

Office of Institutional Research and Assessment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

US News and World Report – Best Colleges Rankings 2017 September 14, 2016

On September 13, *US News and World Report* (USNWR) released updated *Best Colleges* rankings. For the eighth consecutive year, Drake ranked 3rd in the Midwest region of regional universities (n = 171). Additional lists on which Drake appeared were the “A+ Schools for B Students” (unranked list), “Best Colleges for Veterans” (3rd in region), and “Highest 6-year Graduation Rates (4th in region)

US News continued with a very similar ranking methodology compared to last two years, which places less emphasis on inputs and more on outcome measures. The ranking for regional universities adds a graduation rate performance indicator, focusing on the difference between predicted and actual graduation rate. A few notable changes for 2017 rankings include:

- As a result of the 2016 Carnegie Classification update, about 1 in 8 schools are ranked in a different category than in the past.
- A change in the faculty resources score is a more nuanced class size index that examines multiple ranges of class sizes.
- For schools that did not report all scores, U.S. News reduced the value of ACT scores in the Best Colleges ranking model by 15 percent.

Overall Rank

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

Table 1: Drake Historical Rankings

2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Creighton	Creighton	Creighton	Creighton	Creighton	Creighton	Creighton
Butler	Butler	Butler	Butler	Butler	Butler	Butler
Drake	Drake	Drake	Drake	Drake	Drake (tied)	Drake (tied)
Valpo	Bradley	Xavier	Valpo	Valpo	Xavier	Xavier
Xavier	Valpo	Bradley	Xavier	Xavier	Valpo	Valpo

Sub-Category Ranks

The factors that contribute to the *US News and World Report* rankings are listed in table 2, along with Drake's rank on each factor among institutions in the Midwest region. Drake's rankings improved on the Faculty Resources and Financial Resources subscales.

Table 2: Summary of *US News* Component Rankings

Evaluative Area	Percent item Contributes to Overall Ranking	Ranking 2017	Ranking 2016	Ranking 2015	Ranking 2014	Ranking 2013	Ranking 2012
Peer Assess. of Academic Quality	22.5%	3	3	3	3	3	3
Graduation and Retention Rate	22.5%	10	7	5	3	6	6
Faculty Resources	20%	7	12	6	9	5	7
Student Selectivity	12.5%	3	2	2	2	3	2
Financial Resources	10%	7	9	15	22	26	35
Graduation Rate Performance	7.5%	N/A ¹	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Alumni Giving	5%	35	33	37	37	35	40

Drake's **Peer Assessment** was 3.9 this year, which places Drake as tied for the 5th rank among 653 master's institutions nationally. This year the peer score used two sets of results (spring 2015 and 2016) to reduce year-to-year volatility.

Drake's **Graduation/Retention** rank remains consistent. Drake's six-year graduation rate for the 2009 cohort is 75%. Table 3 provides longitudinal data on retention, predicted graduation rate, and six-year graduation rate.

¹ Calculation has a ceiling effect for institutions with a high predicted graduation rate, negating the meaning of ranking.

Table 3

US News Reporting Year	Average First-year Retention Rate	Predicted Graduation Rate	Actual Graduation Rate
2017	88%	76% (09 cohort)	75%
2016	89%	76% (08 cohort)	78%
2015	86%	75% (07 cohort)	73%
2014	86%	75% (06 cohort)	74%

Drake’s **Faculty Resources** rank is 7th in our region. The Faculty Resource rank is comprised of: class size index (proportion of undergraduate classes with <20, 20-29, 30-39, and 40-49 students), faculty compensation, proportion of faculty with the highest degree in the field, student-faculty ratio, and proportion of full-time faculty.

Student Selectivity - Drake placed 3rd best on the Student Selectivity rank in the Midwest region. The Student Selectivity rank includes: SAT/ACT test scores (25th – 75th percentile = 24 – 30), first-year students in the top 25% of High School Class (69%), and acceptance rate (67%).

Financial Resources - Drake continues to show consistent improvement in the rankings, moving from 9th to 7th 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 Finance and Administration 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 2009 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 62% – 82% for the top ten ranked schools). Of the top ten Midwest regional institutions, six have graduation rates below expected. Drake’s graduation rate (75%) was one percentage point below the expected rate (76%) based on student characteristics (e.g., test scores, percent receiving Pell grants).

Alumni Giving Rate - Drake ranked 35th 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 previous two years).