high school counselors (12,200) were asked to rate the schools in the National Universities ranking category and the other half were asked to rate schools in the National Liberal Arts category.

### **Financial Resources (10 percent)**

Generous per-student spending indicates that 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 2016 and 2017 fiscal years. Spending on sports, dorms and hospitals does not count.

### **Student Excellence (10 percent, down from 12.5 percent in 2018)**

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.

New for 2019, acceptance rate (1.25 percent in last year's ranking) has been completely removed from the ranking calculations to make room for the new social mobility indicators.

Also, we reduced the weight of the two remaining student excellence factors assessing the fall 2017 entering class – standardized tests and high school class standing.

**Standardized tests:** U.S. News factors admissions test scores for all enrollees who took the mathematics and evidence-based reading and writing portions of the SAT and the composite ACT. The SAT scores used in this year's rankings and published on usnews.com are for the new SAT test administered starting March 2016.

We weighted standardized tests at 7.75 percent, down from 8.125 percent in 2018.

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 summer 2017. 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 percent. This practice is not new; since the 1997 rankings, U.S. News has discounted under these circumstances because the effect of leaving students out could be that lower scores are omitted. U.S. News also footnotes schools that declined to tell U.S. News whether all students with SAT and ACT test scores were represented.

If the combined percentage of the fall 2017 entering class submitting test scores is less than 75 percent of all new entrants, its combined SAT/ACT percentile distribution value used in the rankings was discounted by 15 percent. U.S. News has also applied this policy in previous editions of the rankings.

**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 percent of their high school classes. For Regional Universities and Regional Colleges, we used the proportion of those who graduated in the top quarter of their high school classes.

We weighted this at 2.25 percent, down from 3.125 percent in 2018.

### **Alumni Giving (5 percent)**

This is the average percentage of living alumni with bachelor's degrees who gave to their school during 2015-2016 and 2016-2017. Giving measures student satisfaction and post-graduate engagement.

### **Assigning Ranks**

The weighted, normalized values across all 16 indicators are summed and transformed so that each eligible school receives an overall score between 0 and 100, with the top performer scoring 100. Finally, colleges and universities are ranked against their peers in descending order of their overall scores, with tied scores producing tied rankings. Schools placing in the top 75 percent display their individual rank on usnews.com. For lower-performing schools, U.S. News made an editorial decision to only display the bottom quartile ranking range in that ranking category.

### **Data Sources**

Most colleges report the data directly to U.S. News. This year, 92 percent of ranked institutions returned their statistical information during the spring 2018 data collection window.

For quality assurance, rankings data that schools reported to U.S. News were algorithmically compared against previous years' submissions and third-party sources. Respondents were required to review, revise and verify any flagged data in order to submit their surveys. Afterward, the veracity of the data submitted was rigorously reviewed by U.S. News data analysts and subject to further requests for schools to confirm or revise data.

We obtained missing data from the Council for Aid to Education (alumni giving rates) and the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (finances, faculty, SAT and ACT, and graduation and retention rates). U.S. News uses estimates, which are not displayed, in the ranking calculation when schools fail to report ranking indicator data points that are not available from these sources. Missing data are reported as "N/A" on usnews.com. Schools that refused to fill out the U.S. News survey altogether are footnoted as nonresponders.

In total, U.S. News has collected data on more than 1,800 independently regionally accredited institutions. While data for all schools appear on usnews.com, just shy of 1,400 schools were ranked.

### **Unranked Schools**

In total, 126 colleges are listed as unranked. This designation most typically owes to one of two main reasons:

- They are in a Carnegie Classification that U.S. News has not included in its ranking categories. These include 85 highly specialized schools in arts, business and engineering.
- They reported not using either SAT or ACT scores in admissions decisions for first-time, first-year, degree-seeking applicants.

Note: Schools with test-optional or test-flexible admissions policies still use these SAT and ACT scores in their admissions process, if prospective students provide them, and those schools are included in the rankings. Many schools not using standardized tests at all primarily administer nontraditional degree-completion programs targeted toward midcareer adults.

In very rare cases, schools display as unranked because their total enrollment is under 200 undergraduate and graduate students, they received fewer than 10 cumulative peer assessment ratings in the 2017 and 2018 surveys, or other narrow reasons.

Separate from those that are unranked, U.S. schools that award bachelor's degrees are excluded entirely from the Best Colleges section of usnews.com if they are only nationally accredited or have no accreditation, are branch campuses whose accreditation is through a parent institution or are graduate schools that only award bachelor's degrees through degree-completion programs.

Check out usnews.com in the coming year, since we may add content to the Best Colleges pages as we obtain additional information. And as you mine these tables for insights – where your SAT or ACT scores might win you 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.