

'A different kind of ranking' places Alfred University 20th in nation

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A new measure for ranking colleges places Alfred University 20th in the nation among master's universities, according to Washington Monthly magazine. Washington Monthly uses different standards that it says measure how service-oriented the schools are to determine the rankings, dividing its criteria into three categories: social mobility, research and service. "[W]hile there were plenty of guides out there that help students and parents decide how to spend their tuition dollars wisely, there wasn't one to tell citizens and policymakers which colleges were spending their tax dollars wisely," explain the Washington Monthly editors in the edition that arrives on newsstand today. "This new ranking system attempts to address other guides and rankings tend to ignore: what an institution actually does to help its students improve," said Alfred University President Charles M. Edmondson. "Most of best-known rankings concentrate on little more than the exclusivity of an institution, and by doing so, often reward institutions more for how many students it turns away than for how well it serves their needs. Imagine rating a hospital or a restaurant merely because it refused service to someone. Yet, that is sometimes the net effect of most rankings." Even though Alfred University fares well in those rankings, I take more personal satisfaction from The Washington Monthly ranking because it affirms that "We really do what we say we do," said Edmondson. "From our founding, the real focus of Alfred University has been to help young people fulfill their potential regardless of their background. We care more about where they can go in life than where they started." The criteria used by Washington Monthly include the percentage of students who receive federal Pell Grants, the assistance program that allows low-income students to attend college, and the difference between the anticipated graduation rate, predicted on the basis of SAT scores, and the actual graduation rate for those students. At Alfred University, 28 percent of the nearly 2,000 undergraduate students are eligible for Pell Grants. The anticipated graduation rate is 59 percent; the actual rate is 67 percent. Another set of measures looks at the amount of research dollars, and the percentage of graduates who go on to receive the highest degree in their fields. Alfred University's research expenditures are \$5.4 million per year. It ranks third in the nation among the master's universities for the percentage of students who earn advanced degrees. The service component looks at the number of graduates who enter the Peace Corps, the number who are involved in the Reserve Officer Training Corps, the percent of federal work-study funds spent on service projects, the percentage of students involved in community service and the number of hours they volunteer, as well as the number of service-learning courses, community service staff and financial aid support. Also out Sunday, Parade magazine offered it "A list" of colleges. Alfred University was among the top 25 in the country for its School of Art & Design. Parade asked for recommendations from 43 guidance counselors to compile its lists. Last week, Alfred University learned it was ranked third in the North among masters' degree-granting institutions as a "Great School at a Great Price" by US News and World Report, which also ranked the University 20th overall in the North. Forbes.com and Princeton Review earlier included Alfred University in their listings of the top schools in the country, and Fiske Guide called AU one of the best buys in the country.