



Postsecondary Institutional Rankings for Assessing Economic and Social Mobility

Janet Holt, Illinois Education Research Council, SIUE, Steven Lawton, & Mary Frazier-Meyers, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

Presentation at the Mid-Western Educational Research Association

October 27, 2016

Evanston, IL

STL Graduates Project

- Mission of St. Louis Graduates is to increase high quality certificates, associate's and bachelor's degrees among low income, first generation, and students of color from the St. Louis metro area.
- Collaborative network of K-12, higher education, college access & success non-profits, business, and philanthropy groups.
- In 2015-16 partnered with St. Louis Regional Chamber and was funded by Lumina Foundation as part of their Community Partnership for Attainment
- Formed STL Grads Higher Education Recognition Task Force to recognize those higher education institutions effectively elevating the success of these student populations
- One goal was to see how these institutions fared on college rankings, particularly for success for populations of interest



Goals of the Current Research

Based on the available data concerning the current college ranking systems and their methodology, this study has the following goals:

1. Provide an objective summary of the various types of college ranking systems and the variables that are prioritized in each system.
 2. Combine features of multiple ranking systems to provide an index of how well colleges and universities perform for disadvantaged students, as defined by low-income students, first generation students, and students of color.
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3. Describe the strategies that successful institutions are using to support these population to graduation.



Theoretical Framework

- 65% of all jobs in the U.S. will require some postsecondary degree by 2020 (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2013).
- Economic opportunity is lacking for low-income students.
- This discrepancy is partially due to the choices made when deciding on colleges to apply to and attend.
- Low income students are more likely to attend 2-year and 4-year for-profit institutions and 2-year public colleges (Nichols, 2015).
- Institutional ranking systems can supply information that may help to alleviate the academic capital gap for low-income students.
- The propagation of ranking systems has provided various types of data for evaluation of institutional success.



Institutional Rankings Overview

- Institutional rankings are important for prospective students when deciding where to apply and attend college.
- U.S. News and World Report is a common ranking tool that prospective students and their parents use to compare institutions, although many new ranking tools are coming available.
- It is important for students and their families to understand the underlying factors that comprise the current college ranking systems.
- Ranking systems provide key information that can lead to improved economic mobility for disadvantaged students.



Prestige Ranking Systems

- 1. U.S. News and World Report:** Used for “students, faculty, and administrators who want to gauge the reputation of institutions where they work or might want to work”.

Components: Undergraduate academic reputation (22.5%), Graduation and freshman retention rates (22.5%), Faculty resources (20%), Student selectivity (12.5%), financial resources (10%), Graduation rate performance (7.5%), and Alumni giving (5%)

- 2. Forbes Best College List:** Used for “students who want high-earning careers and administrators who want to gauge the success of their own institution relative to others for consumers.”

Components: Student Satisfaction (25%), Post-Graduate Success (32.5%), Student Debt (25%), Graduation Rate (7.5%), and Academic Success (10%)



Prestige Ranking Systems Continued

- 3. Princeton Review:** “Focused primarily on the students themselves and the perceptions they have about a given school they currently attend”

Student survey : 1) their school’s academics/ administration, 2) life at their college, 3) their fellow students, & 4) themselves

- 4. Parchment Student Choice:** Based on # colleges students apply to relative to the colleges they attend. Creates ranking and creates a probability that student will attend college. Uses a point system to rank schools based on matches (extra points for unexpected matches).



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Economic Mobility Ranking Systems

- 1. Niche College Ranking:** “Student and alumni realities at each college”

Academics Grade (25.0%), Value Grade (25.0%), Professors Grade (10.0%), Student Surveys on Overall Experience (10.0%), Diversity Grade (7.5%), Student Life Grade (7.5%), Athletics Grade (5.0%), Campus Quality Grade (5.0%), Local Area Grade (2.5%), Safety Grade (2.5%)

- 2. College Scorecard:** Focused on both access (i.e., cost) and success (i.e., potential earnings). Created “to produce value-added rankings based on the earnings of alumni”.

Five key data areas relative to a specific college: institution’s costs, graduation rate, loan default rate, average amount borrowed, and employment

- 3. The Economist:** Intended for students who want to know which colleges are likely to boost their future salaries by the greatest amount, given their qualifications and preferences regarding career and location. Uses scorecard data and regression analyses to determine projected earnings based on student and institutional characteristics.

- 4. Kiplinger Best Value**

55% Quality measures; 45% Financial measures

Competitiveness (22.5%), Graduation Rates (18.75%), Academic Support (13.75%), Cost and Financial Aid (35%), and Student Indebtedness (10%)



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Economic Mobility Systems Continued

- 5. Brookings College Ranking:** Institution's dimensions of quality, as well as the difference between actual alumni outcomes (like salaries) and the outcomes one would expect given a student's characteristics and the type of institution.

Based on curriculum value, alumni skills, STEM orientation, completion rates, and student aid

- 6. Money Magazine's Best College List:** Provides information related to colleges and universities that give you the best value for your money.

Quality of education (33%); Affordability (33%); Outcomes (33%)

- 7. Unigo:** Identifies the schools that are both a good FIT and that provide good expected earnings for the time and money that you've invested.

School Fit (i.e. types of students, geographic location), Likelihood of Acceptance, Personality Fit (school culture), and expected earnings



Access and Social Mobility Ranking Systems

- 1. Pro Publica's Debt by Degrees:** focus on the financial burden on college students from low-income families and on how much certain schools support their poorest students financially

% Received Pell Grants, Avg. Cost for Low-Income Students, Avg. Discount for Low-Income Students, and Median Federal Debt of Pell Grantees

- 2. Washington Monthly's College Ranking:** Rates schools based on their contribution to the public good in three broad categories: Social Mobility (recruiting and graduating low-income students), Research (producing cutting-edge scholarship and PhDs), and Service (encouraging students to give something back to their country).

- 3. Social Mobility Index:** "The extent to which a college or university educates more economically disadvantaged students (with family incomes below the national median) at lower tuition, so they can graduate and obtain good paying jobs"

Published tuition, % of Student body whose families are below the US median income, Graduation rate, Reported median salary 0-5 years after graduation, and Endowment



Access and Social Mobility Ranking Systems Continued

4. Payscale College ROI Report: Examines return on investment for college grads. You can see which colleges are providing the best monetary return for their alumni via low cost of attendance, high earning potential or a combination of the two.

Uses data for each institution such as graduation rates, time to graduation, aid students receive (grants), household income distribution and then looks at 20 year median income for graduates and compare how students are fairing in comparison to national sample

5. Ed Trust Graduation Rate Tool: Not a ranking system, but a tool to compare institutions. Look at trends in graduation rates and colleges track records for graduating diverse students. Specifically compare institutions on their record of graduating Pell recipients.

Can compare institutions based on graduation rates by race OR gender; graduation rates by race AND gender; graduation rates over time; retention and progression rates; degrees granted by program area; college characteristics, student characteristics; admissions, price and financial aid; financial outcomes; and funding and faculty



Summary of Ranking Systems

- **Prestige Rankings:** Main focus is the reputation of the college and the selectivity of the students
 - U.S. News and World Report
 - Forbes Best College List
 - Princeton Review:
 - Parchment Student Choice
- **Economic Mobility Rankings:** Main focus is future income based on expected income levels based on student characteristics
 - Niche College Ranking
 - College Scorecard
 - The Economist
 - Kiplinger Best Value
 - Brookings College
 - Money Magazine's Best College List:
 - Unigo
- **Access and Social Mobility Rankings:** Main focus is factors that improve access, affordability, and graduation for disadvantaged students
 - Pro Publica's Debt by Degrees
 - Washington Monthly's College Ranking
 - Social Mobility Index
 - Payscale College ROI Report
 - Ed Trust Graduation Rate Tool



Ranking Data Limitations

- All but one system (Brookings) do not provide data on community colleges
- Many systems missing data on the 4-year institutions from 48% coverage (Kiplinger) to 100% (Brookings and Niche)
- Few rankings systems rank institutions on the ability of underprivileged students to access them though lower tuition or other practices (Pro Publica's Debt by Degrees, Washington Monthly's College Ranking, Social Mobility Index, PayScale College ROI Report)
- None ranked all 27 of the institutions
 - Best: Brookings College Rankings (26 of 27 ranked)
 - Worst: Kiplinger Best Value List (6 of 27 ranked)



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Institutions of Interest

Four Year

- Fontbonne University
- Harris-Stowe State University
- Lincoln University
- Lindenwood University
- Maryville University
- McKendree University
- Missouri Baptist University
- Missouri State University--Springfield
- Missouri University of Science & Technology
- Ranken Technical College
- Saint Louis University
- Southeast Missouri State University
- Southern Illinois University--Carbondale
- Southern Illinois University--Edwardsville
- Truman State University

- University of Central Missouri
- University of Missouri--Columbia
- University of Missouri--Kansas City
- University of Missouri--St. Louis
- Washington University
- Webster University

Two Year

- East Central College
- Jefferson College
- Lewis & Clark Community College
- St. Charles Community College
- St. Louis Community College
- Southwestern Illinois College



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Creating New Metric

- Provide a metric for determining which schools are successful with populations of interest
- Ensure each institution enrolled a moderate amount of low- income students
 - cut-off % Pell \geq 25%
- Ensure that the graduation rate was at least 50%



Data

- IPEDS data for graduation rates, % underrepresented minorities, % Pell
- College scorecard data for median debt at graduation and % first generation
- Selected primarily 4-year institutions from the list of St. Louis institutions ($n=20$)



Success Methodology for 4-Year Institutions

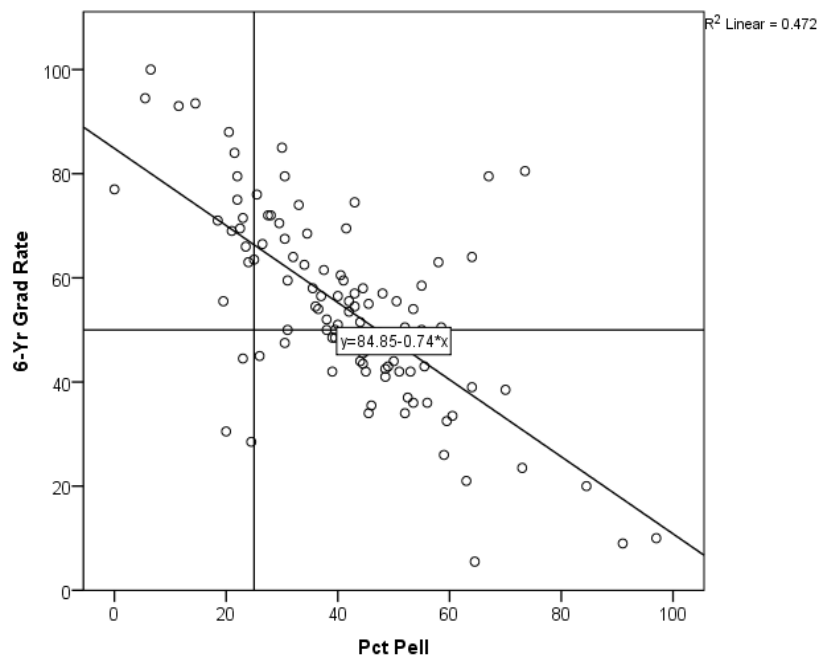
- Predicted – Actual 6-year Graduation Rate (averaged for AY13 & AY14)

–Predictor Variables:

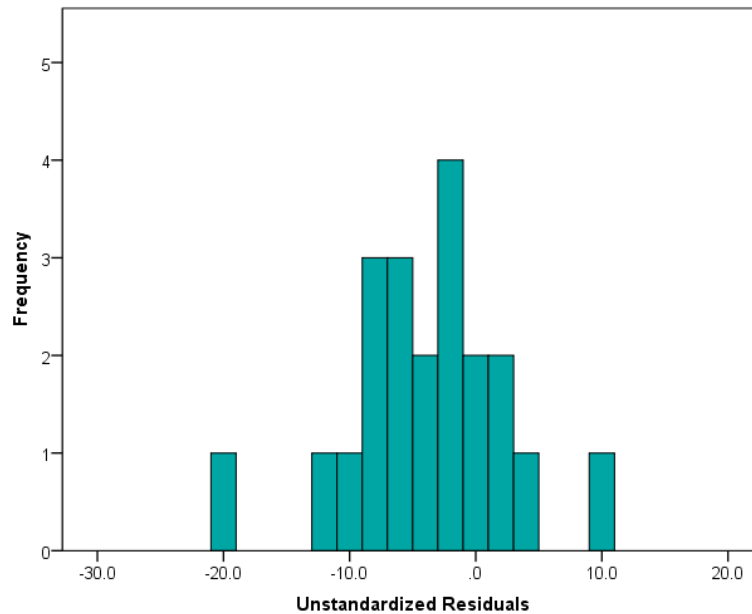
- Percent Pell, averaged for AY13 & AY14
 - Proportion of enrolled URMs (Black or African American + Hispanic/Latino) for AY13 & AY14
 - Percent First Generation for AY12 & AY13
- Median Debt at Graduation (averaged for AY12 & AY13)
- Formula: Standardized Predicted vs. Actual Graduation rate – Standardized Debt



Predicted vs. Actual Illustration



Residuals – Merged back to STL Grads Institutions



Institution Screening

- Institutions eliminated if:
 - Below 25% Pell recipients attending
 - Lower than 50% 6-year Graduation Rate
 - Primarily a 2-year institution
- 4 institutions (2 public and 2 private) met these criteria and were ranked by success formula



Current Data Collection Underway

Interviewing Administrators and Students at 4 Ranked Institutions

- Institution Leads for:
 - Academic Affairs/ Student Success
 - Student Affairs and/or Diversity and Inclusion
 - Enrollment Management
 - Financial Aid
- An institution-selected focus group of 6 – 8 students from the populations we are emphasizing
- Goal is to describe the success strategies that these institutions are using to increase graduation among these student populations



Release Date Feb 16, 2017

- Look for publication of report and STL Graduates release event at our websites:

<http://ierc.education>

<http://www.stlouisgraduates.org>





Limitations

- Many institutions with high % Pell have a lot of transfer students and part-time students – IPEDS grad rates based on first-time full-time cohorts
- Data, particularly from College Scorecard, are a couple years old
- Student perspectives may be more positive than as a whole – institution selected student pool



Future Research

- Continue to track trends and look for relationships between newly implemented institutional strategies and later success
- Create new metrics once cohorts from new IPEDS data are available
- Study diffusion of success strategies across institutions – best ways to influence institutional behavior





Illinois Education Research Council

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

Janet Holt, Executive Director

janholt@siue.edu

<http://ierc.education>

  **@IERC_SIUE**