

National Research Council's Rankings of SIU Programs (by Percentile)

Broad Field	Programs	Number of Programs Nationwide	Regression- and Survey-Based Rankings of Overall Program Quality								Dimensional Rankings - Measures of Program Quality											
			R				S				Faculty Research Activity				Student Support/ Outcomes				Faculty/Student Diversity			
			5th		95th		5th		95th		5th		95th		5th		95th		5th		95th	
Agricultural Sciences	Plant Biology	116	15	13%	73	63%	12	10%	41	35%	58	50%	100	86%	1	1%	5	4%	54	47%	87	75%
	Zoology	60	46	77%	58	97%	32	53%	57	95%	18	30%	50	83%	31	52%	54	90%	40	67%	53	88%
Biological/Health Sci.	MBMB	159	100	63%	155	97%	81	51%	142	89%	119	75%	153	96%	3	2%	56	35%	26	16%	78	49%
	Pharmacology	116	109	94%	116	100%	102	88%	116	100%	44	38%	107	92%	107	92%	116	100%	110	95%	114	98%
	Physiology	63	50	79%	61	97%	52	83%	61	97%	54	86%	62	98%	28	44%	54	86%	8	13%	24	38%
Engineering	Civil & Environmental	130	91	70%	126	97%	50	38%	96	74%	125	96%	130	100%	1	1%	2	2%	50	38%	94	72%
	Electrical & Computer	136	103	76%	129	95%	126	93%	133	98%	131	96%	136	100%	54	40%	110	81%	4	3%	23	17%
	Mechanical	127	117	92%	127	100%	91	72%	117	92%	85	67%	123	97%	55	43%	104	82%	2	2%	10	8%
Humanities	English	119	90	76%	117	98%	100	84%	113	95%	109	92%	117	98%	26	22%	83	70%	61	51%	94	79%
	History	137	92	67%	124	91%	38	28%	88	64%	33	24%	67	49%	35	26%	124	91%	29	21%	70	51%
	Philosophy	90	70	78%	81	90%	80	89%	87	97%	46	51%	72	80%	73	81%	85	94%	86	96%	89	99%
Physical & Mathematical	Chemistry	178	126	71%	172	97%	105	59%	168	94%	90	51%	164	92%	76	43%	174	98%	10	6%	30	17%
	Mathematics	127	109	86%	122	96%	105	83%	122	96%	115	91%	124	98%	62	49%	110	87%	5	4%	23	18%
Social & Behavioral	Anthropology	82	64	78%	79	96%	31	38%	67	82%	38	46%	64	78%	3	4%	56	68%	53	65%	69	84%
	Mass Comm/Media	83	7	8%	82	99%	59	71%	72	87%	69	83%	81	98%	23	28%	57	69%	52	63%	75	90%
	Speech Comm	83	27	33%	83	100%	67	81%	79	95%	80	96%	83	100%	8	10%	37	45%	56	67%	76	92%
	Economics	117	81	69%	113	97%	73	62%	98	84%	72	62%	101	86%	48	41%	97	83%	6	5%	40	34%
	ER&P	49	29	59%	45	92%	18	37%	40	82%	16	33%	40	82%	17	35%	31	63%	28	57%	39	80%
	Political Science	105	100	95%	105	100%	92	88%	101	96%	70	67%	90	86%	61	58%	80	76%	74	70%	93	89%
	Psychology	236	127	54%	192	81%	175	74%	206	87%	167	71%	201	85%	58	25%	141	60%	47	20%	108	46%
	Sociology	118	67	57%	102	86%	66	56%	92	78%	67	57%	99	84%	18	15%	68	58%	13	11%	32	27%

HIGHER EDUCATION

US school ranking names no winners

Graduate programmes are assessed and measured, but stale data could reduce impact of long-awaited report.

BY EMMA MARRIS

Which US chemistry department is the biggest? As of autumn 2005, the University of California, Berkeley, had a whopping 406 graduate students. That must be some departmental picnic. Which ecology programme takes the longest? The median time to complete a PhD degree in the ecology and evolutionary biology department at Tulane University in Louisiana is 8.5 years. Which genetics programme has the highest average number of citations per faculty publication? The Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge dominates, with a knockout 10.08. Which physics programme is the best? A new report that supplies all of the other answers doesn't make the call.

Released on 28 September, the long-awaited National Academies study on US PhD programmes, *A Data-Based Assessment of Research-Doctorate Programs in the United States* (see go.nature.com/tqvokc), is notable for not ranking programmes in 1-2-3 order. But it aims to offer comparisons that are detailed enough both

to help students determine where to apply and to help job-seekers judge offers. The findings could also guide spending by administrators at a state or school level — whether by lavishing funds on standout programmes or by spending money to improve less-successful ones.

The report was delayed by funding problems, and the National Research Council had to charge institutions up to US\$10,000 apiece to be included. The underlying data are now five years old, which could limit the report's impact. But it is accompanied by a huge trove of raw data, which can be manipulated to answer specific questions. And the rankings are less subjective than previous versions of the report, the last of which appeared in 1995. "We thought doing it right was more important than doing it fast," says the report's committee chair Jeremiah Ostriker, an astronomer at Princeton University in New Jersey.

The new rankings derive from quantitative measures, such as publications or citations per faculty member, weighted in two different ways. In one scheme, members of a field were asked to evaluate the importance of

various measures. In the other, the specialists had to rank programmes, and statistical analysis determined the weights that various measures would have to be given to reproduce those rankings. "It is not really based on reputation, it is based on the things that seem to predict reputation," says Ostriker.

The two methods produced subtle differences (see 'Grading the schools'). For example, although few faculty members stressed the importance of programme size, they tended to give higher rankings to the programmes that awarded many PhDs. Both ranking schemes, however, gave surprisingly little importance to other measures. "How well the students are taken care of and how well they do after they graduate is obviously important, but it isn't what the faculty put the most emphasis on," says Ostriker. "They care more about the research output of the faculty."

Each programme's position is expressed as a range rather than an average to communicate the uncertainties and fluctuations in the data. The overall result is a lot of data — 20 variables for more than 5,000 programmes at 212 universities — but no clear 'winners'. "The committee believes that the concept of a precise ranking of doctoral programs is mistaken," the report reads. "The reader who seeks a single,

"We thought doing it right was more important than doing it fast."

authoritative declaration of the 'best programs' in given fields will not find it in this report."

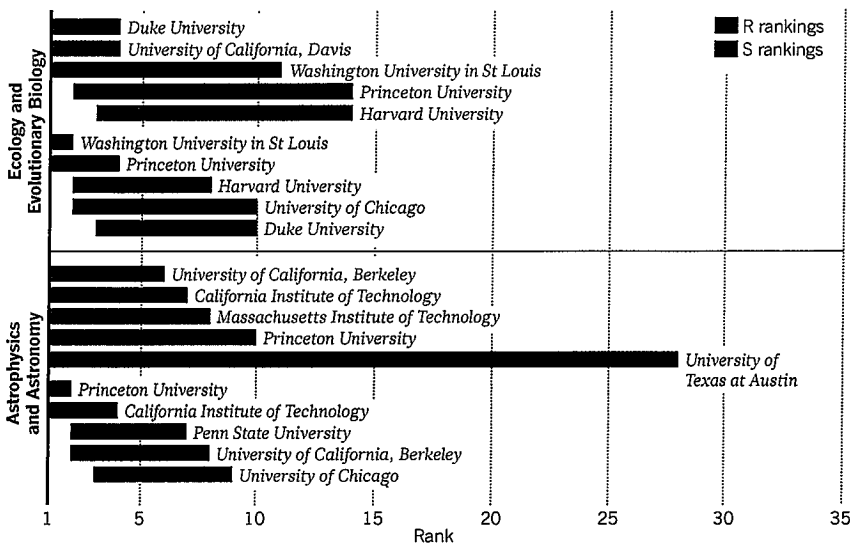
Harvey Waterman, associate dean for academic affairs at the graduate school of Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, who helped to advise on the surveys used by the project, predicts a fair amount of nitpicking about old data and new methodology. For example, 'interdisciplinarity' is measured by how many of a programme's faculty members are listed as 'associate'. Programmes that were interdisciplinary by nature scored zero because their faculty are full members (not associates) regardless of speciality.

Debra Stewart, president of the Council of Graduate Schools in Washington DC, calls the report's two ranking systems and the ranges of outcomes "perplexing in a very healthy way". For Stewart, the varied rankings prove that different criteria make sense for different programmes, depending on their priorities. A school that prides itself on diversity might focus on the various measures of faculty and student diversity; a school that has no plans for expanding a small programme might compare itself only with other small programmes. The fact that the data are a bit stale, she says, "only becomes important if there is no effort to update this on a regular basis".

Ostriker says that this is on the cards. "We hope that in a couple of years we can get data on new faculty and then repeat it. That is the only thing that changes very quickly." ■

GRADING THE SCHOOLS

R rankings (based on a statistical model derived from faculty members' opinions) and S rankings (based on the criteria that faculty members named as important) produced different lists of the top-five programmes in two different fields. To reflect uncertainties, the report expressed each programme's position as a range.



SOURCE: NATIONAL ACADEMIES

Graduate Council – Educational Policies Committee

Educational Policies Committee met 29 Sept 2010.

Some concerns were raised about both the draft *University Code of Conduct* and, especially, the draft *University Code of Ethics*. It was determined we need more information. If the documents are to be addressed as stands, then the committee will bring forth recommendations at the next meeting. (Concerns are detailed below).

The issue of the exorbitant increase in the cost of the Nature-group publications and the potential effects on research and researchers of any campus boycott of these publications was deemed most appropriately an issue for the Research Committee, and it was returned to the Expanded Executive Committee for reassignment.

Concerns with draft *University Code of Conduct*:

- 1) What is the source of this draft? Who wrote it, and with what mission? (And since this is unclear, we have no idea to whom to address our concerns).
- 2) What is the intended placement/audience for this code? Will it become part of the Employee's Handbook? Elsewhere? How will it be made public to individuals expected to abide by it?
- 3) If it becomes part of the Employee's Handbook, will it replace the current *Code of Ethics*? If so, why was it deemed necessary to replace the old code? What problems is it intended to address? If it is in addition to the existing *Code of Ethics*, what was the motive / perceived need that drove the development of this additional Code?
- 4) Much of the language is fairly boilerplate and addresses a number of practices that are now standard under various legal and ethical requirements on researchers and teachers in university settings. Why is it deemed necessary to have an additional and separate Code addressing these legally binding practices?
- 5) In Item 12a "**Reporting to Management**" – strong objections were raised to the use of the word "management." We suggest substituting "administrative offices," "administration," or another term more in keeping with university structure and practice.

No vote was taken on recommendation of the draft *Code of Conduct*, pending clarification on its purpose and intended placement.

Concerns with draft *University Code of Ethics*:

- 1) What is the source of this draft? Who wrote it, and with what mission? (And since this is unclear, we have no idea to whom to address our concerns).
- 2) What is the intended placement/audience for this code? Will it become part of the Employee's Handbook? Elsewhere? How will it be made public to individuals expected to abide by it?
- 3) What was the impetus / perceived need for this document? Is it to replace the existing *Code of Ethics*? What was deemed insufficient in the prior code that necessitates this new *Code*? Since the draft *Code of Conduct* directly addresses a number of ethical issues, why is this second code deemed necessary?
- 4) Under the "principle" of **RESPECT**-
This section appears to legislate issues of attitude ("care, concern") in addition to overt behaviors ("fairness, civility"). In doing so, it appears to reach too far and open the door to excessive grievance.

Graduate Council – Educational Policies Committee

{E.g., If there is a heated faculty meeting, does this show lack of care and concern, or civility, and must be reported to higher administration? If someone doesn't smile at someone and ask how their day is going, are they insufficiently caring, and must be reported to higher administration? Where is the line on appropriate "concern" and "care"??}

5) Under the "principle" of **HONESTY AND INTEGRITY** –

Whose "greater good" must we evaluate in decision making – faculty? students? department? college? other? This is open to many different interpretations, and yet there are implied, potentially severe sanctions.

{E.g., Must a faculty member stop working on scholarship to teach extra classes for the "greater good?" Must we rush to embrace extra service assignments for the "greater good" despite personal cost, even when on a tenure line, or we will be charged with unethical behavior?}

Bottom line – do we really WANT all of our decisions to be based on some "greater good?"

6) Under the "principle" of **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT** –

This states that we must meet the expectations of "those we serve" – yet it is unclear who these mystical folks are and what exactly are their expectations. Are we to meet all the expectations of legislators? parents? students? Must we meet even unreasonable expectations?

{E.g., If students expect us to be available 24/7, is that reasonable or a fair standard for required ethical behavior?}

7) Under **REPORTING** –

We would be REQUIRED to report ANY violations of the above listed expectations, which are vague, broad, and cover attitude and thoughts as well as deeds. This appears to set up a "grievance machine," and many behaviors would be ambiguously "ethical." Of greatest concern- this would provide a wide-open back door to consideration of issues of collegiality in tenure, promotion, and the continued employment of individuals.

Uncooperative behavior (which might be perceived to include discussions of course offerings, course scheduling, service assignments) could be variously interpreted as civil vs. uncivil, cooperative vs. uncooperative, caring vs. uncaring conversations – thus open to charges of unethical behavior.

The Code, as written, requires all such potential breaches to be immediately brought to the attention of the higher offices of the university – which could lead to even minor infractions ending up at the desk of the President on a routine basis.

8) The committee likes the opening statements in the existing *Code of Ethics*, as well as other elements of the existing code. Many aspects of ethical behavior are also covered clearly in the draft *Code of Conduct*, and in a more focused manner that addresses behaviors, not intents or attitudes. The draft *Code of Ethics* appears to require an unattainable standard of perfection and self-sacrifice in attitude and behavior, and to demand reporting of any deviance from perfection, even momentary, to the highest levels of the administration, which could then be declared an ethical violation and subject to punitive action. In practice, this could lead to widespread differences in application and the abusive singling out of particular individuals for targeting as "unethical" under trumped up and minor infractions.

No vote was taken on recommendation of the code, pending clarification and further discussion of these concerns.