EMU Scores In U.S. News

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U.S. News & World Report ranked EMU in the fourth tier in the “national liberal arts colleges-bachelor’s” category. According to Shirley Yoder, Vice president of Enrollment and Marketing, EMU’s ranking for this year was similar to last year’s ranking. At 63 percent, EMU had the highest graduation rate performance in its tier this year.

EMU’s ranking is based on seven different categories. According to U.S. News & World Report, these categories include evaluation of the university by administrators at peer institutions, student retention rate, faculty resources, student selectivity, financial resources, alumni giving, and graduation rate performance. Each category contributes to a percentage of the final score, with the evaluation by peer administrators, student retention, and faculty resources constituting 65 percent of the final score.

This year, U.S. News & World Report ranked EMU with 216 other schools in the “liberal arts colleges-bachelor’s” category as defined by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. According to U.S. News & World Report, these schools “focus almost exclusively on undergraduate education. They award at least 50 percent of their degrees in liberal arts disciplines.”

This is only the third year that EMU has been ranked nationally with other schools. According to Yoder, before 2002, EMU had been ranked in the “Southern liberal arts colleges” category. In that category, EMU ranked eighth and 10th in 1999 and 2000, respectively. Then the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching decided to recategorize their classifications. According to Yoder, EMU could have stayed in the regional category, but was decided that EMU should be placed in the national category.

Although EMU ranked in the fourth tier this year, Yoder believes EMU did well. “Our retention rate is well above the national average,” she said. She was also very impressed by EMU’s increasing SAT scores. This year, EMU had the second highest SAT scores in its tier, in the 75th percentile.

These adjustments are possible mainly because EMU has revised its general education curriculum. Students in programs such as Nursing, Business, and Teacher Education still need to meet pre-requisite GPAs in order to continue in those departments at EMU. Unfortunately, EMU cannot recognize Hesston’s applied arts and science degrees, such as Aviation, because of the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia. Students with this type of degree will be evaluated on an individual basis.

Hesston transfers Denae Kennel and Stephanie Roth are excited about anything that will make the process of changing schools more efficient. In recent years, transfer students have had to take more time registering in order to evaluate which classes they need. Roth said, “It took me two hours to register.” Now the process should be shorter, and require less one-on-one time with advisors.

Roth and Kennel had some additional ideas about how to make the transition smoother. “There should be more interaction between the transfers and the upperclassmen,” Roth said.

Kennel agreed saying, “They shouldn’t put the transfers with the freshmen at orientation. We want to meet people our age.” Both appreciated the help of their admissions counselor, Colleen Rhodes. “Colleen Rhodes is so positive and upbeat,” said Kennel.

She made it really easy,” Roth. “She’s a sweetheart.”

Kennel thought her transfer process was relatively problem free even before the new plan. “It was much easier to register here than at Goshen,” she said. “That’s one reason why I came here instead.”

Kennel had other motivation to come to EMU. “When I transferred, everyone was real nice.”

“Heaston students bring a unique academic experience which serves to enrich the EMU campus learning community,” said Morris. “We have had a long history of working very well with Hesston transfers. The statement just makes it easier for everybody all around.”

Yoder also explained that one of the biggest factors in a school’s ranking is the evaluation administrators from peer institutions give it, which makes up 25 percent of the total score. She said that many schools flood peer institutions with mail, thus making them better known. EMU, however, does not participate in this act. She expects, though, that if EMU continues to be ranked nationally, it will become noticed by peer schools.

Yoder also stressed that while some schools strive to move up in the rankings, EMU’s goal is to provide a good education for its students so they can be competent in the field in which they choose to work. “We’re never going to compete with schools in the first tier…That’s not EMU’s mission,” said Yoder.

Although some prospective students may look at the rankings in U.S. News & World Report to help them decide where they want to attend college, according to Yoder, what influences future students most in choosing the school they will attend are how they “feel about the campus” and the “type of education they will receive.”

Students’ sentiments agree with Yoder’s. EMU’s ranking did not factor into freshman Marcy Spory’s decision to attend. Spory explained that she had initially been drawn toward Goshen College and Hesston College, but decided to come to EMU because of its proximity to her hometown and strong academic programs. EMU’s ranking also did not influence junior Jennifer Cameron’s decision to attend EMU when she was a freshman. “I came mostly because of the education program…I came up to visit EMU and loved the campus,” she said.