

U.S. News & World Report 2023 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.

This report presents the 2023 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	2020	2021	2022	2023
Overall Rankings				
<i>National Universities</i>	104	112	103	115
<i>Public School</i>	44	52	46	53
Institutional Scores/Rankings				
<i>Overall Score</i>	51	59	60	59
<i>Expert Opinion</i>	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3
<i>Outcomes Rank</i>	170	147	157	171
<i>Graduation and Retention Rank</i>	137	136	130	136
<i>Six-year graduation rate</i>	71%	72%	71%	72%
<i>Average freshmen retention rate</i>	86%	87%	87%	88%
<i>Over/Under Predicted graduation rate</i>	-3	0	-5	-6
<i>Graduate Indebtedness Rank</i>	*	103	107	115
<i>Graduating Students who Borrowed</i>	*	0.49	48%	48%
<i>Average Federal Indebtedness</i>	*	\$20,584	\$20,308	\$19,810
<i>Social Mobility Rank</i>	138	161	192	250
<i>Faculty Resources Rank</i>	169	166	141	198
<i>Faculty Compensation Rank</i>	55	51	49	55
<i>Proportion of classes fewer than 20 students</i>	30%	31%	38%	28%
<i>Proportion of classes with 50+ students</i>	15%	15%	14%	16%
<i>Student Excellence Rank</i>	83	98	81	79
<i>SAT/ACT 25th-75th percentile</i>	25-31	24-30	25-31	25-31
<i>Financial Resources Rank</i>	110	116	125	132
<i>Alumni Giving Rank</i>	108	90	84	86
<i>Average alumni giving rate</i>	10.7%	11.1%	10.7%	10.4%

The University of Tennessee - Knoxville

In the 2023 rankings, the University of Tennessee – Knoxville (UTK) fell to #115 in the national rankings and to #53 in the public school rankings. In the national rankings UTK is tied with five other institutions and with two in the public ranking.

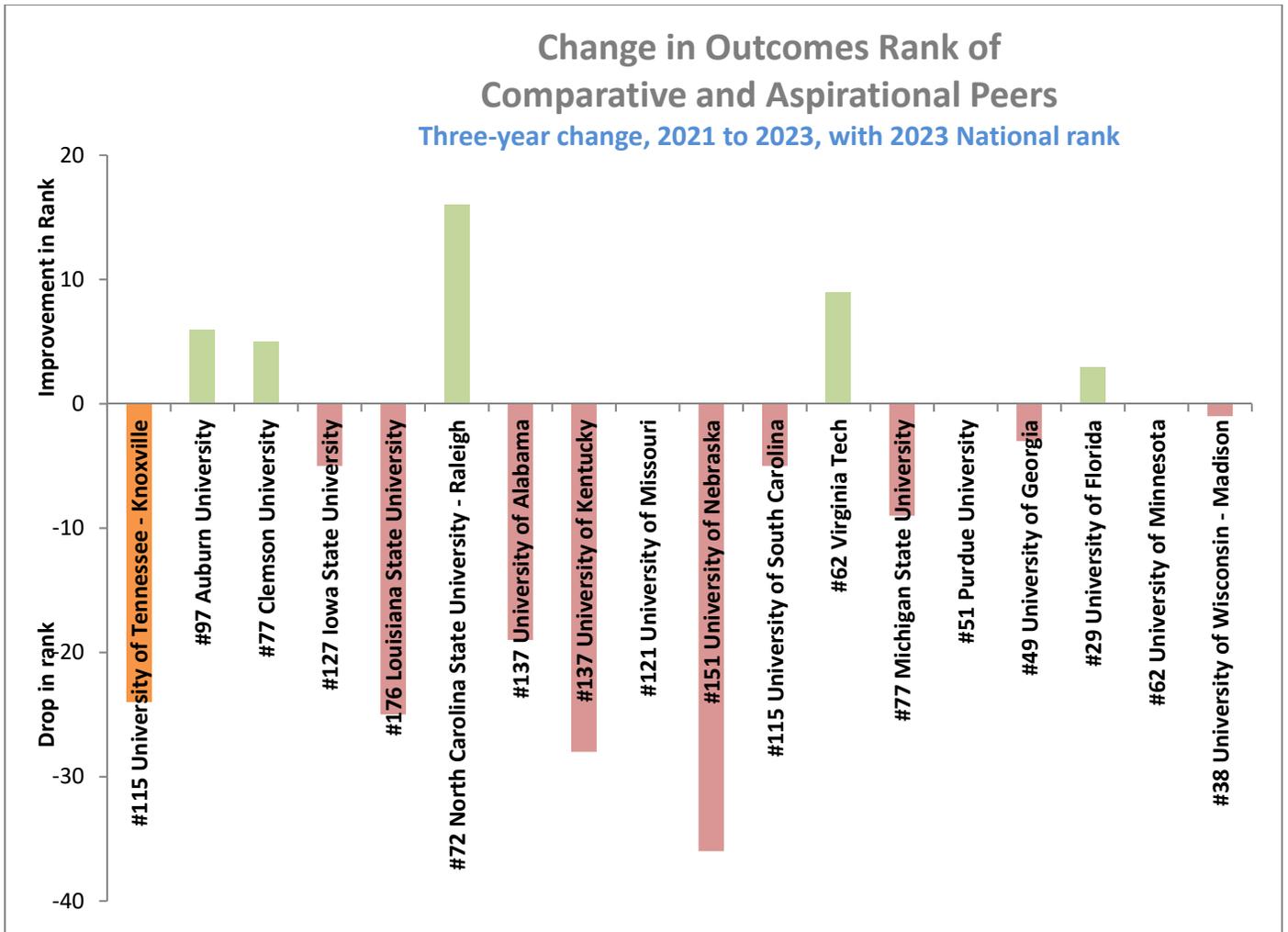
Ties among institutions can have a significant impact on an institution's yearly rank. In 2020 we were tied with 11 other institutions with 6 institutions tied in the rank above us, while in 2021 the number of institutions tied in the rank above us increased to 9 and we dropped in the rankings to #112. In 2022 we improved to #103 and were tied with 13 other institutions (with 4 tied in the rank above us). This year, we dropped to #115 (tied with 5 other institutions) with 10 institutions tied in the rank above us.

Our undergraduate business program ranked 39th nationally (up 10 places) and 26th among publics (up 4 places). The supply chain/logistics program is again ranked 3rd nationally and is also 3rd among public schools. Undergraduate engineering is ranked 68th (down 5 places) nationally and 38th among publics (down 3 places). Nursing came in at 51st (up 7 spots) nationally and 37th among publics (up 5 places). These discipline rankings are based solely on the peer surveys of deans and senior faculty members of the different programs.

U.S. News made several minor changes in their methodology this year. A change in weighting for the percentage of the 2020 entering class submitting test scores did not affect us. The proportion of faculty with terminal degree ranking factor was determined by using both full-time and part-time instructional faculty with terminal degrees. Also, both the average faculty salaries and class size ranking indicators only used 2021-22 academic year data instead of being based on two-year averages – as both indicators were in the previous ranking.

UTK dropped in the Outcomes rank, moving down from 157 to 171. The drop was fueled by decreases in our Graduation & Retention Rank, Social Mobility Rank, and Graduate Indebtedness Rank. The University's Graduation & Retention Rank fell slightly from 130 to 136. Two of our comparable peers had much larger drops in Outcomes, the Universities of Nebraska and Kentucky, mainly due to drops of -29 and -17 respectively in Graduation and Retention. Our Social Mobility Rank fell from 192 to 250, and all of our peers dropped anywhere from 20 to 75 spots. The Graduate Indebtedness Rank fell from 107 to 115 even though the percentage of graduates who borrowed remained the same along with the average federal indebtedness decreasing slightly (-\$498). UTK ranks better than nine of our comparable peers in the Graduate Indebtedness sub-ranking (federal loan debt) and one of our aspirational peers.

The following chart shows the changes in Outcomes Rank of our comparative and aspirational peers over a three year period, from 2021 to 2023. Over this period, 5 peers increased their rank and 9 peers decreased with 3 having no change.



UTK dropped significantly in the Faculty Resources ranking, from 141 to 198, which is still tied with or higher than 8 of our comparable peers and 2 of our aspirational peers. These falls were mostly due to changes in class size. Our percentage of classes with 20 or fewer students dropped to 28%, back to pre-pandemic levels. Many other institutions did the same, but a few of our peers made progress in this area. For the faculty compensation sub-rank, we ranked better than most of our peers.

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 the largest increases or decreases in the different categories.

Comparative Peers

- National Universities ranking
 - Increased in rank: Virginia Tech (13), University of Alabama (11) and NC State (7)
 - Decreased in rank: University of Nebraska (-15), UTK (-12), and the University of Kentucky (-10)
- Public Universities ranking
 - Increased in rank: Virginia Tech (7)
 - Decreased in rank: University of Nebraska (-8) and UTK (-7)
- Outcomes Rank
 - Increased in rank: Auburn University (7), NC State (7) and Clemson University (6)
 - Decreased in rank: University of Nebraska (-37), University of Kentucky (-27), LSU (-17), University of Alabama (-17), and UTK (-14)
- Faculty Resources Rank
 - Increased in Rank: Virginia Tech (109), University of Alabama (57), and NC State (18)
 - Decreased in rank: Clemson University (-110), Iowa State (-75), and UTK (-57)
- Student Excellence Rank:
 - Increased in Rank: University of Missouri (16), LSU (14), Virginia Tech (13), and NC State (11)
 - Decreased in rank: Auburn University (-14) and University of Alabama (-13)
- Financial Resources Rank:
 - Increased in Rank: Iowa State (6)
 - Decreased in rank: LSU (-43), University of Nebraska (-20), University of Alabama (-19), Auburn University (-16), University of Missouri (-16), and the University of South Carolina (-14)

Aspirational Peers

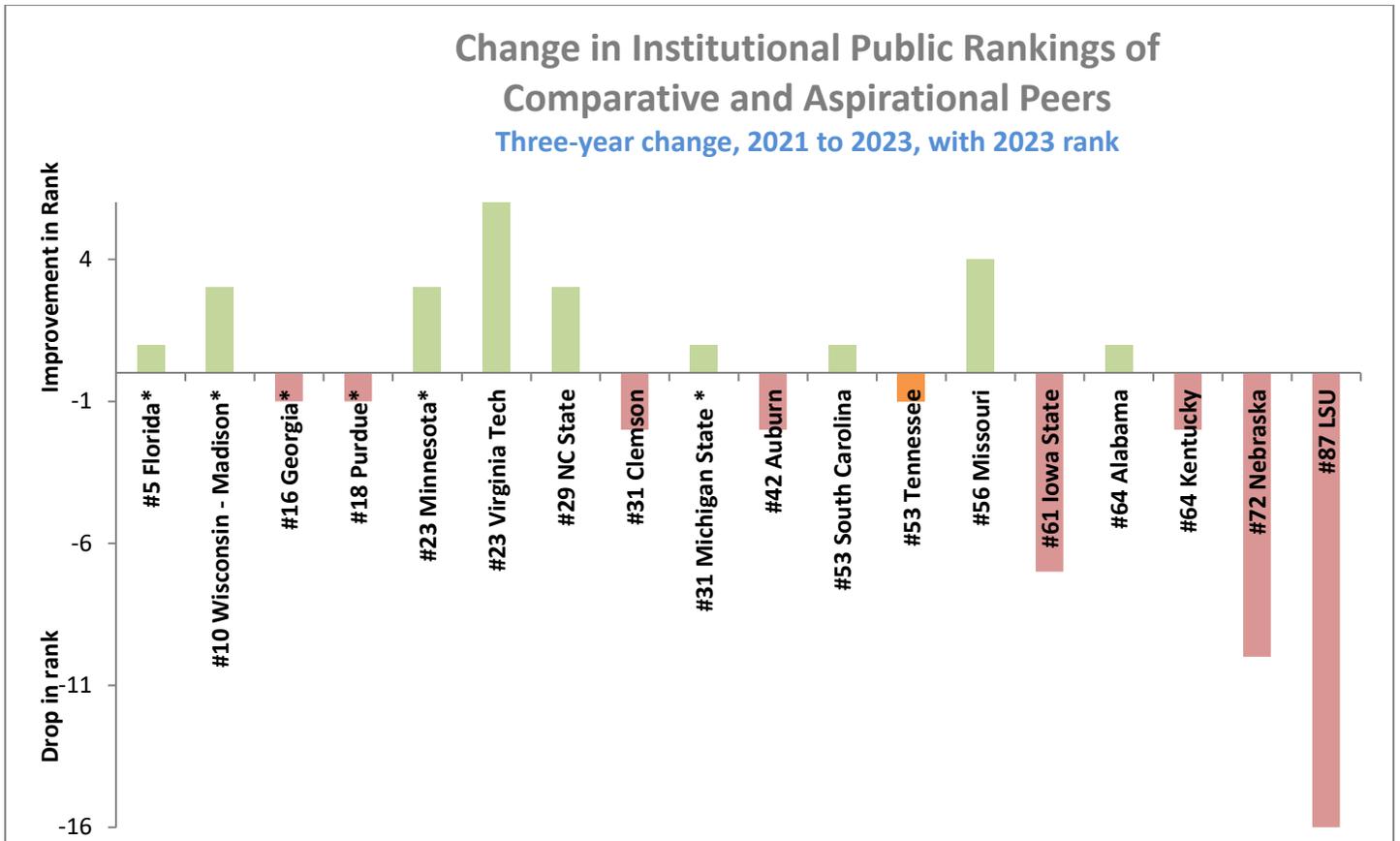
- National Universities ranking
 - Increased in rank: Michigan State University (6), and the University of Minnesota (6)
 - Decreased in rank: UTK (-12) and Purdue University (-2)
- Public Universities ranking
 - Increased in rank: University of Wisconsin - Madison (4) and the University of Minnesota (3)
 - Decreased in rank: UTK (-7)
- Outcomes Rank
 - Increased in rank: University of Florida (5)
 - Decreased in rank: UTK (-14) and the University of Minnesota (-9)

- Faculty Resources Rank
 - Increased in Rank: University of Minnesota (47), University of Wisconsin - Madison (23), Michigan State University (21), and the University of Georgia (11)
 - Decreased in rank: UTK (-57) and Purdue University (-17)
- Student Excellence Rank:
 - Increased in Rank: Michigan State University (6) and the University of Georgia (4)
 - Decreased in rank: University of Minnesota (-4)
- Financial Resources Rank:
 - Increased in Rank: University of Wisconsin - Madison (1)
 - Decreased in rank: UTK (-7), Michigan State University (-6), and the University of Georgia (-5)

SEC

- National Universities ranking
 - Increased in rank: University of Alabama (11) and
 - Decreased in rank: University of Arkansas (-14) and the University of Kentucky (-10)
- Public Universities ranking
 - Increased in rank: University of Alabama (3) and the University of Missouri (2)
 - Decreased in rank: University of Arkansas (-9)
- Outcomes Rank
 - Increased in rank: Auburn University (7) and the University of Florida (5)
 - Decreased in rank: University of Kentucky (-27), University of Alabama (-17), LSU (-17), Mississippi State (-16), UTK (-14), and University of Mississippi (-13)
- Faculty Resources Rank
 - Increased in Rank: University of Alabama (57) and Mississippi State (31)
 - Decreased in rank: University of Arkansas (-58), UTK (-57), and Texas A&M (-40)
- Student Excellence Rank:
 - Increased in Rank: University of Missouri (16) and LSU (14)
 - Decreased in rank: University of Arkansas (-24), Mississippi State (-20), Auburn University (-14), and the University of Alabama (-13)
- Financial Resources Rank:
 - Increased in Rank: Texas A&M (2)
 - Decreased in rank: LSU (-43), University of Alabama (-19), University of Missouri (-16), and Auburn University (-16)

The following chart shows the changes in institution rankings of our comparative and aspirational peers over a three year period, from 2021 to 2023. Over this period, 8 peers increased their public ranking and 10 peers decreased.



* Aspirational Peer

In the 2023 national rankings the University of Tennessee – Knoxville tied with five other universities. The public institutions tied with UTK include Rutgers University--Newark and the University of South Carolina. The private institutions that are tied with us are: Creighton University, Fairfield University, and Loyola University – Chicago.