

AU 8th in nation in Washington Monthly rankings

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Alfred University moved up to eighth in the nation among master's degree institutions in the Washington Monthly College Rankings. The University was 20th last year. The rankings were released today. "American higher education is in the midst of the worst crisis of all time," said President Charles M. Edmondson. "Colleges and universities are being criticized - with some justification - for failing to fulfill their mission, which is to provide people with an education that will help them improve their lives." That it is why it is particularly gratifying to be ranked so highly by Washington Monthly magazine," said Edmondson. "This is an impartial third party who looks at colleges and universities in ways that others do not, and affirms that Alfred University is doing what we promise: We help students achieve their potential, sometimes against the odds." The more traditional college rankings look at what students bring with them to school - their test scores, their grade-point averages, and their socioeconomic backgrounds - not what the students gain over the four years they are in school, Edmondson explained. "Washington Monthly ranks institutions according to how much they exceed predicted success rates," Edmondson said. "In other words, this ranking looks at how well we help our students, and how much we contribute to society." Other rankings also measure colleges in terms of how many people they deny admission; the "more selective" the college, the higher it is ranked. The Washington Monthly ranking looks at who the colleges accept; how they help them achieve; and what the impact on society is. "We devised our college rankings to change the system by offering a different, healthier set of incentives that reward schools for promoting research, service and social mobility," said Editor Paul Glastris in his column in the September/October 2011 issue of Washington Monthly. Rather than look at measures of wealth as a measure of quality, Washington Monthly looks at "what a public-minded college should do." Since 2005, Washington Monthly has attempted to answer the question, "What are colleges doing for the country?" The editors wrote, "We all benefit when colleges produce ground-breaking research that drives economic growth, when they offer students from low-income families the path to a better life, and when they shape the character of future leaders. And we all pay for it, through hundreds of billions of dollars in public subsidies. Everyone has a stake in how that money is spent." One-third of the Washington Monthly ranking is based on measures of social mobility. It looks at how committed colleges are to enrolling low-income students and helping them earn degrees, something that is reflected in the percentage of students who receive Pell Grants, and then the predicted vs. actual six-year graduation rate for those students. "This is a standard against which Alfred University measures very well," said Edmondson. "Thirty-two percent of our students have family incomes that qualify them for Pell Grants. The anticipated graduation rate is 57 percent, and our actual rate is 69 percent." The magazine notes that at the most elite - and wealthiest colleges - in the country, only one in 25 students qualifies for a

Pell Grant, meaning only 4 percent of their students come from low-income families. Washington Monthly looks at research expenditures and the percentage of students who go on to earn doctoral degrees in their fields. Those standards, it says, reflect how much the institution is contributing to the economy. Alfred University ranks third in the country among all master's degree-granting institutions in the percentage of graduates enrolling in doctoral programs. The final category includes measures of service - how much the students contribute to the public good. Criteria for that include number of students entering the Peace Corps and the Reserve Officer Training Corps; the percentage of federal work-study funds spent on public service; the number of community service hours students donate; and the number of staff, courses and financial aid committed to service.