

TAMPA, Fla., Jan. 13, 2014 /PRNewswire/ -- U.S. News University Connection announces that the Best Online Programs rankings from U.S. News & World Report have returned for 2014. This edition includes more programs than ever before; almost 1,000 submitted assessment questionnaires in 2013, a 16% increase over the previous year. The rankings are now available on both USNews.com and USNewsUniversityDirectory.com.

"Interest in online education continues to increase," says Matthew Speer, Director of Sales and Marketing for U.S. News University Connection. "In 2013, the Sloan Consortium reported that the proportion of all students taking at least one web-based class reached an all-time high of 32%. The Best Online Programs rankings are important for a very straightforward reason: students are demanding more of this type of education."

The ranked online programs are divided into six categories, according to the type of degrees they grant: Best Online Bachelor's Programs, Best Online Graduate Business Programs, Best Online Graduate Computer Information Technology Programs, Best Online Graduate Education Programs, Best Online Graduate Engineering Programs and Best Online Graduate Nursing Programs.

The ranking methodology has changed this year, mostly due to the larger number of programs submitting information and the fact that U.S. News now has two years of data to look back on. Evaluations now give greater weight to outcome-based measurements, like graduation rate and student debt load after completion. Some factors now carry less weight to accommodate the new criteria. Admissions selectivity is a prime example; in the five graduate categories, it is now less of a factor.

The [2014 Best Online Programs rankings](#) will also look different from those of previous years. All programs are now scored from 0 to 100, with the results curved so that the top-ranked program (or programs) receives a score of 100. This allows for ties. It also invalidates comparisons between the 2013 and 2014 scores, because they are arrived at in a different manner.

The Best Online Programs rankings from U.S. News are unique in that they evaluate only the online programs themselves, not the institutions that provide them. Campus-based factors unrelated to a school's distance learning program are not included in its ranking. This ensures that the report assesses the online programs only on their own merits.

About U.S. News University Directory

[U.S. News University Directory](#) provides comprehensive and unbiased information on more than 2,000 academic institutions directly from U.S. News & World Report, the most trusted source for college and university rankings since 1983. Prospective students can search the nation's best colleges and the nation's best graduate schools offering associate's degrees, bachelor's degrees, master's and MBA degrees, doctoral and PhD degrees, and certificate programs. And because U.S. News is the leading ranking resource for anyone seeking an on-campus or online degree, students who use the directory can be confident that they are getting the best education advice and information available.

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