

Princeton No. 1 in magazine's college ranking

Stanford places 5th, UC Berkeley 20th in disputed listings incorporated into guidebook

By Arlene Levinson
ASSOCIATED PRESS

For the second straight year, Princeton University is at the top of the annual campus rankings by U.S. News & World Report, ahead of Harvard and Yale.

California Institute of Technology is ranked fourth; Stanford is tied for fifth place, and the University of California at Berkeley is ranked 20th.

The list, released yesterday, appears amid growing criticism that it misses the point of college — learning. Even the No. 1 school says rankings aren't everything.

"While we appreciate the recognition in these rankings, we don't put much stock into this particular ranking, or to others like it," said Princeton spokeswoman Marilyn Marks. "There are issues of methodology and subjectivity, and we don't believe any ranking can capture whether any institution is appropriate for any individual student."

U.S. News counters that the editors' year-round effort to get the rankings right includes regular consultation with top college officials nationwide. It says complaints from schools are few.

More importantly, consumers understand the list is only a starting point, said Peter Cary, U.S. News special projects editor.

"The hundreds of thousands of

Top 25 universities

U.S. News & World Report uses its own formula to rate more than 1,400 four-year institutions. While the magazine sorts schools into several categories, the most prestigious is culled from the 249 schools the magazine calls "national universities-doctoral." The scoring system produces ties, hence the repeated numbers.

The top 25 national universities, according to the magazine:

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| 1. Princeton University | 14. Washington University in St. Louis |
| 2. Harvard University | 16. Brown University |
| 2. Yale University | 16. Johns Hopkins University |
| 4. California Institute of Technology | 18. Emory University |
| 5. Massachusetts Institute of Technology | 19. University of Notre Dame |
| 5. Stanford University | 20. University of California at Berkeley |
| 5. University of Pennsylvania | 21. Vanderbilt University |
| 8. Duke University | 21. University of Virginia |
| 9. Columbia University | 23. Carnegie Mellon University |
| 9. Dartmouth College | 23. Georgetown University |
| 9. University of Chicago | 25. University of Michigan |
| 12. Northwestern University | |
| 12. Rice University | |
| 14. Cornell University | |

Source: Associated Press

people who buy our guidebook are not buying it to find out who's No. 1," Cary said, "They're really buying these guidebooks to mine the data, to find out what college is right for them."

The rankings, first presented in 1983, were released on the magazine's Web site. They'll also be available in the magazine and a

more comprehensive book, "America's Best Colleges," beginning Monday.

Harvard and Yale tied for second behind Princeton in the magazine's premier category of "national universities-doctoral." The 249 schools in that group offer an array of undergraduate majors, master's and doctoral programs.

Sorting schools into three other categories, the magazine also ranks liberal arts colleges, universities that chiefly offer bachelor's and master's degrees, and schools that focus on undergraduates but have high enrollments in professional programs like nursing and teaching. The last two categories are broken down by region.

Schools are placed into categories, then graded by a numeric formula figuring in such factors as selectivity, class size, faculty salaries, graduation rates and alumni giving.

The biggest part of the equation — 25 percent — is academic reputation. For that, campus executives are asked to rate rival institutions.

Amy Graham, who ran the U.S. News' rankings for 18 months in the late 1990s, co-wrote an article for the latest issue of the Washington Monthly, criticizing the rankings as shallow.

"The basic problem is some of the criteria they use are just measuring the wrong thing," she said in an interview. The high-scoring schools tend to be those that produce a lot of research, with money and faculty salaries to match, she said.

The rankings need to factor in evidence of education, including student satisfaction, she said.