

U.S. News & World Report 2021 Best Colleges Rankings

Office of Institutional Research and Assessment Summary Report

U.S. News and World Report releases the Best Colleges Rankings each fall. These undergraduate rankings are used by students to help them decide where to apply to college. Rankings are based on criteria such as retention and graduation rates and other outcomes, peer assessments, and faculty and financial resources. Rankings serve a purpose, but only measure a small portion of what we use as an institution to measure our success. The university is coming off a record year in undergraduate enrollment and has also seen sustained growth in our graduation rates.

This report presents the 2021 U.S. News Best Colleges Rankings for the University of Tennessee - Knoxville and our peers. Detailed peer rankings and rankings methodology are presented in the appendices.

The University of Tennessee - Knoxville	2018	2019	2020	2021
Overall Rankings				
<i>National Universities</i>	103	115	104	112
<i>Public School</i>	46	52	44	52
Institutional Scores/Rankings				
<i>Overall Score</i>	49	48	51	59
<i>Expert Opinion</i>	3.2	3.2	3.3	3.3
<i>Outcomes Rank</i>	-	-	170*	147
<i>Graduation and Retention Rank</i>	120	124	137	136
<i>Six-year graduation rate</i>	69%	70%	71%	72%
<i>Average freshmen retention rate</i>	86%	86%	86%	87%
<i>Over/Under Predicted graduation rate</i>	-2	-3	-3	0
<i>Graduate Indebtedness Rank</i>	*	*	*	103
<i>Graduating Students who Borrowed</i>	*	*	*	49%
<i>Average Federal Indebtedness</i>	*	*	*	\$20,584
<i>Social Mobility Rank</i>	-	-	138*	161
<i>Faculty Resources Rank</i>	124	123	169	166
<i>Faculty Compensation Rank</i>	-	-	55*	51
<i>Proportion of classes fewer than 20 students</i>	30.00%	30.00%	30%	31%
<i>Proportion of classes with 50+ students</i>	13.00%	14.00%	15%	15%
<i>Student Excellence Rank</i>	84	112	83	98
<i>SAT/ACT 25th-75th percentile</i>	24-30	24-30	25-31	24-30
<i>Financial Resources Rank</i>	84	97	110	116
<i>Alumni Giving Rank</i>	102	105	108	90
<i>Average alumni giving rate</i>	10.4%	10.5%	10.7%	11.1%

The University of Tennessee - Knoxville

In the 2021 rankings, the University of Tennessee – Knoxville (UTK) dropped 8 spots to #112 in the national rankings. We also dropped 8 spots to #52 in the public school rankings. In the national rankings UTK is tied with five other institutions and with one in the public ranking.

Ties among institutions can have a significant impact on an institution's yearly rank. In 2018 we were ranked at #103 (tied with 6 other institutions), with 6 institutions tied in the rank above us. 2019's rankings had us dropping to #115 with 9 institutions tied in the rank above us. Once again in 2020 we improved to #104 (tied with 11 other institutions) with 6 institutions tied in the rank above us. This year the number of institutions tied in the rank above us increased (9 again) and we dropped to again in the rankings to #112. Methodological changes in recent years have also impacted rankings.

Our undergraduate business program ranked 52nd nationally (down 2 places) and 28th among publics (up 3 places). The supply chain/logistics program is ranked 5th nationally (up 2 places) and is 4th among public schools (up 2 places). Undergraduate engineering is ranked 63rd nationally (up 3 places) and 34th among publics (also up 3).

U.S. News once again made changes in their methodology this year by adding two outcome measures pertaining to graduate indebtedness. These measures are:

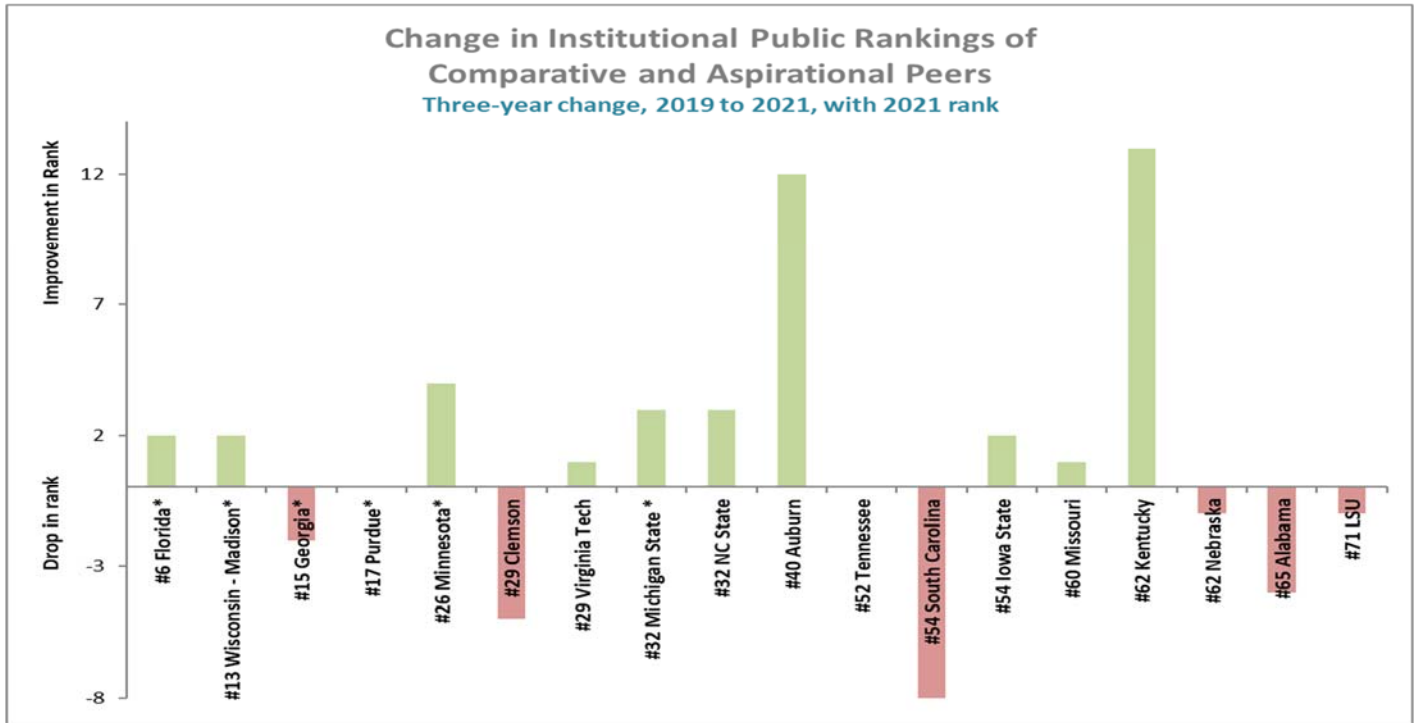
- Graduate indebtedness proportion: The percentage of graduates from the 2019 bachelor's degree graduating class who borrowed federal loans.
- Graduate indebtedness total: The average amount of federal loan debt among the 2019 bachelor's degree graduating class that took out federal loans.

UTK significantly improved in the Outcomes rank, moving up from 170 to 147. Our continued emphasis on undergraduate retention and graduation is key to our rise in this rank. In particular, our continued rise in 6-year graduation rates has made the 4-year average of these get better, and has led to no penalties for not meeting their calculated expected graduation rate (note: there was a change in that expected calculation this year – it's now based on 2 years of data). We are ranked higher than 5 of our comparable peers in the Outcomes rank. UTK also ranks better than all but three of our comparable peers in the newly added Indebtedness sub-ranking (federal loan debt).

UTK rose slightly in Faculty Resources ranking while 8 of 11 comparable and 2 of 6 aspirational peers dropped in the rank. For the faculty compensation subrank, we ranked better than or tied with all comparable peers, and better than 4 of 6 aspirational peers (now based on only 1 year of data instead of a 2-year average). Our percentage of classes with 20 or fewer students also rose to 31%, from 30% last year.

Our rank in Alumni Giving, which now only accounts for 3%, rose 18 points from #108 to #90.

The following chart shows the changes in institution rankings of our comparative and aspirational peers over a three year period, from 2019 to 2021. Over this period, 10 peers increased their public ranking, 6 peers decreased, and UTK saw no movement.



* Aspirational Peer

Peer Comparisons

The University of Tennessee – Knoxville has two sets of comparison peers: Comparative (11) and Aspirational (6). In the following section, we list the schools that exhibited a large increase or decrease in the different categories.

Comparative Peers

- National Universities ranking
 - Increased in rank: University of Missouri (15), University of Alabama (10), and Auburn University (7)
 - Decreased in rank: University of South Carolina (-14), and UTK (-8)
- Public Universities ranking
 - Increased in rank: University of Alabama (7), Auburn University (4), and University of Missouri (4),
 - Decreased in rank: University of South Carolina (-10), and UTK (-8)
- Outcomes Rank
 - Increased in rank: UTK (23), Auburn University (22), Clemson University (22), Louisiana State (17), University of Alabama (17), University of Missouri (16), and University of Kentucky (13)
 - Decreased in rank: Iowa State (-5)

- Faculty Resources Rank
 - Increased in Rank: University of Missouri (61), University of Alabama (26), and University of Nebraska (14)
 - Decreased in rank: University of South Carolina (-52), Louisiana State (-39), Iowa State (-30), University of Kentucky (-29), Clemson University (-21), and Virginia Tech (-21)
- Student Excellence Rank:
 - Increased in Rank: University of Missouri (9), University of Alabama (7), and Virginia Tech (7)
 - Decreased in rank: UTK (-15) and University of South Carolina (-11)
- Financial Resources Rank:
 - Increased in Rank: Iowa State (10), Louisiana State (6), and University of Kentucky (6)
 - Decreased in rank: University of South Carolina (-18), Auburn University (-16), Virginia Tech (-12), and University of Nebraska (-8)

Aspirational Peers

- National Universities ranking
 - Increased in rank: Michigan State University (4), Purdue University (4), University of Florida (4), University of Minnesota (4), and University of Wisconsin - Madison (4)
 - Decreased in rank: UTK (-8)
- Public Universities ranking
 - Increased in rank: Michigan State University (2)
 - Decreased in rank: UTK (-8)
- Outcomes Rank
 - Increased in rank: Purdue University (28), UTK (23), and University of Minnesota (19)
 - Decreased in rank: University of Georgia (-13) and Michigan State University (-11)
- Faculty Resources Rank
 - Increased in Rank: University of Wisconsin - Madison (24) and University of Florida (21)
 - Decreased in rank: University of Minnesota (-24) and Michigan State University (-13)
- Student Excellence Rank:
 - Increased in Rank: University of Florida (15), Purdue University (11), and University of Georgia (8)
 - Decreased in rank: UTK (-15)
- Financial Resources Rank:
 - Increased in Rank: Michigan State University (11)
 - Decreased in rank: UTK (-6)

SEC

- National Universities ranking
 - Increased in rank: University of Missouri (15), University of Alabama (10), and Auburn University (7)
 - Decreased in rank: University of South Carolina (-14), UTK (-8), and University of Arkansas (-7)
- Public Universities ranking
 - Increased in rank: University of Alabama (7), Auburn University (4), and University of Missouri (4)
 - Decreased in rank: University of South Carolina (-10), UTK (-8), University of Arkansas (-5), and Mississippi State (-4)
- Outcomes Rank
 - Increased in rank: UTK (23), Vanderbilt (23), Auburn University (22), Texas A&M (19), Louisiana State (17), University of Alabama (17), University of Mississippi (17), and University of Missouri (16)
 - Decreased in rank: Mississippi State (-49) and University of Georgia (-13)
- Faculty Resources Rank
 - Increased in Rank: University of Missouri (61), Mississippi State (31), University of Alabama (26), and University of Florida (21)
 - Decreased in rank: University of South Carolina (-52), Louisiana State (-39), and University of Kentucky (-29)
- Student Excellence Rank:
 - Increased in Rank: Texas A&M (16), University of Florida (15), University of Missouri (9), and University of Georgia (8)
 - Decreased in rank: UTK (-15), University of South Carolina (-11), and University of Arkansas (-7)
- Financial Resources Rank:
 - Increased in Rank: Louisiana State (6) and University of Kentucky (6)
 - Decreased in rank: University of South Carolina (-18), Auburn University (-16), and UTK (-6)

In the 2021 national rankings the University of Tennessee – Knoxville tied with five other universities. The University of Illinois – Chicago is the only public institutions tied with UTK. The private institutions that are tied with us are: Creighton University, Loyola University Chicago, Rochester Institute of Technology, and the University of La Verne (CA).