

## California public universities outrank traditional elites in new ratings system

By Andrew Edwards, Press-Telegram

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California's public universities fared well in a new style of college rankings released Friday that overturn the dominant paradigm of Ivy League preeminence.

The new standards, based on criteria from the White House, emphasize such criteria as graduation rates and affordability.

UC Riverside took the No. 1 spot, and 10 of the Top 25 universities in the new rankings, compiled by Time Magazine, are part of the University of California or Cal State University Systems.

Cal State Long Beach, ranked in the 10th spot, had the highest ranking of any CSU school.

"This newest ranking is another confirmation that Cal State Long Beach is among the nation's best values in higher education," interim campus president Donald J. Para said in an emailed statement. "We offer our students a high-quality, low-cost education."

The new rankings generally omitted many institutions that are regarded as being among the nation's most elite universities from the Top 25. Not a single Ivy League school reached the Top 25; Harvard University was good enough to place 31st — one place behind Cal State San Bernardino.

"We're pleased to have made Time magazine's list of top colleges and universities in the United States. We take great pride in our exceptional students, our inspiring faculty, and our dedicated administration and staff members who have worked hard to make CSUSB a great university," Cal State San Bernardino president Tomas Morales said in an email.

Many of the country's most prestigious public schools were also left off the highest tier of the list. For example, flagship public universities like North Carolina (72), Virginia (77) Michigan (124) and Texas (126) missed the Top 25, as did UC Berkeley, which ranked in the 51st spot.

Among schools that did make the Top 25, UCLA barely made it in at the 25th rank, but was bested by several sister campuses. UC San Diego took second place, followed by UC Irvine (4), UC Davis (6), UC Santa Cruz (14) and UC Santa Barbara (16).

Within the CSU system, the Fresno and Stanislaus campuses ranked 21st and 22nd, respectively, and Cal State Dominguez Hills in Carson ranked 29th.

"When you focus on what's right, like affordable access and quality of education, community service and student success, it's not surprising that we are ranked so high.

With the right investment, we intend to be ranked even higher,” Dominguez Hills president Willie J. Hagan said in an emailed statement.

The Obama Administration proposed in late November that a new ratings system is necessary to help prospective college students plan for higher education given that students who use loans to finance their classes were graduating with an average debt of \$26,000.

The goal expressed for the new ratings was to assess schools factors such as on affordability, graduation rates, graduates’ earnings and access, with the last to be measured by the percentage of students who receive Pell Grants. The plan was for the rankings to be published before the 2015 school year, and the administration proposed that federal financial aid disbursements should be linked to schools’ performance in the new style of rankings.

Time Magazine’s list is not a report of an official government ranking, but is instead the magazine’s attempt to figure out who would come on top if the proposed system were in place.

## Deciding Factors

May 7, 2014

Inside Higher Ed

By Carl Straumsheim

Faculty members and staffers at Northwestern and Washington State Universities, after more than a year of surveys, pilots and presentations, wanted roughly the same services and quality from their new learning management systems. Yet last month, they decisively chose different software providers.

Northwestern will move to Instructure's Canvas; Washington State to Blackboard Learn. Both will leave older Blackboard products, and at both institutions, ease of use, file management and grading ranked as three key features of a new learning management system.

But as the cases at Northwestern and Washington State show, the deciding factor may not always be a feature.

"When you're looking at the learning management systems and comparing them, their feature sets overlap by about 85 percent," said Gregory J. Crouch, clinical associate professor of chemistry at Washington State University at Pullman. "I don't care how they're the same -- tell me how they're different."

Despite the software providers' attempts to outperform one another on features, many faculty members still see a perfectly usable learning management system as one where they can deposit their syllabuses at the beginning of the semester and grades at the end -- and not pay much attention in between those events.

"I don't really care about learning management systems," said Mitchell A. Petersen, the Glen Vasel professor of finance at Northwestern. "The less time I need to spend with the system, the better off I am. If I need to think about it, that's a problem."

That "whatever works" attitude was reflected in a survey conducted in October 2012, when faculty at Northwestern identified a need to review the learning management system market. To the surprise of those behind the initiative, about two-thirds of faculty members said they were satisfied with the Blackboard system, deployed on campus in 1999. But tucked away in the responses were signs that "it was clear people were looking for a more modern system," said Victoria Getis, manager of faculty support services.

After months of tinkering with the latest offerings from Blackboard, Instructure and Desire2Learn -- followed by two quarters of pilot courses on Instructure's Canvas platform -- faculty opinion flipped. Of the 44 faculty members who responded to a post-pilot survey, 36 said they preferred Canvas, while only two preferred to remain with

Blackboard. Results among students were similarly skewed: Almost 400 of the 502 surveyed said they supported a switch.

As faculty were asked to compare Canvas to an older version of Blackboard's platform, the numbers may not come as a surprise. But even with the availability of sandboxed versions of the latest software from the three companies, the university "really didn't get much positive movement toward either Desire2Learn or Blackboard," Getis said.

Northwestern is part of a broader trend in the learning management system market, where institutions embark on years-long transitions to replace software more than a decade old. The end of those transitions, they hope, will bring not just savings on computer hardware -- the new systems are hosted in the cloud -- but also the flexibility to access it from a variety of devices and connect it to other web apps. When Northwestern finally powers off its old system in August 2015, it will have been almost three years since the university began the painstaking process.

"You don't want to be locked into the new thing as opposed to being locked into the old thing, because the new thing is going to be old in five years," Petersen said.

Two years ago, Washington State also looked poised to switch to Canvas. In May 2012, the 34 public institutions governed by the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges announced it would replace its aging Angel Learning system, owned by Blackboard, with Canvas. Crouch said the board tends to set the tone for universities in the state, but that faculty at Washington State wanted to complete their own review of the software they would be dealing with for the foreseeable future.

"Canvas is the new shiny thing -- it really is," Crouch said. "As the committee goes, we're fairly mystified as to why Canvas is gaining the traction."

By some estimates, Blackboard's share of the learning management system market has fallen 30 percentage points in the last six and a half years. Blackboard has responded by expanding abroad, investing in open-source software and continuing to develop its Learn platform. It still controls nearly half the market, compared to Desire2Learn and Instructure, which both register in the teens.

After two rounds of surveys and vendor presentations, a committee of faculty, staff and students unanimously chose Blackboard Learn. As with Northwestern, Washington State's decision was influenced by more than just feature comparisons.

While Northwestern welcomed "armies of [Instructure] people," according to Getis, Crouch said Instructure only sent a single sales representative to Washington State. Blackboard also spent weeks on a document describing how its software differed from that of Desire2Learn and Instructure, and "bent over backwards" to assist the university during its pilot.

“I want somebody to fight!” Crouch said. “These things are not cheap -- 300 grand or something like that? ... I want people to want it! When you’re trying to buy something, you want them to work at it! [Instructure] just didn’t.”

Washington State also chose the perceived long-term security of Blackboard, a familiar force in the market, over Instructure, which is expected to go public sometime this year.

“We didn’t want to take the chance,” said Devon A. Seymour, a junior political science and French major who served as the student representative on the committee.

“Blackboard is a really well-established company.”

Faculty members at Northwestern and Washington State also split on the need to customize every aspect of the learning management system -- there, Canvas is slightly more restrictive. While Crouch said the decision struck him as “odd,” faculty members at Northwestern eventually decided to let a consistent student experience trump the need for customization from top to bottom.

“Canvas clearly shut down some of the control, and I was irritated -- how dare you tell me how to set up the class?” Petersen said. “It makes it more difficult for me in a sense, but it makes it much easier for the students.... This trade-off between faculty and students -- who are you trying to make it easier for? -- is definitely a balancing act.”

And after spending several years on the transition, Getis said she hopes faculty will use the new system as more than a repository.

"I'm hoping that this is the first step to many more engaging and creative ways of using technology in the classroom and outside the classroom," Getis said. "We will be using it as a first step toward using technology to not only engage students, but also facilitate teaching and student learning."

Enrollments drop, but at slower rate  
By Daily Staff, Published May 15, 2014

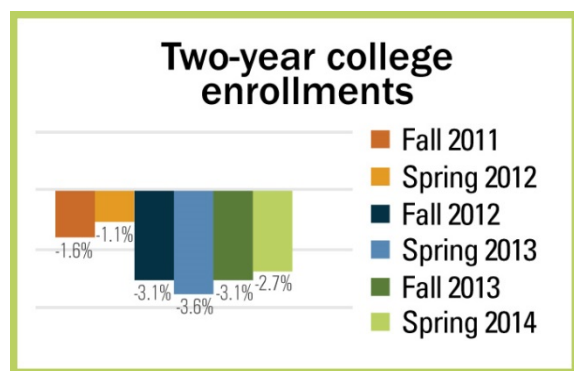
Source: National Student Clearinghouse

Enrollments at community colleges continue to decline, but at a slower pace, according to a new study on higher education enrollment.

Enrollments at public two-year colleges dropped 2.7 percent from spring 2013 to spring 2014, according to the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). However, the decrease is less than last year (3.6 percent).

Nationally, enrollment among all postsecondary institutions studied in the report dipped 0.8 percent, with four-year public and four-year private nonprofit institutions seeing an increase of 0.7 percent and 2.0 percent, respectively. Enrollments of older community college students dropped much more than younger students, though, again at a slower rate than in the previous year. Students age 24 and younger had a 0.5 percent decline in enrollment, while the rate for students over age 24 was 5.9 percent. In spring 2013, the enrollment dip among older students was 6.2 percent.

“With an improving economy, it is not surprising that older adults are choosing to return to the workforce instead of attending postsecondary education themselves and that the families of younger students are in a better position to afford to pay for their children’s education,” surmised Jolanta Juskiewicz, director of policy analysis at the American Association of Community Colleges.



### Trends for women, part-timers

The study also shows that the number of women enrolling at community colleges continues to decline, though, again, at a slower rate — 3.2 percent in spring 2014 compared to 4.5 percent in spring 2013. Among men attending community college, the rate of decrease was 2.1 percent for this spring, compared to 2.4 percent last spring.

NSC data show lower enrollments among part-time students compared to full-time students, 3.1 percent and 2.5 percent, respectively.

NSC also provided state enrollment figures, though not by institutional sector. Enrollments among all colleges and universities for spring 2013-2014 covered the gamut, ranging from an 8.4 percent decrease in Iowa, to an increase of 15.5 percent in New Hampshire. Institutions in New York saw a 1.1 percent drop, while California saw its rate decrease 0.3 percent. Florida had no change in its enrollments, while Texas saw a 1.3 percent increase.



May 22, 2014

Dear Thomas,

On Friday, the Senate Budget Committee adopted an alternative proposal to provide 100% funding to the California State Teachers Retirement System over the next 33 years. The alternative meets the same funding goals of the governor, but phases in the increases on employers and most employees more slowly in the early years and more steeply in the later years.

The increased contributions under both plans would commence July 1, 2014.

<b>Proposed STRS Contribution Rates Governor's Proposal</b>				
	<b>Employer</b>	<b>Employee (pre- 2013 hire date)</b>	<b>Employee (post- 2013 hire date)</b>	<b>State</b>
2013-14	8.25%	8%	8%	3.1%
2014-15	9.5	9.2	8.08	3.45
2015-16	11.1	10.25	8.56	4.89
2016-17	12.7	10.25	9.21	6.33
2017-18	14.3	10.25	9.21	6.33
2018-19	15.9	10.25	9.21	6.33
2019-20	17.5	10.25	9.21	6.33
2020-21	19.1	10.25	9.21	6.33
<b>Share of Solution</b>	<b>\$42B</b>	<b>\$12B</b>		<b>\$20B</b>

<b>Proposed STRS Contribution Rates Senate's Proposal</b>				
	<b>Employer</b>	<b>Employee (pre- 2013 hire date)</b>	<b>Employee (post- 2013 hire date)</b>	<b>State</b>
2013-14	8.25%	8%	8	3.04%
2014-15	8.88	8.15	8.15	3.45
2015-16	9.81	9.20	8.56	4.89
2016-17	11.81	10.25	9.21	6.33
2017-18	14.25	10.25	9.21	6.33
2018-19	17.75	10.25	9.21	6.33
2019-20	18.75	10.25	9.21	6.33
2020-21	19.10	10.25	9.21	6.33
<b>Share of Solution</b>	<b>\$42B</b>	<b>\$12B</b>		<b>\$20B</b>



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Scott".

Scott Lay  
President and Chief Executive Officer, The League  
Orange Coast College '94