

Ranking Systems in Higher Education: How They Work and Why They Matter (EDHI 677)

**College of Education, University of Maryland
Winter, 2014
Benjamin 3315**

Faculty

Dr. KerryAnn O'Meara
Associate Professor, Higher Education
3112C Benjamin
(301) 405-5579
komeara@umd.edu
Office hours by appointment

Course Overview and Purpose

Each year college administrators and faculty hold their breath as institution, college, and department rankings are released. Did they move up or down? What will this mean for their programs and the resources they can attract? At the same time, many students begin their higher education experience with little to no knowledge of how college programs are ranked by such magazines as *USNWR*. Rather students care about their college's location within 100 miles of their home, the cost, and career placement upon graduation. Increasingly, students log-in to websites that rank party schools, professors, and fraternities and sororities. Yet what is being ranked, rated, or categorized varies greatly, and has differing levels of consequence for various stakeholders of higher education: the student, the parent, the faculty member, the college president or provost, the alum, the donor, the higher education researcher, the community member nearby and the state legislator.

This course considers how the dominant and alternative ranking systems work and how they shape higher education structures and cultures. We will use the somewhat narrow field of ranking systems as the starting point to consider how to measure the quality of higher education. We will examine the history, criteria, field and measurement issues, and consequences of domestic and world ranking and rating systems. We will examine the criteria used in ranking systems for their connection to research on students, faculty, and higher education organizations, and how rankings can be used to reflect and legitimize the status quo, or to shed light on new and distinct contributions of higher education institutions.

Each student will join a team that creates their own ranking system to rank 10 institutions on an important, but currently unranked aspect of their mission. Students will utilize higher education research to support the criteria they choose and analyze publicly available data to create their ranking.

Speakers for this class will include representatives from U.S. News and World Report, USDE, Washington Monthly, AASCU, UMD-IRPA, and other experts on rankings.

Learning Objectives

Learning objectives for this course are that by the end of the course students:

- Understand the history and evolution of ranking systems in higher education
- Have working knowledge of and are able to critique how these ranking systems identify fields, determine criteria, collect data, and assign ranks
- Are able to identify and critique the impact ranking systems have on institutional and individual behavior; the consequences of the criteria for how institutions and their stakeholders behave
- Are able to design their own ranking system, use their system to rank 10 institutions, defend the criteria, methods, and consequences of their ranking system using research on higher education, and make a persuasive argument for why their new ranking system improves on key aspects of current ranking systems

Required Texts

Articles listed on the syllabus are available on the Canvas site for this class. There will also be handouts provided in class.

Meeting Times

This course will meet for nine sessions over five days. In addition, students will complete ten “lab hours” by working on team projects, classroom assignments, and independent work assigned in class. The course meeting times are as follows:

January 6, Monday

Session 1: 9am-1pm

Session 2: 2-6pm

January 9, Thursday

Session 3: 9am-1pm

Session 4: 2-6pm

January 13, Monday

Session 5: 9am-1pm

Session 6: 2-6pm

January 16, Thursday

Session 7: 9am-1pm

Session 8: 2-6pm

January 21, Tuesday

Session 9: 6-9pm

Course Assignments and Expectations

This course represents a relatively short but intense learning experience. Over three weeks we will meet together and work intensely in our nine class sessions. You will also be expected to do ten additional hours in classroom assignments and in class projects, viewing relevant websites, videos, news stories, and reports. Each student is expected to prepare very thoroughly and carefully for each class session. As such the grade for this course will be distributed between three key areas—classroom preparation and assignments, reflective essays, and final team projects.

Classroom Assignments and In-Class Engagement (20%)

- Because this course relies heavily on classroom participation and interactive dialogue, it is essential for you to **attend all classes**. In the case of an absence caused by sickness, it is your responsibility to inform Dr. O’Meara of your absence via email and to connect with classmates to cover work covered during the absence. Attendance will influence participation grades. We will need to reconsider your enrollment in this class if you miss more than one class session. Missed classes should not be for work reasons. Students should be ready and prepared to start class at the beginning of each session. Repeated lateness will hurt the course grade. Please do not read email or work on other class assignments or projects during the class as it is important we all be fully present.
- **Student contributions to class discussion** should reveal a substantial familiarity with assigned readings, a capacity to analyze the issues and problems under discussion, and an ability to listen, incorporate, synthesize and constructively criticize the comments and work of classmates. Class members are encouraged to bring questions, issues, critiques, and insights from the readings and from professional experiences to every class.
- For each of the class sessions except the last one, there is a **classroom assignment** due. These classroom assignments are meant to focus student reading and prepare them for full participation in classroom discussions, debates, and other learning exercises. Students will then show they are prepared for class by engaging in classroom discussions and exercises, referring to their notes to assist them. Each classroom session the instructor will assign a grade for classroom participation of A, B, or unprepared. Please see the instructor if you have any questions about your participation grade at the end of each session.
- Rankings are constantly in the news. In order to stay up-to-date and cover a larger amount of news than we would be able to read individually, **each student will be assigned one “In the News” Brief**. These Briefs include small bundles of stories that emerged in the news over the last 1-2 years on some specific aspects of ranking systems. Students will each be assigned one of these topics in the pre-class phone conference, and be responsible for providing a 10 minute “Brief” to the class. See class session descriptions for when individual Briefs are assigned.

Reflective Essays (40%)

Each student will be required to submit **three** of the following six reflective essays (**Essay 2 and two others**). These essays should be completed in 4 pages, 1.5 spaced, Times New Roman, 12-point font. They must be submitted at the beginning of class on the day assigned in hard copy.

Reflective Essay One: Building on the articles for Sessions 1 and 2, discuss the history of the ranking systems and whom they were created to serve. Consider carefully their earlier purposes and then compare those to the way the system operates today. In doing so, integrate at least two theories or concepts from the Key Concepts Handout. Finally, imagine how the evolution of rankings might be different if they were created by a different set of organizations, or for different stakeholders and for different reasons. **Due January 6th**

Reflective Essay Two: Building on articles from Sessions 1-4, concisely summarize, and then critique the criteria and weights used by the USNWR ranking system. Be sure to base your critique on the most recent criteria and weights used by USNWR (visit website), as the criteria

and weights have changed over the last 5 years. Use evidence from the readings to discuss several strengths and weaknesses of the USNWR system, making sure your critique integrates and cites research on higher education. **Due January 9th**

Reflective Essay Three: Building on readings from Sessions 1-6, discuss the specific behaviors of institutions that are in active “striving mode.” In doing so, integrate at least two theories or concepts from the Key Concepts Handout. Be careful to distinguish between striving behaviors (what institutions, administrators and faculty are doing to move up) and consequences of those behaviors. What are the benefits for students, administrators and faculty of being in an institution in active striving mode? What are the likely negative aspects of being in a striving institution? **Due January 13th**

Reflective Essay Four: Building on readings from Sessions 1-6, consider the consequences that have been found from striving behavior. In doing so, integrate at least two theories or concepts from the Key Concepts Handout. Given this is a new area of research, document what class readings or outside readings suggest is known about consequences for institutional mission, for student engagement, equity and access, and faculty work-life. However, also acknowledge what is unknown or areas where further research is needed and suggest what some of that research might look like. **Due January 13th**

Reflective Essay Five: Building on readings from Sessions 1-8, consider the different stakeholders of ranking systems. In doing so, integrate at least two theories or concepts from the Key Concepts Handout. What are these different stakeholders getting and not getting from the existing ranking systems out there today? What purposes of higher education and criteria that could be important to these stakeholders are currently being ignored? How might such areas be measured in a future system? **Due January 16th**

Reflective Essay Six: Use Table B categories and questions to analyze one of the following alternatives to dominant ranking systems: the USDE rating system, the Voluntary System of Accountability/the College Portrait, Washington Monthly, Parchment Student Choice College Rankings. You may also suggest an alternative rating or ranking system to critique, but must have it approved. In addition to questions in Table B, include in your critique whether the criteria seem to be informed by research on higher education outcomes and purposes. **Due January 16th**

In addition to the course readings here are some great resources to consider as you make persuasive arguments:

IHEP Clearinghouse on Rankings

<http://www.ihep.org/Research/rankingsystemstopic.cfm>

Presentation by Ellen Hazelkorn

<http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/events/Are%20Rankings%20a%20Useful%20Transparency.pdf>

Grading Criteria for Essays	Points
Writing clarity, presentation, editing and grammar	1
Organization and focus	1

Critical analysis	1
Content analysis—major points are supported by details from the readings-facts, research findings, etc.	1
	4 Points

*Extra credit is provided for making these essays creative and integrating non-assigned reading.

4 points= A

3 points= B+

2 points= B

1 point= Fail

Final Team Project—Creating a Ranking System (40%)

Students' final project will be to create an original ranking system, using criteria they have selected. Each team project should:

1. Provide a ranking of 10 institutions using publicly available data.
2. Clearly identify criteria, weights, and methods of their ranking system.
3. Use class readings and importantly—higher education research-- to substantiate the importance of criteria and methods chosen (be sure to cite research in APA).
4. Identify the field of this ranking system.
5. Discuss the striving behavior this ranking system might catalyze: What kinds of institutional, faculty, or student behavior is it likely to catalyze?
6. Differentiate characteristics of the student ranking system from those of other ranking systems and explain the implications of these differences.
7. Argue persuasively as to why this ranking system is superior. Which stakeholders will it serve and how? Discuss the limitations of this system.
8. Use APA, be double spaced, normal margins, 12-point font, Times New Roman.
9. Be a minimum of 20 pages plus references and appendix.
10. Include a one-paragraph description of the role of each team member in the project, signed off by the entire team.

Final projects will be comprised of two parts: (1) 20 page paper, and (2) a 20 minute class presentation of the ranking system. Students will receive feedback on a proposal for the project in class on Thursday, **January 9th**. The feedback here will focus on the key ideas, criteria, sources of data, and field proposed. The presentation will occur on **January 21st** and will allow Dr. O'Meara and students to provide feedback that can be integrated into the final paper. Here the focus of feedback relates to how the ranking system is presented, and whether the criteria and methods are justified by solid higher education research. In order to meet winter deadlines for grades, **the team project paper is due in hard copy to Dr. O'Meara's CHESE box by January 23rd at 3pm.** An electronic copy should also be sent by the same time to komeara@umd.edu.

Grading Criteria for Final Projects	Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization, structure, and clarity of writing and presentation. 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment of higher education research to justify 	1.5

criteria, methods and field.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of critical analysis and reasoning for chosen criteria; consideration of field. 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effectiveness of comparison and contrast with extant ranking systems. 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective use of class feedback to improve the final product. 	.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creativity, innovation, and significance. 	1
TOTAL possible points	6

A/A+ = 6 points

B+/A =5 points

B=4 points

C/C+= 3 points

D/F=1-2 points

Policy on Incomplete Grades

A grade of incomplete requires the instructor's prior approval. I will restrict the grade of Incomplete to documented emergencies. Such emergencies are not based on work commitments; rather students should not take the course if work responsibilities make it clear at the beginning of the course that they will not be able to complete assignments by deadlines.

Course Evaluation

As a member of our academic community, you as a student have a number of important responsibilities. One of these responsibilities is to submit your course evaluations each term through CourseEvalUM in order to help faculty and administrators improve teaching and learning at Maryland. Please watch for the dates the system will open for evaluation of the semester and make a note of the link at which you can access the submission system: <https://www.courseevalum.umd.edu/>. I greatly appreciate your completing the course evaluations when the email invitation is sent to you.

Inclement Weather

Official closures and delays are announced on the campus website at umd.edu and snow phone line (301-405-SNOW), as well as on local radio and TV stations. If the university is closed we will not be having class. I will also contact everyone by email to confirm the class is canceled, and to schedule make-up sessions within a few days of the cancelled sessions.

Academic Integrity Statement from Student Honor Council

The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit: <http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatis.html>

Academic Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities

Both in compliance with and in the spirit of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), I would like to work with students who have a disability that impacts learning in this class.

Students with a documented disability should contact me within the first week of the course to discuss appropriate accommodations. The University is responsible for providing appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities, and has services available for both staff and students to help support their ongoing success. Additional information and support is available through Disability Support Services at 301-314-7682 or <http://www.inform.umd.edu/dss/>.

Religious Observances

The University System of Maryland's policy on "Assignments and Attendance on Dates of Religious Observance" states that students should not be penalized because of observances of their religious beliefs; students shall be given an opportunity, whenever feasible, to make up within a reasonable time any academic assignment that is missed due to individual participation in religious observances. If you have any religious observance that comes into conflict with our time together or your work in this course, please let me know so that I can plan accordingly.

Copyright

Course materials that exist in a tangible medium, such as written or recorded lectures, Power Point presentations, handouts and tests, are copyright protected (e.g. O'Meara, 2014). Students may not copy and distribute such materials except for personal use and with the instructor's permission.

Class Sessions

Session One - January 6: In this session we consider the history of ranking systems in the last half century and what is meant by striving for prestige. What were some of the key social, political and economic forces that influenced the emergence of rankings? We will also compare and contrast how competition operates in higher education versus other fields. We will discuss key concepts and theories in organizational behavior. Such concepts can be helpful in framing the role ranking systems play in higher education and challenges in measuring the quality of higher education.

Classroom Assignment #1:

The readings for this class focus on the history and social context of rankings, as well as organizational concepts we can use to understand how rankings are functioning within higher education. As you read for this session, please take notes in response to the following questions:

- Were the first rankings developed for graduate or undergraduate institutions?
- What do you notice about the characteristics of the individuals and institutions involved in early rankings?
- Have you ever been a part of a striving institution as described in the table at the end of the O'Meara piece? Use the tables in this reading to identify three concrete ways in which your institution was or was not striving.
- Review the Key Concepts sheet. Identify 3 concepts that seem relevant to how you chose your undergraduate, MA or Ph.D program. For example, what was the field you chose from? Was there anchoring or aspects of assessment of prestige involved in your choice?

Webster, D. S. (1992). Reputational rankings of colleges, universities, and individual disciplines and fields of study, from their beginnings to the present. *Higher Education Handbook of Theory and Research: Vol. VIII*, 234-304.

- O'Meara, K. (2007). Striving for what? Exploring the pursuit of prestige. J.C. Smart (ed.). *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, Vol. XXII, 121-179.
- Birnbaum, R. (1983). *Maintaining Diversity in Higher Education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. (Chapters 1 & 2).
- Cutright, M. (2003). Untitled. [Review of the book *In Pursuit of Prestige*]. *Journal of Higher Education*, 74(2), 238-240.
- Winston, G. C. (2000). *The Positional Arms Race in Higher Education* (Discussion Paper No. 54). Williamstown, MA: Williams Project on the Economics of Higher Education.
- Oliver, C. (1991). Strategic responses to institutional processes. *Academy of Management Review*, 16(1) 145-179
- Morphew, C. C. & Huisman, J. (2002). Using institutional theory to reframe research on academic drift. *Higher Education in Europe*, 27(4), 491-506.

Session Two - January 6: In this session we carefully consider what is ranked, rated, categorized, and why in USNWR and other dominant ranking systems. We will use a rubric created for this class (see Table B) to analyze USNWR and other influential U.S. based ranking systems and the criteria and weights they use to measure performance.

Classroom Assignment #2: Every student will be assigned a different ranking system to analyze using Table B. Be especially careful to include detail on the field, criteria, and measurement in your ranking system so you can explain it to the class. **Please bring 13 copies of your ranking system table to class.** See class resources on canvas for an example.

- O'Meara, K. & Meekins, M. (2012). *Inside Rankings: Limitations and Possibilities*. Working Paper: Boston, MA: New England Resource Center for Higher Education.
- Pike, G. R. (2004). Measuring quality: A comparison of U.S. News rankings and NSSE benchmarks. *Research in Higher Education*, 45(2), 193-208.
- Kuh, G. D. & Pascarella, E. T. (2004). What does institutional selectivity tell us about educational quality? *Change*, 36(5), 52-58.
- Ehrenberg, R. G. (2003). Reaching for the brass ring: The U.S. News and World Report rankings and competition. *The Review of Higher Education*, 26(2), 145-162.
- Meredith, M. (2004). Why do universities compete in the ratings game? An empirical analysis of the effects of the U.S. News and World Report college rankings. *Research in Higher Education*, 45(5), 443-461.

Rankings in the News: Report from “Moving Up and Down.”

Session Three - January 9: In this class we extend our conversation of dominant ranking systems to the world stage. What are the dominant international ranking systems for world universities and within other national systems of higher education? What are the criteria they are using to assess performance? Have global ranking systems helped move scarce resources to new institutions or caused policy-makers to take from open access institutions and move them to more prestigious research universities?

9-10:30 AM: Guest Speakers:

Dr. Mona Levine, Associate Vice President for Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment and ***Pamela Phillips***, Associate Director for Reporting and Special Projects.

Dr. Levine and Ms. Phillips are responsible for collecting and reporting University of Maryland data to ranking systems. They will discuss their experiences as institutional researchers working with data collection for USNWR and other ranking systems.

10:30-11:30 AM: Guest Speaker:

Dr. Ellen Hazelkorn, *Director of Research and Enterprise, and Dean of the Graduate School, Dublin Institute of Technology*. Dr. Hazelkorn is author of *Rankings and the Reshaping of Higher Education: The Battle for World-Class Excellence* (2011). She also leads the Higher Education Policy Research Unit (HEPRU), and is a Consultant to the OECD Programme on Institutional Management of Higher Education (IMHE). Dr. Hazelkorn is currently leading an international research project on the Impact and Influence of League Tables and Ranking Systems on Higher Education Decision-Making and Academic Behaviour in association with IMHE and IAU [<http://www.oecd.org/edu/imhe/rankings>]. She is also working with the Institute for Higher Education Policy on a New Agenda for College and University Ranking.

Classroom Assignment #3: Use the readings to consider three ways the world rankings are influencing colleges and universities worldwide. Do the world rankings encourage “strategic imitation,” international distinction, or some of both? Have global ranking systems helped move scarce resources to new institutions or caused policy-makers to take from open access institutions and move them to more prestigious research universities? We will have class debates on these issues so please choose positions and be ready to defend them with examples from the readings. Also, we have a rare opportunity to ask the foremost expert on global rankings about these issues. Please prepare a question for Dr. Hazelkorn about the impact of rankings on the world stage.

Also, we have a rare opportunity to ask questions of the institutional researchers who collect the institutional data that go into rankings. Please prepare 2 questions to ask Dr. Levine and Pamela Phillips about the nature of collecting this data and their experiences with this process.

- Hazelkorn, E. (2009). Rankings and the battle for world-class excellence: Institutional strategies and policy choices. *Higher Education Management and Policy*, 21(1), 55-76.
- Marginson, S. (2006). Dynamics of national and global competition in higher education. *Higher Education*, 52, 1-39.
- Birnbaum, R. (2006). *No world class university left behind*. Paper presented at the 2006 Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Anaheim, CA.
- Rauhvargers, A. (2011). *European University Association Report on Rankings 2011: Global university rankings and their impact*, Belgium: European University Association. READ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ONLY (Pages 10-17)
- Altbach, P. G. (2004). The costs and benefits of world class universities. *Academe*, 90(1), 20-23.
- Pusser, B. & Marginson, S. (2013). University rankings in critical perspective, *JHE*, 84(4), 544-568.

Rankings in the News: Report from “The Global Scene.”

Session Four - January 9: We will continue our critique of dominant ranking systems (U.S. and Global) with a particular focus on criteria used to measure performance and their strengths and

weaknesses. We will also consider the “fields” and contexts specific to different ranking systems.

Classroom Assignment #4: Please view the videos below and integrate them with your readings to provide what you think are the three best arguments for eliminating rankings and the three best arguments for keeping them as they exist today.

Malcolm Gladwell on CNN: Why rankings are “absurd”:

<http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/us/2011/05/01/gps.gladwell.college.cnn>

PBS debate over value of USNWR rankings:

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/education/july-dec07/rankings_08-20.html

Dichev, I. (2001). News or noise? Estimating the noise in the U.S. News university rankings. *Research in Higher Education*, 42, 237-266.

Volkwein, J. F. & Sweitzer, K. V. (2006). The influences on prestige and reputation at research universities and liberal arts colleges. *Research in Higher Education*, 47(2), 129-148.

Monks, J. & Ehrenberg, R. G. (1999). U.S. News & World Report rankings: Why they do matter. *Change*, 31(6), 43-51.

Webster, T. J. (2001). A principal component analysis of the *U.S. News & World Report* tier rankings of colleges and universities. *Economics of Education Review* 20, 235-244.

Hossler, D. (2000). The problem with college rankings. *About Campus*, 20-24.

Gladwell, M. (2011) The order of things: What college rankings really tell us. Feb 14, 2011, *The New Yorker*.

Henderson, L. & Herrina, C.(2013). Does critical diversity pay in higher education? Race, gender and departmental rankings in research universities. *Politics, Groups and Identities*, 1(3), 299-310.

Rankings in the News: Reports from “HBCUs/HSIs and Rankings,” and “the Public Affairs Challenge.”

Session Five - January 13: Having considered the dominant rankings systems in the U.S. and abroad we will consider the behavior of institutions trying to move up within them. What do campuses do when they are striving? What kinds of behaviors do they exhibit? Here we begin to consider the consequences of striving, with particular focus on admissions, access, equity and educational quality, and spending.

Classroom Assignment #5: Use your review of readings to answer the following questions: What is the best thing rankings (and specific criteria and weights in them) and the desire to move up in them have encouraged institutions to do with regard to admissions, access, equity and educational quality, and spending? What is the worst thing?

- Bowman, N. A. & Bastedo, M. N. (2009). Getting on the front page: Organizational reputation, status signals, and the impact of US News and World report rankings on student decisions. *Research in Higher Education*, 50, p. 415-436.
- Lovett, C. M. (2005). The perils of pursuing prestige. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 51(20),
- Morphew, C. C. & Baker, B. D. (2004). The cost of prestige: Do new research one universities incur increased administrative costs? *Review of Higher Education*, 27(3), 365-384.
- Hazelkorn, E. (2011). Rankings: Student Choice and Recruitment. P. 121-152. *Rankings and the Reshaping of Higher Education: The Battle for World-Class Excellence*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sponsler, B. A. (2009). *The Role and Relevance of Rankings in Higher Education Policymaking*. Washington, DC: Institute for Higher Education Policy.
- Fisher, B. (2009). Athletics success and institutional rankings. In J. D. Toma & D. A. Kramer II (Eds.), *New Directions for Higher Education*, 148, 45-53.
- Kirp, D. L. & Holman, J. (2004). This little student went to market. In D. L. Kirp, D. Solomon, P. Roberts, E. P. Berman, J. T. Holman, & J. VanAntwerpen (Eds.), *Shakespeare, Einstein, and the Bottom Line: The Marketing of Higher Education* (pp. 11-32). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Rankings in the News: Reports from “Cheating: and “How Striving Influences Access.”

Session Six - January 13: During this class we consider several dominant alternative projects underway to assess quality in higher education and critique the strengths and weaknesses of each, as well as consider the challenges of measuring performance in higher education more generally. Our class will open up to a public panel for the first part of this session.

2:00-3:30 PM: Guest Speaker Panel:

Note: LOCATION FOR PANEL – Benjamin 1107

Robert Morse, Director of Data Research, *U.S. News & World Report*. Mr. Morse is responsible for the methodology and execution of the *U.S. News rankings*. He is also editor of the blog, “Morse Code.”

Lucy Corbin Martin Campbell, Assistant Professor in *Higher and Postsecondary Education Program, Teachers College, Columbia University*. Dr. Campbell’s research focuses on developing comprehensive measures of college educational quality (academic rigor, teaching quality, and learning objectives) at the institution level with a focus on informing students, parents, and the broader public.

Archie P. Cubarrubia, *Postsecondary, Adult & Career Education Team, Policy & Program Studies Service, Office of Planning, Evaluation & Policy Development, U.S. Department of Education*. Archie Cubarrubia recently oversaw research and development for the Integrated Postsec-ondary Education Data System (IPEDS) at the National Center for Education Statistics. He was part of the leadership team in the Office of the Under Secretary responsible for implementing the Department’s higher education transformation agenda to increase the accessibility, af-fordability , and accountability of America’s colleges and universities.

Christine M. Keller, Associate Vice President, Academic Affairs, Executive Director, Voluntary System of Accountability & Executive Director, Student Achievement Measure Association of Public and Land-grant Universities. Christine Keller has provided leadership in the development and application of research, policy, and analyses for the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) since 2007. She oversees the Voluntary System of Accountability on behalf of APLU and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities as well as the Student Achievement Measure project on behalf of the six association partners.

Classroom Assignment #6: As you review the readings for today, pretend that a family member is applying to college. What information might you obtain from the VSA: College Portrait, the College Educational Quality project, Washington Monthly, or the new USDE rating system that you are not getting from USNWR? Alternatively, what do you still need USNWR and more dominant rankings to tell you?

See TIME Magazine's coverage of its recently co-sponsored TIME Summit on Higher Education: <http://nation.time.com/reinventing-college/>

NPR interview with editor of Washington Monthly on their rankings vs. USNWR: <http://www.npr.org/2012/09/05/160607416/thinking-harvard-ranking-system-says-think-again>

Also please visit Robert Morse's blog on the USNWR ranking system: <http://www.usnews.com/blogs/college-rankings-blog>

See Corbin Campbell's project: College Educational Quality: <http://collegeedquality.weebly.com/>

Mathews, J. (2005). Caveat lector: Unexamined assumptions about quality in higher education. In R. H. Hersch & J. Merrow (Eds.), *Declining By Degrees: Higher Education at Risk* (pp. 47-59). New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

Steedle, J. Kugelmass, H. & Nemeth, A. What do they measure? Comparing three learning outcomes assessments. *Change*, 42(4), 33-37.

Ostriker, J. P., Holland, P. W., Kuh, C. V., & Voytuk, J. A. (Eds.) (2010). *A Data-Based Assessment of Research-Doctorate Programs in the United States*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

U.S. Department of Education (2013, October 30). *College Ratings System*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/documents/college-completion/college-ratings-overview.pdf>.

U.S. Department of Education (2013). *College Ratings and Paying for Performance*. Retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/college-affordability/college-ratings-and-paying-performance>.

Rankings in the News: Reports from "USDE Rating Plan."

Session 7 - January 16: We will continue our conversation about the impact of striving by turning to the influence of ranking systems on faculty work-life and organizational culture.

9:30-10:30 AM: Guest Speaker:

Rachel Fishman, Policy Analyst for the Education Policy Program, The New America Foundation. Rachel was involved in the production of the 2012 *Washington Monthly* college rankings. She is interested in problems around social mobility through higher

education and was involved in the introduction of a new measure to *Washington Monthly's* system this year, the cost-adjusted graduation rate, which she blogged about on *Higher Ed Watch*:

http://higheredwatch.newamerica.net/blogposts/2012/americas_best_bang_for_the_buck_colleges-70787

Classroom Assignment #7: As you read for today, make two columns. On one side put all of the reasons it can be good for faculty to be in a striving university or program context. On the other side place negative side effects. Then pretend you are a mid-career faculty member. Decide whether you want to be at a striving university or not and why. In class we will move to different sides of the room based on your answer and consider this issue from both perspectives.

Also, in preparing for Ms. Fishman's visit, consider how the Washington Monthly rankings changed some aspects of the conversation about rankings. What do you wish was different about the Washington Monthly rankings? What questions might you have about their recent measures?

O'Meara, K. & Bloomgarden, A. (2010) Prestige at what Cost: Examining the consequences of striving for faculty work-life, reward systems, and satisfaction. *Journal of the Professoriate*, 4(1). 40-74.

Gonzales, L. & Martinez, E. (in press). Faculty Discourses on University Rankings: Links to Neoliberalism and Science. *Journal of Critical Thought and Praxis*.

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Ward, K. & Wolf-Wendel, L. (2005). *Faculty Life at Comprehensives: Between a Rock and A Hard Place*. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Philadelphia, PA.

Dubrow, G., Moseley, B., & Dustin, D. (2006). Life at mission creep U. *Academe*, 92(3), 24-28. *Impact of college rankings on institutional decision-making: Four country case studies* (2009). Washington, DC: Institute for Higher Education Policy.

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Session 8 - January 16: There are many stakeholders of ranking systems, including but not limited to students, parents, alumni, legislators, donors, administrators, higher education researchers, and state legislators. In this session we consider whether stakeholders are getting what they want from ranking systems. We will consider cases where some stakeholders have decided not to "play" in the rankings game. We will also discuss the role of membership groups as one parallel system to rankings such as AAU, the Ivy League, The Big Ten and Annapolis group.

2:30-3:30 PM: Guest Speaker:

Dr. George Mehaffy, Vice President for Academic Leadership and Change at the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. AASCU is a Washington-based higher education association of nearly 420 public colleges, universities and systems whose members share a learning- and teaching-centered culture, a historic commitment to underserved student populations and a dedication to research and creativity that advances

their regions' economic progress and cultural development. Dr. Mehaffy has done a lot of thinking about the negative consequences of striving in AACSB institutions as well as the opportunity of these institutions to become something more distinctive: stewards of place, or institutions that mark their quality by the degree to which they provide unique service to a specific region and location.

Classroom Assignment #8: As you prepare for this class session consider the various stakeholders of the University of Maryland system of higher education. These stakeholders should include students, parents, alumni, legislators and taxpayers, faculty and administrators, and donors. What critical information are they getting from ranking systems? What important information and contexts are they missing?

Also, consider the "field" of AACSB institutions. How are they served and disadvantaged by the dominant ranking systems?

CNN video on student perceptions of rankings:

<http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/living/2011/07/28/perry.college.rankings.cnn>

CIRP survey data:

<http://www.heri.ucla.edu/infographics/CIRP-FreshmanSurveyInfographic-2012.pdf>

Callan, P. M., Doyle, W., Finney, J. E. (2001). Evaluating higher education performance: Measuring up 2000. *Change*, 33(2), 10-19.

Benson, A., Esteva, R. & Levy, F. S., (September 13, 2013). The Economics of B.A. Ambivalence: The Case of California Higher Education Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2325657> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2325657>
http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2325657

Hoxby, C. & Avery, C. (2012). *The Hidden Supply of High-Achieving, Low Income Students*
<http://www.nber.org/digest/may13/w18586.html>

Hensley et al, (2013). *How Rankings and Perceptions of Quality Impact Student Decision-Making*.

<http://usa.britishcouncil.org/files/2013/10/NACAC-session-slides.pdf>

Burell, J. *Colleges That Change Lives: Loren Pope's List of 40 Remarkable Colleges You've Never Heard Of*.

<http://youngadults.about.com/od/collegelife/qt/collegeschangelives.htm>

Rankings in the News: Report from "How Students Use Rankings to Make Decisions."

Session 9 - January 21: Team Project Presentations: Final project presentations will occur during this class session. Each group will have 20 minutes for their presentation of a new ranking system. Students in the class will raise questions and provide feedback which should be integrated into the final paper submitted January 24, 2012.

Table A: Ranking Systems in Higher Education (not an exhaustive list)

Domestic Focus

Publisher	Focus	Website
U.S. News & World Report (USNWR)	Reputational Surveys, Selectivity, Graduation and Retention Rates, Faculty Resources, Financial Resources, Alumni Giving, Graduation Rate Progress	http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges
The Princeton Review	Best 373 Colleges	http://www.princetonreview.com/college-rankings.aspx
Financial Times	Focus on Business Schools	http://rankings.ft.com/businessschoolrankings/rankings
Washington Monthly	Social Mobility, Research, and Service	http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/collegeguide/rankings_2010/national_university_rank.php
Forbes “America’s Best Colleges”	Student Satisfaction, Postgraduate Success, Student Debt, Four-Year Graduation Rate, Competitive Awards	http://www.forbes.com/2010/08/11/best-colleges-universities-rating-ranking-opinions-best-colleges-10_land.html
Payscale College Salary Report	Salary data from Payscale users	http://www.payscale.com/best-colleges
State University	A mix of non-reputational, government reported data	http://www.stateuniversity.com/
College Prowler Rankings	A variety including campus dining, housing, strictness, social life, safety, parking, and weather	http://collegeprowler.com/rankings/
The Chronicle of Higher Education’s “Great Colleges to Work For”	Workplace issues including governance, compensation, benefits, career development, an satisfaction	http://chroniclegreatcolleges.com/
“Rugg’s Recommendations on Colleges”	Academic departments and programs	http://www.ruggsrecommendations.com/
Bloomberg BusinessWeek “Best B-Schools”	Focus on business schools – academic quality, student satisfaction, job placement	http://www.businessweek.com/business-schools/
The Center for Measuring University	Total research dollars, funding, endowments, annual giving, faculty awards, student competitiveness	http://mup.asu.edu/

Performance		
The Faculty Scholarly Productivity Index	Citations, publications, research funding	http://chronicle.com/statistics/productivity/
Kiplinger's 100 Best Values	Academic quality (selectivity), cost, and financial aid for public institutions	http://www.kiplinger.com/tools/colleges/
Princeton Review/USA Today Top 100 Best Value Colleges	"High-quality academics at a reasonable price"	http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/best-value-colleges.htm
My Chances College Rankings	Aggregated from student admissions decisions	http://college.mychances.net/college-rankings.php
The Global Language Monitor's College Rankings (TrendTopper MediaBuzz Rankings)	Based upon number of keyword appearances on the Internet	http://www.languagemonitor.com/college-rankings/
What Will They Learn? (American Council of Trustees and Alumni)	Core requirements: composition, literature, foreign language, U.S. history, economics, math, science	http://www.whatwilltheylearn.com/
Parchment Student Choice College Rankings	Student admission choices	http://www.parchment.com/c/college/college-rankings.php

International Focus

Publisher	Focus on	Website
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“Academic Ranking of World Universities” (Shanghai Jiao Tong University) – often referred to as “the Shanghai rankings”	Nobel and Field winners, citation indices, publications in <i>Nature</i> and <i>Science</i> , per capita performance	http://www.arwu.org/
Times Higher Education (UK) (as of 2010 publishing separate from QS)	Teaching, citations, research (volume, income, and reputation), international mix, and industry income	http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/index.html
QS World University Rankings (UK) (Quacquarelli Symonds Limited)	Academic reputation (peer review), employer reputation, student-to-faculty ratio, citations per faculty, and international students and faculty.	http://www.topuniversities.com/
G-Factor International University Ranking (USA)	Using Google search engine, ranks links to a particular institution from the websites of others	http://universitymetrics.com/g-factor
Webometrics World University Rankings on the Web (Spain)	Web publication: visibility (external links), size, rich files, Google Scholar	http://www.webometrics.info/
Maclean’s (Canada)	Student award winners, student-to-faculty ratio, faculty grants and awards, resources, student support, library, and reputation (peer review)	http://oncampus.macleans.ca/education/rankings/
“International Professional Classification of Higher Education Institutions” - Ecole des Mines de Paris (France)	Alma maters of Fortune 500 CEOs	http://www.mines-paristech.fr/Actualites/PR/
Asahi Shimbun (Japan)	Admissions, department rankings	http://www.wes.org/ewenr/06aug/japan.htm#asahi
Performance Ranking of Scientific Papers for Research Universities Higher Education Evaluation & Accreditation Council of Taiwan	Scientific papers citations: research productivity, research impact, and research excellence	http://ranking.heeact.edu.tw/en-us/2009/Page/Methodology
RatER (Rating of Educational Resources) (Russia)	Educational activity, research activity, faculty professional competence, financial maintenance, international activity,	http://www.globaluniversitiesranking.org/

	web volume	
CHE Excellence Ranking (Center for Higher Education Development) (Germany)	European graduate study (by discipline/department)	http://www.excellenceraanking.org/eusid/EUSID
4 International Colleges & Universities Web Ranking (Australia)	Web metrics: Google, Yahoo!, and Alexa	http://www.4icu.org/
High Impact Universities (Australia)	Research Performance Index: quality and consistency of publication	http://www.highimpactuniversities.com/
Scimago Institutions Rankings (Ibero-American Rankings) (Spain)	Research: scientific output, international collaboration, average scientific quality, publication rate	http://www.scimagoir.com/
U21 Ranking of National Higher Education Systems	Resources, Environment, Connectivity and Output	http://www.universitas21.com/article/projects/details/152/u21-ranking-of-national-higher-education-systems
U-Multirank	examines institutions' performance across a wide range of higher education missions	http://www.u-multirank.eu/
Leiden Ranking [CWTS]	Uses bibliometric indicators to assess scientific impact of universities	http://www.cwts.nl/ranking/LeidenRankingWebSite.html

Additional Emerging Alternatives

The Voluntary System of Accountability	http://www.voluntarysystem.org/
USDE Rating System	http://www.ed.gov/college-affordability/college-ratings-and-paying-performance
College Board College Search	https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search

Table B: Framework for Analysis of Ranking Systems

History	Why was this ranking system created? By whom?
Stakeholders	For whom? Who is it intended to serve?
The field	Who is included and excluded? What are the boundaries? (e.g. national or international, 2 or 4 year institutions?)
Criteria	What counts in this ranking system and why?
Measurement	How are the criteria evaluated? What are the methods for collecting data? What is the process?
Consequences	To what end? What behavior and outcomes do the rankings encourage?
Criteria and alternatives	What is distinctive and useful for this ranking? How could it be more effective at accomplishing its stated goals?

O'Meara, K. & Meekins, M. (2012). *Inside Rankings: Limitations and Possibilities. Working Paper*: Boston, MA: New England Resource Center for Higher Education.

Table C: Weaknesses of Dominant Ranking Systems

Critiques of Dominant Ranking Systems	Explanation
Mistaken Identity or False Advertising	Research reputation is taken as a proxy for academic program quality
Survival of the craftiest	They encourage fabrication of data, questionable strategic decisions to play to the criteria and not all institutions have the same resources to compile the data.
That's what she said...	They rely heavily on reputational surveys that are highly network driven.
The fix is in	Highly input focused –you can predict the institutional ranking easily by knowing the input measures such as student selectivity, age of institution, endowment, alumni giving. There is very little movement in rankings and most movement is not based on quality change as much as shifts in how criteria are measured from year to year.
The glow in dim light	Rater bias and halo effect—raters not knowing information to rate appropriately and time lag of knowledge
They encourage “strategic imitation.”	The rankings encourage institutions to mimic the behaviors of higher ranked institutions; they do not reward distinctive missions, cultures and identities.

O'Meara, K. & Meekins, M. (2012). *Inside Rankings: Limitations and Possibilities. Working Paper*: Boston, MA: New England Resource Center for Higher Education.

Additional Recommended Readings

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- Altbach, P. G. (2010). The state of the rankings. *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from <http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2010/11/11/altbach>
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- Tierney, W. G. (2009). Globalization, international rankings, and the American model: A reassessment. *Higher Education Forum*, 6, 1-18.