

Rankings and Reputation

- Michael Levine-Clark
- Fiesole Retreat
- April 9, 2025

Columbia whistleblower on exposing college rankings: 'They are worthless'

US News relegated Columbia to 18th from second place after it was revealed the college had misrepresented key statistics

U.S. News Makes Money From Some of Its Biggest Critics: Colleges

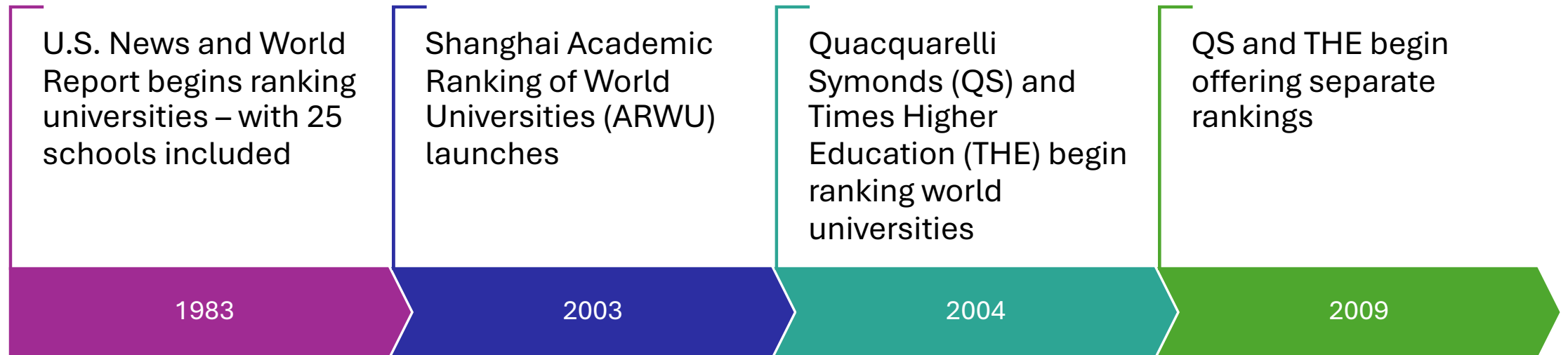
U.S. News sells “badges” to colleges, so they can promote their rankings — whether they are 1st, 10th or much, much lower.

Elite Law Schools Boycotted the U.S. News Rankings. Now, They May Be Paying a Price.

After a preview of the new rankings system, Yale and other universities raised a storm of objections. The formal list is now indefinitely delayed.

As many readers know, Reed [has long stood as a holdout](#) against the system. Appalled by a blistering article on US News in the *Wall Street Journal*, then-President Steve Koblík pulled Reed out of the system in 1996. US News retaliated by relegating the college to the bottom of the barrel, and has imposed a steep penalty on Reed ever since. In 2019, Reed statistics students [hacked the system](#) and estimated that the college should have been ranked at #38; its actual rank was #90. (Although US News claimed the students’ analysis was “inaccurate,” it swiftly promoted Reed to #63).

Rankings – a brief timeline



University of Denver Soars in Top College Rankings

DU rises to #80 in the U.S. News Best Colleges rankings for 2021

News • [University News](#) • September 14, 2020



U.S. News & World Report Reveals 2023 Rankings

Announcement • [University News](#) • September 12, 2022

The University of Denver is ranked among the country's top colleges by U.S. News & World Report. Today, the publication released its 2023 list of the nation's Best Colleges, with DU ranking 105th on the National Universities list, out of 440 institutions.



U.S. News & World Report Reveals 2025 College Rankings

Now 121st on the National Universities list, DU earns high marks for its support of veterans, undergraduate business program and more.

News • [University News](#) • September 24, 2024



A decline in ranking

Not a significant decline, but a meaningful one

Being outside of the top 100 seems to matter to potential applicants

There are lots of ties, so going from 80 to 121 is not a drop of 41 places

Many of our metrics improved over this time

There have been some changes in the ranking algorithm

2021

- US News National Universities: 80
- THE World University Rankings: 401-500
- QS World University Rankings: 651-700
- Academic Ranking of World Universities: 901-1000

2025

- US News National Universities: 121
- THE World University Rankings: 601-800
- QS World University Rankings: 951-1000

2021 – Schools tied at #80

- Brigham Young University
- Gonzaga University
- Howard University
- Michigan State University
- North Carolina State University
- Stevens Institute of Technology
- Texas Christian University
- University of Denver



2021 – Schools tied at #80

- Brigham Young University (109 in 2025)
- Gonzaga University (98)
- Howard University (86)
- Michigan State University (63)
- North Carolina State University (58)
- Stevens Institute of Technology (76)
- Texas Christian University (105)
- University of Denver (121)



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- Howard University (86)
- Michigan State University (63)
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- Stevens Institute of Technology (76)
- Texas Christian University (105)
- University of Denver (121)

2025 – Schools tied at #121

- Arizona State University
- Chapman University
- Creighton University
- CUNY – City College
- Elon University
- Iowa State University
- University of Albany, SUNY
- University of Central Florida
- University of Denver
- University of South Carolina
- University of Vermont

Comparing Rankings (schools at #121 on the 2025 US News “National Universities” List)

Institution	US News	THE (World)	QS (World)
Arizona State University	121	201-250	200
Chapman University	121	801-1000	
Creighton University	121	1001-1200	
CUNY – City College	121		
Elon University	121		
Iowa State University	121	401-500	470
University of Albany – SUNY	121	501-600	851-900
University of Central Florida	121	401-500	741-750
University of Denver	121	601-800	951-1000
University of South Carolina	121	401-500	601-610
University of Vermont	121	351-400	1001-1200

National Universities 2025 Best Colleges Overall Ranking Criteria and Weights

Indicator	2025 National Universities Weight for Schools With Usable SAT/ACT	2025 National Universities Weight for Schools Without Usable SAT/ACT	2024 Weight
Graduation rates	16%	21%	16%
First-year retention rates	5%	5%	5%
Graduation rate performance	10%	10%	10%
Pell graduation rates	5.5%	5.5%	3%
Pell graduation performance	5.5%	5.5%	3%
First-generation graduation rates	0%	0%	2.5%
First-generation graduation rate performance	0%	0%	2.5%
College grads earning more than a high school grad	5%	5%	5%
Borrower debt	5%	5%	5%
Peer assessment	20%	20%	20%
Financial resources per student	8%	8%	8%
Faculty salaries	6%	6%	6%
Full-time faculty	2%	2%	2%
Student-faculty ratio	3%	3%	3%
Standardized tests	5%	0%	5%
Citations per publication	1.25%	1.25%	1.25%
Field-Weighted Citation Impact	1.25%	1.25%	1.25%
Publication share in the Top 5% of Journals by CiteScore	1%	1%	1%
Publication share in the Top 25% of Journals by CiteScore	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%



How the College Rankings Were Calculated

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How the College Rankings Were Calculated

Peer assessment = 20%

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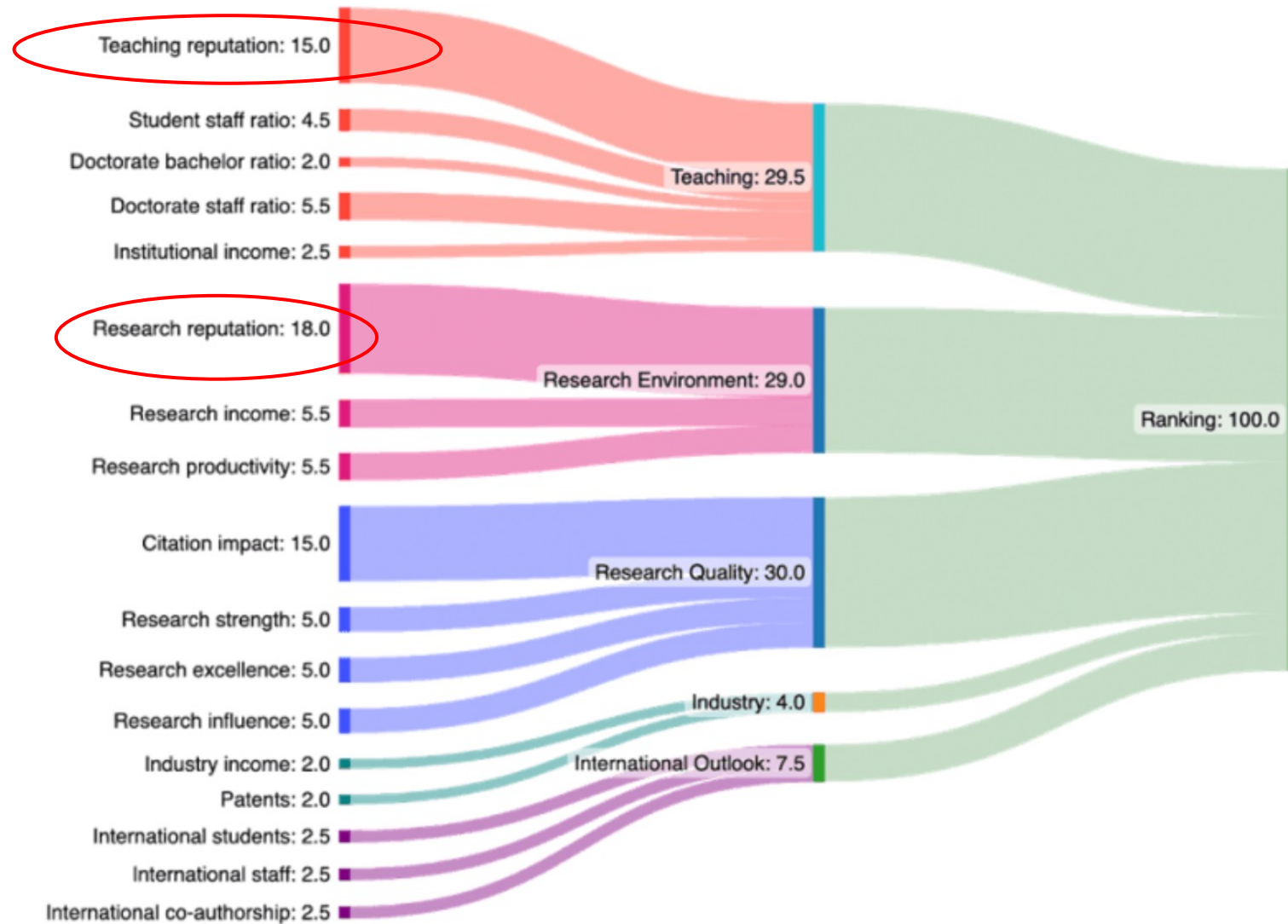


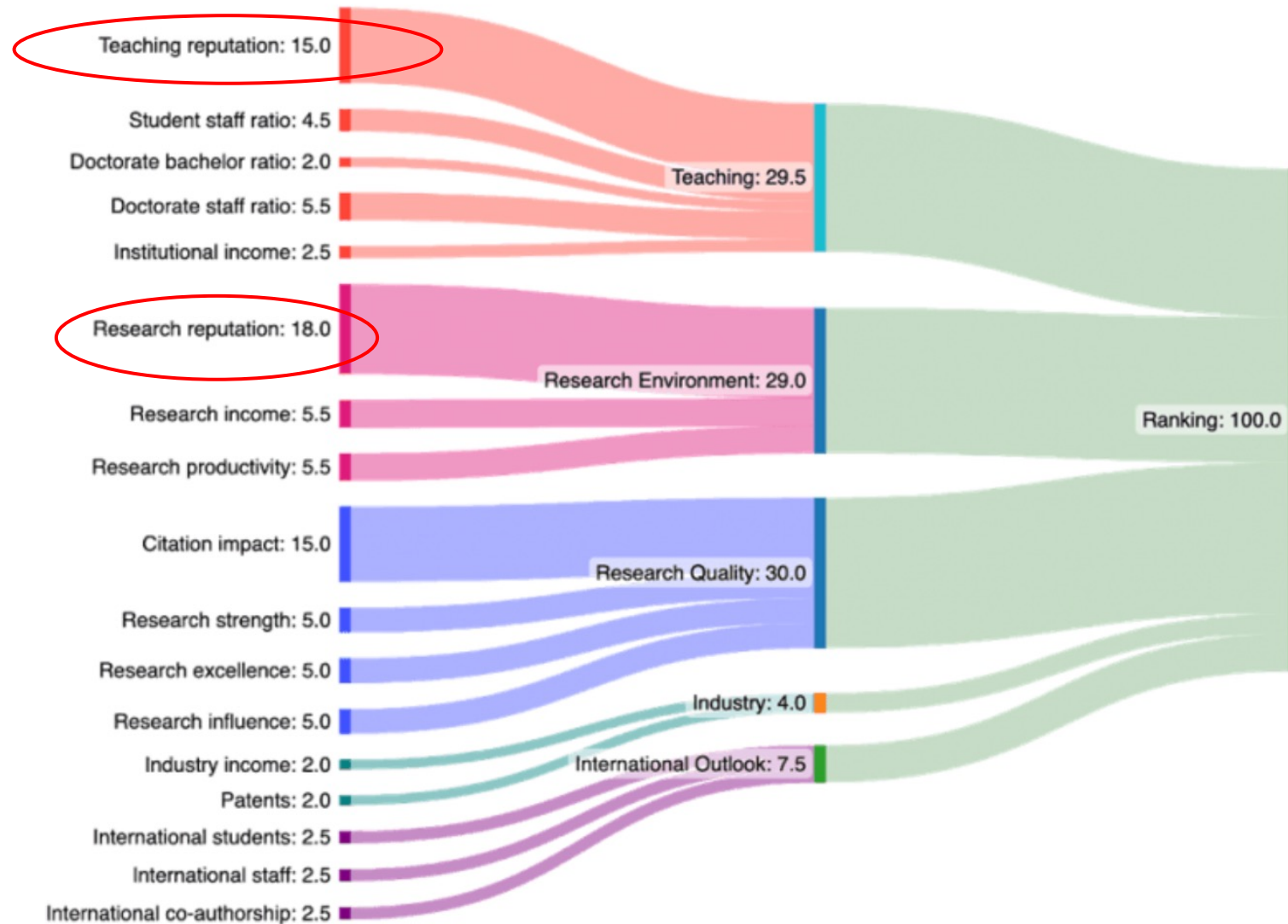
Times
Higher
Education





Times
Higher
Education





Teaching reputation = 15%

Research reputation = 18%



Times
Higher
Education



Research Environment
and Research Quality = 59%



QS World University Rankings

Lens	Weighting	Indicator	Weighting
Research and Discovery	50%	Academic Reputation	30%
		Citations per Faculty	20%
Employability and Outcomes	20%	Employer Reputation	15%
		Employment Outcomes	5%
Global Engagement	15%	International Faculty Ratio	5%
		International Research Network	5%
		International Student Diversity	0%
		International Student Ratio	5%
Learning Experience	10%	Faculty Student Ratio	10%
Sustainability	5%	Sustainability	5%




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Learning Experience	10%	Faculty Student Ratio	10%
Sustainability	5%	Sustainability	5%



Library projects relating to rankings and reputation

- Faculty profiles
 - Position to clean up faculty publication metadata
 - Subscriptions to Esploro, Expert Gallery Suite
 - Scopus cleanup project
 - Including subscription to Scopus
 - Identifying international faculty collaborations
 - ORCID
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Thank You

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