

BU Jumps in *U.S. News* & *World Report* Rankings

Moves from 51 to 41, noted as “Up and Comer”

BOSTON UNIVERSITY HAS jumped 10 positions, from 51 to 41, in *U.S. News & World Report*'s annual ranking of the nation's colleges and universities, and now appears on a short list of “Up and Comers,” chosen for their “promising and innovative changes in the areas of academics, faculty, student life, campus, or facilities.” The publication made special note of BU's robust undergraduate research program as well as its extensive study abroad opportunities, and it cited the undergraduate business and engineering programs as among the best.

In this year's ranking of more than 1,500 colleges and universities, *U.S. News* considered many factors, including peer assessment, retention and graduation rates, faculty resources, student selectivity, financial resources, and alumni giving.

Melanie Madaio-O'Brien, assistant vice president for budget and institutional research, believes that the University's leap forward can be attributed to several factors, including BU's admission last November to the Association of American Universities, an elite organization of 62 leading research universities in the United States and Canada.

“This ranking is a combination of peer assessments,” Madaio-O'Brien says, “with 22.5 percent based on the reputation we have with our peers and high school counselors.”

BU'S U.S. NEWS RANKING may have been moved, in part, by efforts to improve faculty resources, which are measured by factors such as class size and student-to-faculty ratio, faculty salaries, and the number of faculty who are full-time and hold the highest degrees in their fields.

She says student quality has improved because the University is becoming more selective as it moves to reduce class size, a practice that has also improved SAT scores and the class rank of accepted students. “We are also seeing better retention and graduation rates,” she says.

The ranking may have also been moved by efforts by President Robert A. Brown and University Provost Jean Morrison to improve faculty resources, Madaio-O'Brien says, which are measured by a combination of factors, such as class size and student-to-faculty ratio, faculty salaries, and the number of faculty who are full-time and hold the highest degrees in their fields. BU has continued to hire faculty while many peer institutions have slowed theirs, she says, and the University's ranking in alumni participation has also improved. This year's 9 percent participation earned BU a ranking of 147, while last year's 8 percent participation rate put the University at 168.

The categories stayed the same this year, but the relative weights assigned to each category changed slightly from past years. This was an attempt to put more emphasis on student outcomes rather than student quality. For example, the weight assigned to the student selectivity score counted

for 12.5 percent of the overall score, down from 15 percent. Meanwhile, the weight assigned to graduation and retention rates was raised from 20 percent to 22.5 percent. In addition, when calculating the student selectivity score, class rank counted for 25 percent, down from 40 percent, while SAT/ACT scores were raised to 65 percent, from 50 percent.

“Although no evaluation system really captures all the aspects of a comprehensive research university, this significant jump in our ranking in *U.S. News & World Report* is another indication that our investments in our faculty, academic programs, student success, and facilities are starting to take hold and to be recognized nationally,” says Brown. “When taken together with our membership in the Association of American Universities last fall, and the early success of our fundraising campaign, it all adds up to great momentum for Boston University.”

Morrison, BU's chief academic officer, says the ranking is “a reflection of the hard work of our faculty, whose scholarship, practical research discoveries, and commitment to excellence are each day helping to redefine their fields of study and producing success in the broader marketplace.” **ART JAHNKE**



KALMAN ZABARSKY