

US News and World Report—Best Colleges Rankings 2014

Summary Report to the Board of Trustees

September 2013

On September 10, 2013, *US News and World Report* (USNWR) released updated *Best Colleges* ranks. For the fourth consecutive year, Drake ranked 3rd in the Midwest region of regional universities (n = 147). Additional lists on which Drake appeared were the “Great Schools at Great Prices” list (11th in region) and “A+ Schools for B Students” (unranked list).

US News made some significant changes to the ranking methodology to place less emphasis on inputs and more on outcome measures. The weighting declined for peer assessment and student selectivity. The ranking for regional universities adds a graduation rate performance indicator, focusing on the difference between predicted and actual graduation rate.

Overall Rank

For the third time since 2002, Drake is in sole possession of 3rd place in the region (table 1). As has been the case for the past four years, Creighton and Butler hold spots 1 and 2, respectively (table 2).

Table 1: Drake Historical Rankings

Year	Ranking
2014	3
2013	3
2012	3
2011	3 (tied)
2010	3 (tied)
2009	5

Table 2: Top 5 in Midwest Region

Rank	
1	Creighton
2	Butler
3	Drake
4	Xavier
5	Bradley

Sub-Category Ranks

The factors that contribute to the *US News and World Report* rankings are listed in table 3, along with Drake’s rank on each factor among institutions in the Midwest region. Drake’s rankings improved on the Graduation and Retention Rate, Student Selectivity, and Financial Resources subscales.

Table 3: Summary of *US News* Component Rankings

Evaluative Area	Percent item Contributes to Overall Ranking	Ranking 2014	Ranking 2013	Ranking 2012	Ranking 2011	Ranking 2010
Peer Assess. of Academic Quality	22.5%	3	3	3	2	2
Graduation and Retention Rate	22.5%	3	6	6	6	8
Faculty Resources	20%	9	5	7	29	24
Student Selectivity	12.5%	2	3	2	4	3
Financial Resources	10%	22	26	35	35	31
Graduation Rate Performance	7.5%	N/A ¹				
Alumni Giving	5%	37	35	40	40	33

¹ Calculation has a ceiling effect for institutions with a high predicted graduation rate

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Drake's **Peer Assessment** remained at 3.9 this year and ranks in the top 10 of more than 621 master's institutions nationally.

Drake's **Graduation/Retention** rank improved to the highest level in the past five years. Drake's six-year graduation rate for the 2014 report is 74%, which is the same rate as 2013. Retention increased slightly from 87% to 88%, giving Drake an overall rank of 3rd in our region.

Drake's **Faculty Resources** rank moved down from 5th to 9th in our region (although up from 29th in 2011). The Faculty Resource rank is comprised of: percent of classes under 20 students, percent of classes with 50 or more students, faculty compensation, professors' highest degree, student-faculty ratio, and percent of faculty full-time. One change in the publicly available data is a slight decrease in the percent of classes under 20 students, to 50% (down from 52% the previous year). In Fall 2010, First Year Seminar sections were restricted to maximum enrollment of 19 students. In addition, Drake has been able to increase faculty compensation.

Student Selectivity - Drake placed 2nd best on the Student Selectivity rank in the Midwest region. The Student Selectivity rank includes: SAT/ACT test scores (25th – 75th percentile = 24 – 29), first-year students in the top 25% of High School Class (75%), and acceptance rate (66%).

Financial Resources - Drake continues to show consistent improvement in the rankings, moving from 26th to 22nd in our region. This is the highest ranking since 2005. The Financial Resources rank includes the 2-year average of per student spending on instruction, research, student services and related educational expenditures. Recent adjustments through Business and Finance allow us to now include amounts expended for research.

Graduation Rate Performance – This new scale measures the difference between the six-year graduation rate for the Fall 2006 cohort and US News' predicted graduation rate. Ranking institutions based on the magnitude of the difference between predicted and actual graduation rate is difficult, given the variable nature of the predicted rates (which range from 50% – 80% for the top ten ranked schools). Of the top ten institutions overall, half have graduation rates below expected. Drake's graduation rate (74%) was one percent below the expected rate (75%) based on student characteristics.

Alumni Giving Rate - Drake moved from 35th to 37th in the region. This subscale is based on the 2-year average of living alumni who received a bachelor's degree and gave to Drake (12%).

Use of Results

The changing methodology for the US News and World Report rankings is consistent with the public desire for greater transparency regarding the impact of higher education. These data affirm Drake's ability to attract, retain, and graduate high quality students. While encouraging, the results represent one set of benchmarks for Drake. The *Drake University Strategic Plan 2013-2017* offers an opportunity to focus on additional ways that Drake is producing measurable outcomes that are valuable to students and society.