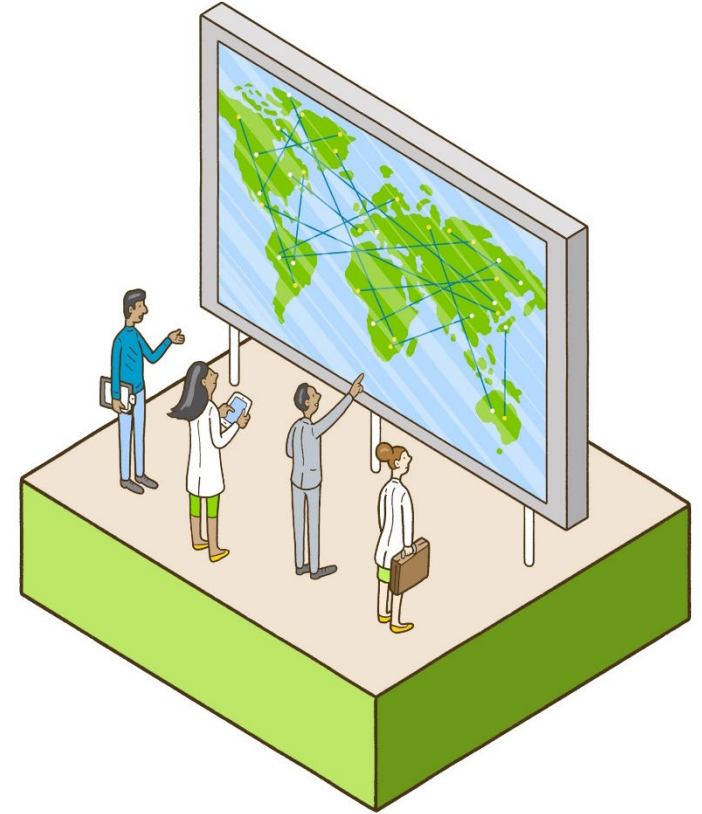# U.S. News & World Report:
2024 Best Colleges Rankings
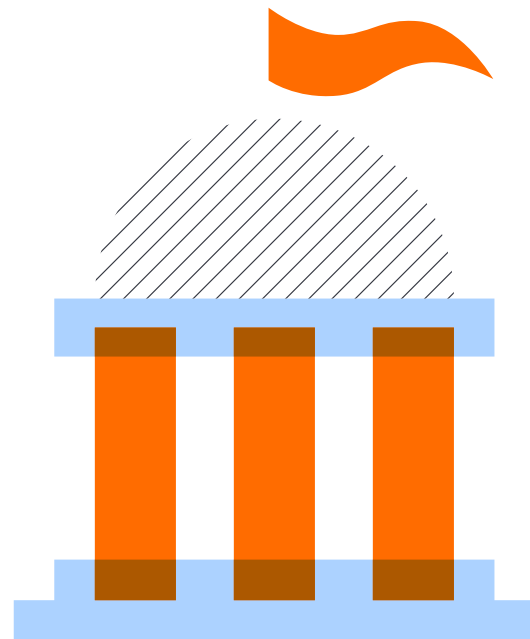## Methodology Quick Guide

Introduction

University rankings vary significantly, with numerous global and regional ranking organizations offering a diverse array of focuses, algorithms, methodologies, and data sources. It's important to recognize that each university has its distinct mission and purpose, while each ranking report or organization has its unique niche and set of indicators that evolve over time. Understanding these differences is essential for aligning your institution's strategy with relevant rankings.

Recognizing the importance of evolving formulas and indicators over time, U.S. News & World Report has made significant methodological changes to the 2024 Best Colleges ranking "by dropping five longstanding factors, modifying its weights of several other factors, and introducing a few new ones." They also increased the emphasis on how often students from all socioeconomic backgrounds earned degrees and took advantage of information on graduate outcomes that was not available until recently.

This guide offers a concise overview of the national ranking and its new methodology.

For further exploration into the 2024 Best Colleges ranking, visit:
https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/us-news-ranks-best-colleges

ELSEVIER

Ranking organization:
US News & World Report

Ranking report:
Best Colleges Rankings

Report focus:
National: United States four-year bachelor's degree-granting institutions

Stated goal:
U.S. News ranks for best quality as well as for best value. To help university-bound students make one of the most important decisions of their lives, recognizing that the investment in a college education could profoundly affect career opportunities, earning power and quality of life. Their goal is to provide potential students with a source of comprehensive data — information that lets them compare one school with another and find the differences that they care about most.

Scope:
Nearly 1,500 institutions in the United States

Data sources:
- Third-party sources and self-reported data by schools to U.S. News in alignment with what they recently reported to the government and/or following Common Data Set (CDS) initiative guidance.
- Elsevier's Scopus Data is used for the measurement of faculty research. Faculty research was not included in the previous ranking methodology. *The data will be applied only for National Universities.*

Timing:
Annually (September)

US News & World Report Best Colleges 2024
ranking methodology
Last updated: September 22, 2023

Source: https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/ranking-criteria-and-weights
Website accessed on: 19 September 2023

U.S.News & WORLD REPORT

U.S. News first places each school into a category based on its mission and, in some cases, its geographic region of the U.S. (North, South, Midwest and West).

National Universities
- Institutions focused on research & offers several doctoral programs
- **19 factors** used to measure academic excellence using
- Each indicator is assigned a weight (expressed as a percentage) based on U.S. News' researched judgments about which measures of quality matter most.

National Liberal Arts Colleges
- Institutions focused almost exclusively on undergraduate education and award at least 50% of their degrees in the arts and sciences.
- **13 factors** of academic quality

Regional Universities & Regional Colleges
- Institutions compared with other schools in the same group and region
- **13 factors** of academic quality

Each school's ranking factors are calculated and compared with the mean & standard deviation values of other schools to create a normalized score. These normalized scores were weighted and summed to arrive at each school's final overall score.

Ranking factor	Which ranking?	% Universities	% Colleges
Borrower debt	All	5%	5%
College grads earning more than a high school grad (new)	All	5%	5%
Faculty research (four new factors based on bibliometric data in partnership with Elsevier) a. Citations per publication (Scopus data) b. Field-weighted citation impact (SciVal) c. The share of publications cited in the top 5% of the most cited journals. The metrics are extracted from SciVal based on Elsevier's Scopus Data d. The share of publications cited in the top 25% of the most cited journals. The metrics are extracted from SciVal based on Scopus Data	National universities only	4%	N/A
Faculty salaries	All	6%	8%
Financial resources	All	8%	8%
First-generation graduation rates (two new factors) a. First-generation graduation rates (2.5%) b. First-generation graduation performance (2.5%)	National universities only	5%	N/A
First-year retention rates	All	5%	5%
Full-time faculty	All	2%	3%
Graduation rates *(for schools without eligible data on ACT/SAT scores this factor raises to 27%)*	All	16%	16%
Graduation rate performance	All	10%	10%
Peer assessment	All	20%	20%
Pell graduation rates	All	3%	5.5%
Pell graduation performance	All	3%	5.5%
Standardized test scores *(based on the percentage of test scores submitted, recognizing changing requirements & trends. If no data, the 5% is added to Graduation rates)*	All	5%	5%
Student-faculty ratio	All	3%	4%

Learn more about university rankings

Discover how university rankings and research activities intertwine. While not the sole gauge of institutional reputation and academic excellence, rankings serve as benchmarks on national, regional, and global scales.

Delve into resources for a deeper understanding of ranking mechanisms and how to analyze and track research activities, crucial for advancing your ranking goals.

Online Rankings Topic Page:

https://beta.elsevier.com/academic-and-government/university-rankings-and-research-activities

Thank you