

Washington Monthly ranks AU #12 among nation's master's degree-granting institutions

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Alfred University (AU) is among the top dozen master's degree-granting universities in the United States, according to the 2013 Washington Monthly College Rankings, released Aug. 26.

In addition, AU is also on Washington Monthly's "Best Bang for your Buck" list, based on best economic value per dollar. AU ranks 214 out of only 349 institutions on this list, out of 1,572 reviewed.

"Alfred University is accustomed to being highly rated. We take special satisfaction, however, from the Washington Monthly ranking because it focuses on how much students improve during their four years. That is reflected in not only this ranking but by the high rates of employment and compensation earned by our graduates," said Alfred University's president, Dr. Charles M. Edmondson.

Schools on the master's degree-granting list are rated 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 Ph.Ds.), and Service (encouraging students to give something back to their country).

Washington Monthly notes no single category is more important than any other. Second, the final rankings needed to reflect excellence across the full breadth of our measures, rather than reward an exceptionally high focus on, say, research. Thus, all three main categories were weighted equally when calculating the final score.

Unlike similar guides, Washington Monthly says it "asks not what colleges can do for you, but what colleges are doing for the country. Are they educating low-income students, or just catering to the affluent? Are they improving the quality of their teaching, or ducking accountability for it? Are they trying to become more productive - and if so, why is average tuition rising faster than health care costs?"

Every year, says Washington Monthly, the nation gives "billions of tax dollars and other public benefits on institutions of higher learning. This guide asks: Are we getting the most for our money?"

In producing this year's "Best Bang for the Buck" list, Washington Monthly noted prospective students should be asking: "What colleges will charge people like me the least and give me the highest chance of graduating with a

degree that means something in the marketplace?”

To answer that question, the periodical created the a list of the colleges in America it views as doing the best job of helping non-wealthy students attain marketable degrees at affordable prices.

To make this list, colleges had to meet four criteria. First, it was determined the institution was not just catering to the affluent; at least 20 percent of their students must be receiving Pell Grants, which go to students of modest means (typically those with annual household incomes below \$50,000). Second, there must be a graduation rate of at least 50 percent. Third, each school&s actual graduation rate must meet or exceed the rate that would be statistically predicted for that school given the number of lower-income students admitted (among other things, this calculation assures that schools with more than the minimum 20 percent of Pell students aren&t penalized). Fourth, to make sure their graduates are earning enough in the workforce to at least cover their student loans, schools must have a student loan default rate of 10 percent or less.

Next, the “buck” part of the measure was applied by ranking the schools based on their net price of attendance. (Net price is the average tuition that first-time, full-time students from families with an annual income of \$75,000 or less actually pay after subtracting the need-based financial aid they receive.)