

Dear SMU Community,

U.S. News & World Report has made dramatic modifications to its methodology for the 2024 Best Colleges rankings resulting in significant ranking shifts for numerous universities nationwide, including SMU. Under the publication's new calculations, SMU ranks 89th out of 439 national universities, down from 72. SMU remains the #1 university in North Texas and #2 in the state among private universities behind Rice University.

It is important to put these new rankings into context and to consider the disproportionate impact they had on public versus private institutions. The revision changed 17 of the 19 indicators used to calculate the assessment of national universities. Under this new methodology, public universities in Texas moved up in the rankings on average 35 places, while private institutions in Texas dropped on average about 14 places.

The magnitude of these shifts clearly points to changes in the US News' rating formula rather than changes in academic quality. Removed from consideration are several factors that have historically favored private institutions, such as small class size, percentage of faculty with terminal degrees, alumni giving, percentage of students who borrowed money to complete their degree, and top of the class high school standings for student recruits – all important academic quality measures that have been and will remain priorities for SMU.

US News' assessment now places greater emphasis on social mobility factors, such as recruiting, retaining and graduating Pell-eligible students and first-generation students, the latter being a new category for this year. These are critically important goals for SMU as well and are a major focus of our *SMU Ignited* campaign for impact, which includes a \$450 million goal toward that end. We are expanding SMU scholarships and programs that aim to support all students, with an increased focus on Pell-eligible and first-generation students, to ensure every student succeeds at SMU.

We know that more must be done to expand these efforts. The university's strategy remains focused on academic and career outcomes for all students throughout their time on the Hilltop including recruiting, retaining, graduating and supporting all students as they pursue their education at our university. We look forward to seeing how these initiatives further enhance academic excellence and the student experience on campus.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth G. Loba, PhD

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Southern Methodist University

<https://www.smu.edu/provost>

World Changers Shaped Here