

Ranking Online Education Programs: A Conversation with U.S. News

July 26, 2011

- The webcast will begin at the top of the hour.
- There is no audio being broadcast at this time.
- If you need assistance, contact Blackboard Collaborate: 866-388-8674.
- An archive of this webcast will be available on the WCET website next week.



Ranking Online Education Programs: A Conversation with U.S. News

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 - Call 866-388-8674
- Use the chat box for questions.
- Archive available next week.



Megan Raymond, WCET



Ranking Online Education Programs: A Conversation with U.S. News



Moderator: Cali Morrison, Manager, Major Grants, WCET

Speaker: Robert J. Morse, Director of Data Research

Speaker: Eric Brooks, Data Research Analyst

Other Project Participants: Diane Tolis, Data Collection Manager

Samuel Flanigan, Deputy Director of Data Research



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Who is Eligible to Participate in Surveys?

- ▶ Programs that self-report for academic year 2011-2012 that their students earn degrees through coursework that is collectively at least 80 percent accessible online
 - ▶ Limited in-person requirements allowable
 - ▶ Uses Sloan Consortium industry standard definition
- ▶ Class lectures/seminars must be audio or visual accessible over the Internet
- ▶ Course delivery may be synchronous or asynchronous

Who is Eligible to Participate in Surveys? Cont.

- ▶ Programs may participate if their online students are integrated into courses with non-online students, or if they are enrolled in stand-alone online education programs
- ▶ For-profit, not-for-profit private and public colleges/universities may participate

Online Degrees Evaluated for 2011

- ▶ Bachelor's Degrees (all majors)
- ▶ Master's Degrees
 - ▶ Business
 - ▶ Computer Information Technology
 - ▶ Education
 - ▶ Engineering
 - ▶ Nursing (includes Doctorate of Nursing Practice)

Criteria to Receive Surveys

- ▶ Bachelor's: Regionally accredited institutions that administer a bachelor's degree program (1767 schools)
- ▶ Business: Regionally accredited institutions that administer a master's degree in business program (964 schools)
- ▶ Computer Information Technology: Regionally accredited institutions that offer master's degree in computer engineering and/or computer science. The programs have ABET accreditation in computer engineering and/or computer science at the undergraduate level (333 schools).

Criteria to Receive Surveys Continued

- ▶ Education: Regionally accredited institutions that administer a master's degree in education program (1056 schools)
- ▶ Engineering: Regionally accredited institutions that offer master's degrees in engineering. The programs have ABET accreditation in engineering at the undergraduate level (257 schools)
- ▶ Nursing: Regionally accredited institutions that administer a CCNE or NLNAC accredited master's degree in nursing or doctorate of nursing practice degree (520 schools)

How Did U.S. News Develop the Survey Questions?

- ▶ Interviews with lead academics in online education programs
 - ▶ Consultation with multiple public, private for-profit, and private not-for-profit institutions
 - ▶ Consultation with programs offering each of the five Master's level degrees being surveyed
- ▶ Review of academic literature
- ▶ Review of industry literature
- ▶ Review of U.S. News Best Colleges and Best Graduate Schools surveys, and discontinued Distance Learning surveys

What are the main areas covered in the Online Degree data collection?

- ▶ Program eligibility (Yes or No)
- ▶ Contacts at the school
- ▶ Background – program characteristics
- ▶ Admissions and enrollment data
- ▶ Tuition – cost of attendance
- ▶ Course delivery technology: details about program's online education process and software
- ▶ Faculty – credentials; training and standards
- ▶ Graduation and retention
- ▶ Career outcomes post-graduation

Reporting Time Periods Used

- ▶ Statistical data (except current tuition) are mainly requested for academic year July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011
- ▶ Current tuition and non-statistical data are requested for academic year July 1, 2011-June 30, 2012
- ▶ Respondents provide unduplicated counts of all students/faculty who are enrolled in/instructors for online courses at any point during specified times
 - ▶ Programs that integrate online students with on-campus students into blended courses and consequently do not track online students on an individual level are asked to estimate total online student enrollment using course registration figures; otherwise, they may identify themselves as unable to report enrollment altogether.

Features of the Online Ed Survey Instruments

- ▶ Institutions can access all surveys they are eligible to complete from one portal
- ▶ Instant validation of data built into many questions; validation flags must be cleared for data to save
- ▶ Valid data saves automatically
- ▶ Contacts at each program have ability to grant colleagues access to surveys
- ▶ Skip patterns allow questions to be locked to users based upon responses to previous questions
- ▶ Modern design and functionality

How the Ranking Methodology Will be Created

- ▶ At this time the ranking methodology, or which evaluative lists will be used, have not been determined; research and analysis will come first
- ▶ Analytical methodology will be shaped by robustness of data collected among different questions
 - ▶ There may be limited overlap with Best Colleges and Best Graduate Schools evaluative metrics in cases when these metrics apply to online learning
 - ▶ Other evaluative questions may assess elements of special relevance to online learning, such as engagement and/or academic integrity
- ▶ The sophistication of this year's methodology and final rankings product is unknown, but will increase in future years.
- ▶ Rankings will be online education-specific, degree level-specific, and discipline-specific
- ▶ More disciplines will be included in future years

Final Product

- ▶ Revamped online education section on U.S. News website
 - ▶ Online degree search engine and in-depth profiles of online degree programs
 - ▶ Program requirements
 - ▶ Distinguishing program characteristics
 - ▶ Rankings or evaluative lists
- ▶ Goal is to collect the most comprehensive list possible of schools that offer online degree programs; something that does not exist at this time
- ▶ Website will increase in sophistication in time

Questions Submitted by WCET Members Prior to the Webcast

- ▶ What quality criteria will be used to create the rankings?
- ▶ When ranking online programs and considering retention and success rates, can that be done with a ratio that shows ftf rates compared to online rates?
- ▶ Will you consider teacher training program as part of a college's score?
- ▶ What will be done to ensure students understand the methodology for the ranking?

In Preparation for...

Questions from the Audience

- ▶ Add your questions to the chat box.
- ▶ The panelists will address questions in the next segment of the webcast.



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- ▶ Visit the WCET's Connect, Learn, Advance services on our new website: <http://wcet.wiche.edu/>
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- ▶ Attend WCET's 23rd Annual Conference in Denver, CO. October 26-29, 2011.

Thank you!

- ▶ Thank you U.S. News:
 - ▶ Speaker: Robert J. Morse, Director of Data Research
 - ▶ rmorse@usnews.com
 - ▶ Speaker: Eric Brooks, Data Research Analyst
 - ▶ EBrooks@usnews.com
- ▶ Thank you to our moderator today, Cali Morrison, Manger, Major Grants, WCET
 - ▶ cmorrison@wiche.edu

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Additional Information and Resources

- ▶ Access to the resources discussed during this webcast, including the archive, will be available next week.
 - ▶ <http://wcet.wiche.edu/connect/webcasts>
- ▶ We appreciate your feedback. Please take a quick survey:
 - ▶ <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/July26WebcastEval>

