

Office of Institutional Research and Assessment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

US News and World Report – Best Colleges Rankings 2016

On September 9, 2015, *US News and World Report* (USNWR) released updated *Best Colleges* rankings. For the seventh consecutive year, Drake ranked 3rd in the Midwest region of regional universities (n = 149). Additional lists on which Drake appeared were the “Great Schools at Great Prices” list (10th in region), “A+ Schools for B Students” (unranked list), “A Strong Commitment to Undergraduate Teaching” (5th in the region), and “Best Colleges for Veterans” (3rd in region).

US News continued with the ranking methodology used last year, which places less emphasis on inputs and more on outcome measures. Compared to 2013 rankings, 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

Consistent with rankings for the past five years, Drake is in sole possession of 3rd place in the region (table 1). As has been the case for the past six years, Creighton and Butler hold spots 1 and 2, respectively (table 2).

Table 1: Drake Historical Rankings

Year	Ranking
2016	3
2015	3
2014	3
2013	3
2012	3
2011	3 (tied)
2010	3 (tied)

Table 2: Top 5 in Midwest Region

Rank	
1	Creighton
2	Butler
3	Drake
4	Bradley
5	Valparaiso

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 Financial Resources and Alumni Giving subscales.

Table 3: Summary of *US News* Component Rankings

Evaluative Area	Percent item Contributes to Overall Ranking	Ranking 2016	Ranking 2015	Ranking 2014	Ranking 2013	Ranking 2012	Ranking 2011
Peer Assess. of Academic Quality	22.5%	3	3	3	3	3	3(tied)
Graduation and Retention Rate	22.5%	7	5	3	6	6	6
Faculty Resources	20%	12	6	9	5	7	29
Student Selectivity	12.5%	2	2	2	3	2	4
Financial Resources	10%	9	15	22	26	35	35
Graduation Rate Performance	7.5%	N/A ¹	N/A	N/A			
Alumni Giving	5%	28	37	37	35	40	40

Drake's **Peer Assessment** was 3.9 this year, which places Drake as tied for the 7th rank of 618 master's institutions nationally. This year the peer score uses two sets of results (spring 2014 and 2015) to reduce year-to-year volatility.

Drake's **Graduation/Retention** rank remains consistent. Drake's six-year graduation rate for the 2016 report is 78%, which is five percentage points above the 2015 report graduation rate. The 88% retention rate is one percentage point higher than previous year rates.

Drake's **Faculty Resources** rank is 12th in our region. 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.

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

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 = 25 – 30), first-year students in the top 25% of High School Class (71%), and acceptance rate (69%).

Financial Resources - Drake continues to show consistent improvement in the rankings, moving from 15th to 9th in our region. 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 2008 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 61% – 79% for the top ten ranked schools). Of the top ten Midwest regional institutions, half have graduation rates below expected. Drake’s graduation rate (78%) was two percentage points above the expected rate (76%) based on student characteristics.

Alumni Giving Rate - Drake tied for 28th 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% - same as 2015 report). The change in position in relation to other Midwest institutions is due to decreased giving rate at other institutions.

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.