

From “Best College”

... to Best Fit

Rankings Alternative:
A new web-based college search tool
for students and parents

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Justifying the rankings:

“For families, the *U.S. News* rankings provide an excellent starting point because they offer the opportunity to judge the relative quality of institutions based on widely accepted indicators of excellence.

... the indicators include input measures that reflect a school’s student body, its faculty, and its financial resources, along with outcome measures that signal how well the institution does its job of educating students.”

5 Complaints about “the rankings”



- Presumptuous understanding of what is “best”

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- Presumptuous understanding of what is “best”
 - >retention (25%)
 - >financial resources (17%)
 - >entry scores (15%)
 - >faculty-student contact (9%)
 - >alumni support (5%)
 - >faculty attributes (4%)
 - >expert peer ratings (25%)

5 Complaints about “the rankings”

- Presumptuous understanding of what is “best”

Best Place?

or

Best Fit?

5 Complaints about “the rankings”

- Presumptuous understanding of what is “best”
- *Misleading sense of precision*

5 Complaints about “the rankings”

- Misleading sense of precision
 - >inherent unreliability of rankings
 - >margin of error in the underlying ratings?

5 Complaints about “the rankings”

- Presumptuous understanding of what is “best”
- Misleading sense of precision
- *Confusion of financial assets with educational quality*

5 Complaints about “the rankings”

- Confusion of financial assets with educational quality
 - >the more you spend the better you are?
 - >cost escalation is a desirable goal?

5 Complaints about “the rankings”

- Presumptuous understanding of what is “best”
- Misleading sense of precision
- Confusion of financial assets with educational quality
- *Barely about the student, not about learning*

5 Complaints about “the rankings”

- Barely about the student, not about learning
>entry scores:

Has this emphasis led to an “arms race”
in order to improve our rankings?

5 Complaints about “the rankings”

- Presumptuous understanding of what is “best”
- Misleading sense of precision
- Confusion of financial assets with educational quality
- Barely about the student, not about learning
- *Precludes comparison across institutional categories*



Are the

U.S. News Rankings

giving us what we want?

What is best ... for student learning?

- First-year seminars
- Writing across disciplines
- Learning communities
- Study abroad (semester, short-term)
- Community-based research / service learning
- Undergraduate research / senior projects
- Internships / meaningful on-campus employment
- Meaningful on-campus leadership



We need to design a system that best informs our potential students.