



LEARNING OUTCOME

After participating...

... you will be able to accurately calculate your institution's alumni participation figures by *U.S. News* standards.

CALCULATING ALUMNI PARTICIPATION


$$\frac{\text{Number of alumni donors}}{\text{Number of alumni}} = \text{Alumni participation}$$




OVERVIEW


- Alumni participation in the rankings
 - Why is it included?
 - Where does it fit and what is its weight?
 - Issues with using participation as a proxy for satisfaction




 OVERVIEW

- Calculating alumni participation
 - Basic Definitions
 - Alumni “of Record”
 - Alumni Solicited
 - Alumni Donors

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 OVERVIEW

- So how complicated could this be?
 - Alumni or degreed alumni?
 - Issues with Number “of Record”
 - Alumni of Record or Alumni Solicited?
 - Issues with Number of Donors
 - What about the graduating class?
 - Alumni who give Indirectly
- Looking Back at *U.S. News & World Report*
- The Challenge

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■ THIS PRESENTATION

- Understanding how (and why) alumni participation is included in the “America’s Best Colleges” rankings ... and related issues.
- Understanding the definitions that *U.S. News* uses related to alumni participation ... and putting them into the broader context of the definitions on the Council for Aid to Education’s Voluntary Support of Education Survey to better understand those definitions and better understand the choices that *U.S. News* made



■ THIS PRESENTATION

- Putting your best foot forward reporting alumni participation to *U.S. News*
- **Not** addressing strategies for increasing the number of alumni who give



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ALUMNI PARTICIPATION IN THE RANKINGS



■ WHY WOULD *U.S. News* INCLUDE ALUMNI PARTICIPATION?

- Looking to include a measure of alumni satisfaction
- There was no direct measure of alumni satisfaction available
 - No surveys of alumni from all colleges and universities, for example
- Alumni participation used as a proxy for alumni satisfaction
 - Satisfied alumni more likely to give



■ WHY WOULD *U.S. News* INCLUDE ALUMNI PARTICIPATION?

- “The percentage of alumni giving serves as a proxy for how satisfied students are with the school.”

-U.S. News , Undergraduate Ranking Criteria and Weights



■ WHY WOULD *U.S. News* INCLUDE ALUMNI PARTICIPATION?

- *U.S. News* considers alumni giving a measure of academic quality
 - 10. What measures of academic quality does U.S. News use in its rankings? Indicators used to measure academic quality fall into seven broad areas: peer assessment; retention and graduation of students; faculty resources; student selectivity; financial resources; alumni giving; and (for National Universities and National Liberal Arts Colleges) “graduation rate performance,” the difference between the proportion of students expected to graduate and the proportion who do and high school counselor ratings.

-U.S. News , Frequently Asked Questions: College Rankings



■ WHY WOULD *U.S. News* INCLUDE ALUMNI PARTICIPATION?

- Other approaches are beginning to emerge
 - Niche's College Rankings uses a survey of current students and recent graduates administered by Niche
<https://colleges.niche.com/rankings/best-colleges/methodology/>



■ WHY WOULD *U.S. News* INCLUDE ALUMNI PARTICIPATION?

- Other approaches are beginning to emerge
 - The U.S. Department of Education College Scorecard includes “supporting data on student completion, debt and repayment, earnings, and more”
<https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/data/>



■ WHY WOULD *U.S. News* INCLUDE ALUMNI PARTICIPATION?

- Other approaches are beginning to emerge
 - Wall Street Journal/Times Higher Education ranking of U.S. colleges looking at value added to graduate salary (12%) and to the loan repayment rate (7%)
 - “The THE data team uses statistical modelling to create an expected graduate salary and loan repayment rate for each college based on a wide range of factors, such as the make-up of its students and the characteristics of the institution.”
<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/wall-street-journal-times-higher-education-college-rankings-methodology>



■ WHY WOULD *U.S. News* INCLUDE ALUMNI PARTICIPATION?

- Other approaches are beginning to emerge
 - The Brookings Institution looked at earnings data of alumni of different schools and programs
 - Finding limitations in how useful earnings data is in comparing colleges
<https://www.brookings.edu/research/making-college-earnings-data-work-for-students/>



■ WHY WOULD *U.S. News* INCLUDE ALUMNI PARTICIPATION?

- Other approaches are beginning to emerge
 - College Measures from the American Institutes for Research, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, and Gallup Inc. “works with state governments to help identify higher education credentials with high return on investment.”

<http://www.air.org/center/college-measures/>



■ WHY WOULD *U.S. News* INCLUDE ALUMNI PARTICIPATION?

- Other approaches are beginning to emerge
 - “*The Economist*’s first-ever [college rankings](#) are based on a simple, if debatable, premise: the economic value of a university is equal to the gap between how much money its students subsequently earn, and how much they might have made had they studied elsewhere.”

- Helpful (and lengthy!) discussion of interpretation and caveats

<http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2015/10/value-university>



WHY WOULD *U.S. News* INCLUDE ALUMNI PARTICIPATION?

SundayReview | OP-ED COLUMNIST

How to Make Sense of College Rankings



Frank Bruni OCT. 29, 2016

"My larger point is this: For almost every well-intentioned measurement, there's either a fundamental shortcoming or possible glitch. Take the Wall Street Journal rankings, which significantly factor in how a school's current students, in a survey, evaluate their experience.

This would seem to be — and perhaps is — an excellent idea. But in visiting colleges over time, I've noticed that the ones with the loftiest reputations sometimes marinate in their own mythology, sending students all sorts of messages about what an extraordinary opportunity they're enjoying. This self-congratulation surely colors the survey responses, which may wind up saying as much about a school's status as about anything else."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/30/opinion/sunday/how-to-make-sense-of-college-rankings.html>

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WHY WOULD *U.S. News* INCLUDE ALUMNI PARTICIPATION?

- "The percentage of alumni giving serves as a proxy for how satisfied students are with the school."

-U.S. News , Undergraduate Ranking Criteria and Weights

- Compared to some of these other measures, relatively straightforward and accessible!

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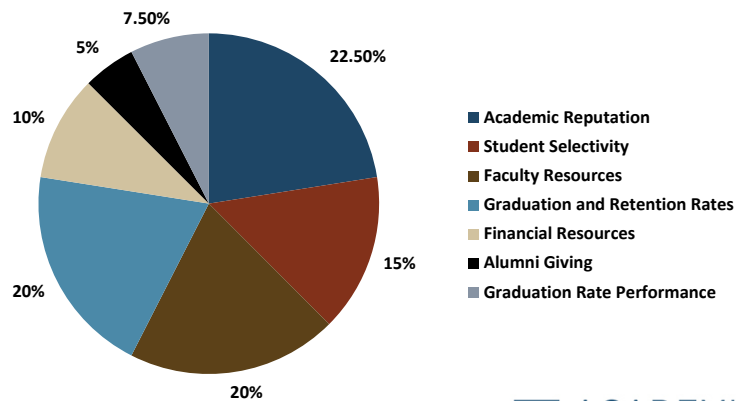
METHODOLOGY OF *U.S. NEWS*

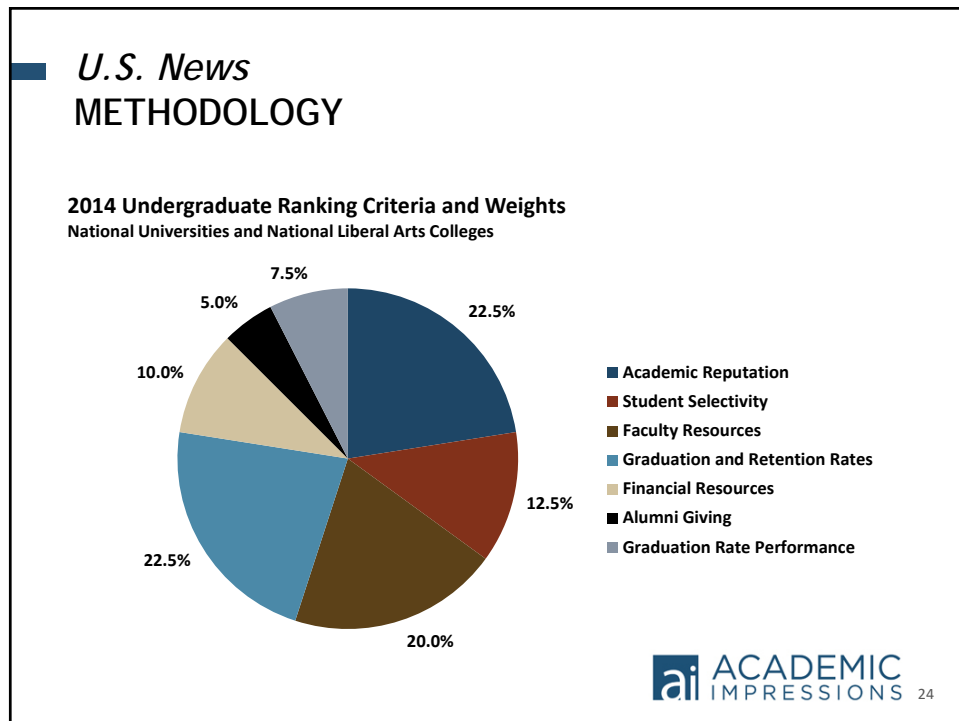
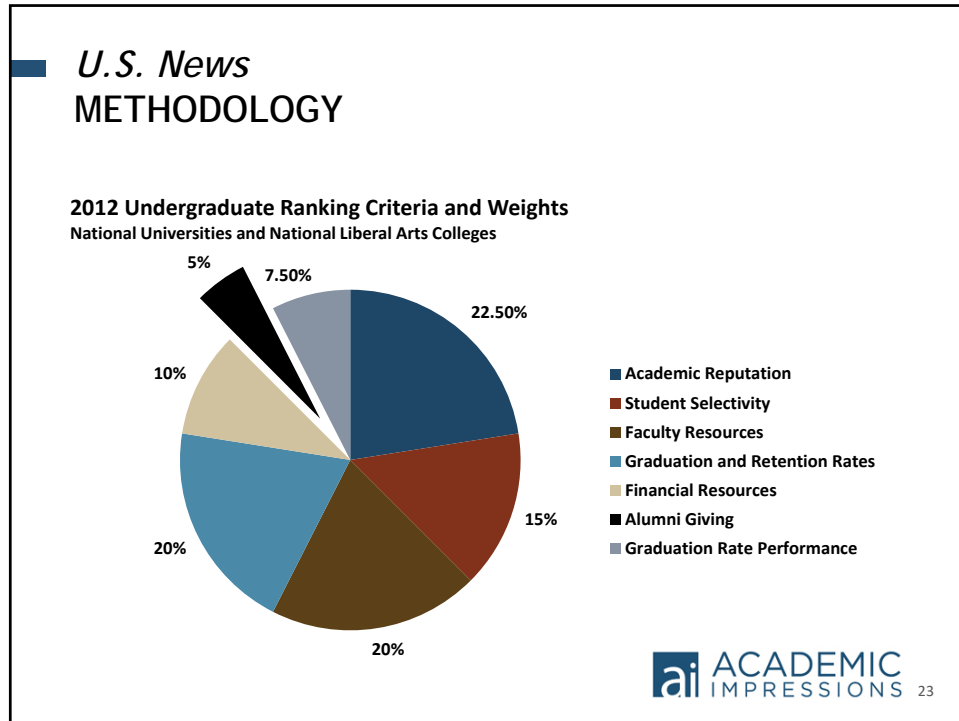
*What Weight Does U.S. News Give to
Alumni Participation?*

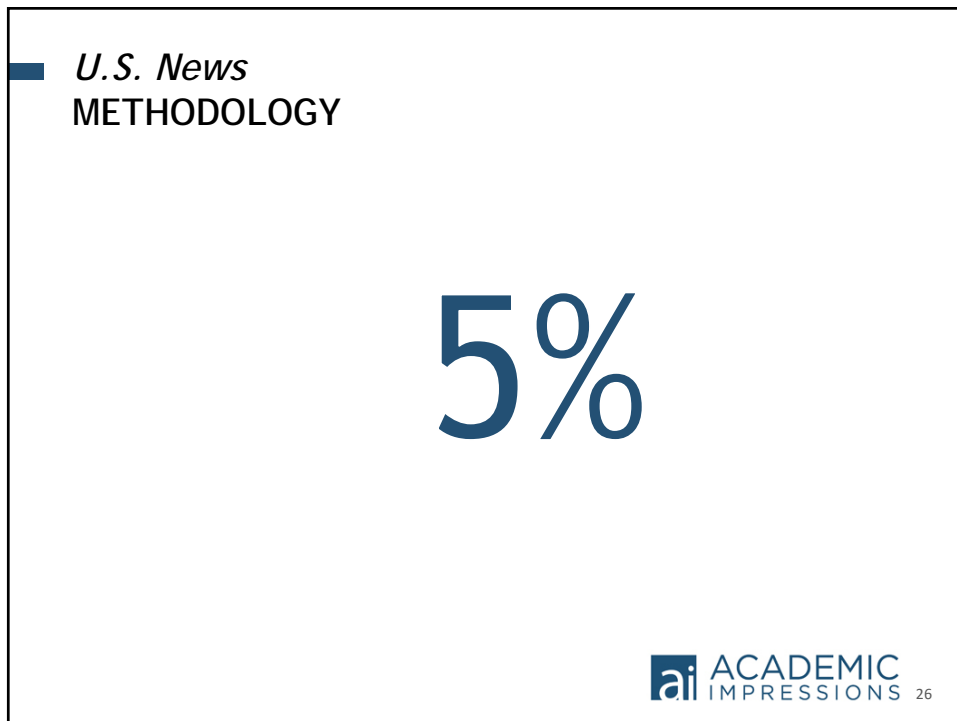
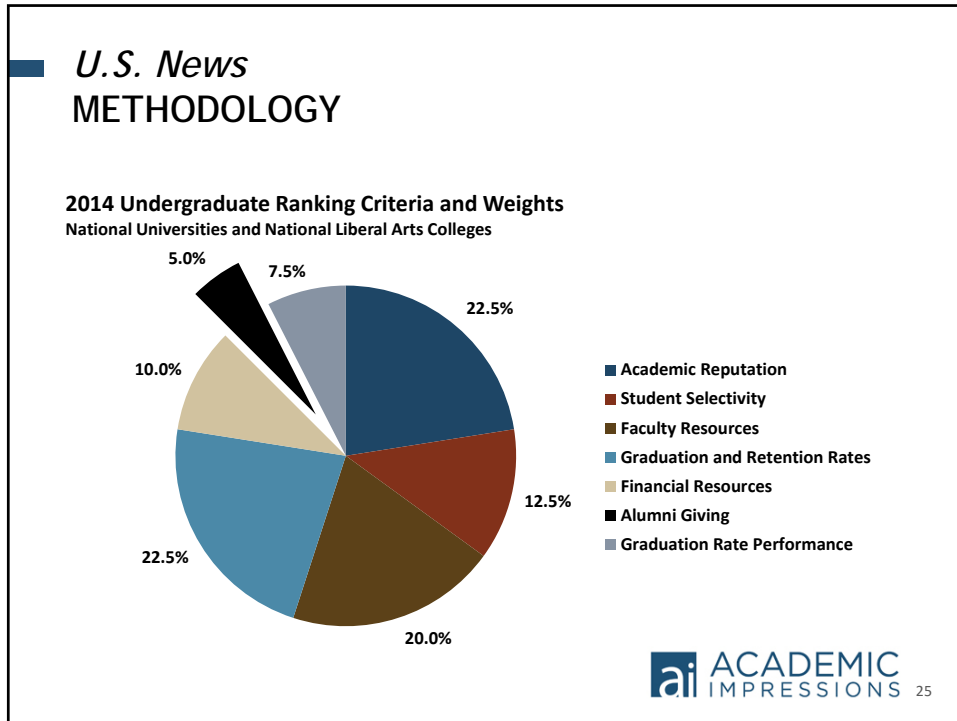


U.S. News METHODOLOGY

2012 Undergraduate Ranking Criteria and Weights
National Universities and National Liberal Arts Colleges







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ISSUES WITH USING ALUMNI PARTICIPATION AS A PROXY FOR ALUMNI SATISFACTION



CHAT

What potential issues do
you see with using alumni
participation as a proxy for
alumni satisfaction?



ISSUES WITH USING ALUMNI PARTICIPATION AS A PROXY FOR ALUMNI SATISFACTION

- Definitions originally established for other purposes
 - Taken from Voluntary Support of Education (VSE) Survey
 - VSE focuses primarily on giving totals, not alumni and donor counts
 - Alumni and donor counts are supplemental information, not intended to be statistically significant



ISSUES WITH USING ALUMNI PARTICIPATION AS A PROXY FOR ALUMNI SATISFACTION

- Participation affected by factors that might not correlate to satisfaction
 - Institutional context and culture
 - Alumni giving not a tradition at most public institutions
 - Different institutions serve different populations
 - Undergraduate vs. graduate
 - Traditional vs. part-time/second-career
 - Residential vs. commuter



ISSUES WITH USING ALUMNI PARTICIPATION AS A PROXY FOR ALUMNI SATISFACTION

- *U.S. News* Does Use What is Generally the Most Comparable Measure
 - Degreed Alumni (only)
 - Undergraduate Alumni (only)
 - Alumni of Record (not Alumni Solicited)
 - Number of Donors (not dollars)



ISSUES WITH USING ALUMNI PARTICIPATION AS A PROXY FOR ALUMNI SATISFACTION

- There is still some ability to “game” the data
 - Inflate the number of donors
 - Under-report the alumni population



■ U.S. News USES THE MEASURES LEAST SUSCEPTIBLE TO “GAMING” ...

- But it’s still vulnerable to aggressive practices
 - Counting:
 - Donors for several years on the strength of a single gift
 - Only donating seniors as alumni of record
 - “Losing” non-donors (lost alumni rates of 17%, 26%)



■ SCRUTINY OF REPORTING PRACTICES

- “Math Lessons: To Boost Donor Numbers, Colleges Adopt New Tricks; Sinking Alumni Stats, Zeal for Rankings Spur Rate Inflation”

-Daniel Golden. *Wall Street Journal*. (Eastern edition). New York, N.Y.: Mar 2, 2007. pg. A.1



INCREASED SCRUTINY OF REPORTING PRACTICES

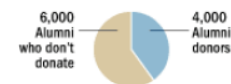
'Lost' Alumni

Some schools improve their alumni donor rates by excluding alumni for whom they don't have accurate contact information, effectively making those alumni who do donate account for a larger slice of the pie.

Below, what the sample university's rate would be if 20% of its alumni, or 2,000, were classified as "lost."

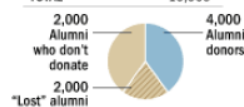
Begin with a pool of 10,000 alumni, 4,000 of whom donate.

Alumni who don't give	6,000
Alumni who give	4,000
TOTAL	10,000



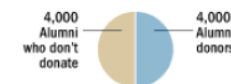
The school may say, "We can't reach 20% of our alumni," or in this case 2,000 graduates.

Alumni who don't give	4,000
Alumni who are "lost"	2,000
Alumni who give	4,000
TOTAL	10,000



Schools don't count the missing alumni as part of the overall alumni group. This raises their giving percentage.

Alumni who don't give	4,000
Alumni who give	4,000
TOTAL	8,000



Some universities have very low numbers of "lost" alumni, such as Princeton, which says it is in touch with 98% of its graduates. But Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pa., which reports a 40% alumni giving rate, considers one-fifth of its graduates lost. Transylvania University in Lexington, Ky., classifies about 1,400 alumni, or 17%, as lost. Among the remaining approximately 7,000 alumni, the school reports a 50% giving rate.

<http://online.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/info-alumchrtbk0703-1.html>

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Counting the Seniors, I

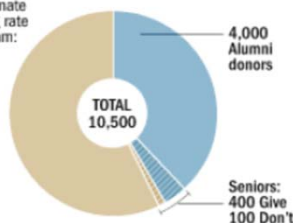
Procedures vary when it comes to counting gifts from seniors, who give before graduating but are alumni by the time the paperwork is filed. Some schools simply count the entire class of seniors -- donors and nondonors -- as if they had already graduated, increasing both the pool of total alumni and donor count.

Below, how this could affect a university with 500 graduating seniors and 10,000 pre-existing alumni.

If 400 seniors and 4,000 alumni donate in a given year, this is how the giving rate is calculated under the above program:

	Donors	Total
Alumni	4,000	10,000
Seniors	400	500
TOTAL	4,400	10,500

TOTAL GIVING RATE: 41.9%



Because seniors are not alumni, many colleges leave them out of the alumni-giving rate. Here's what it would look like:

	Donors	Total
Alumni	4,000	10,000
TOTAL	4,000	10,000

TOTAL GIVING RATE: 40%

Wesleyan University is among the schools that count senior gifts this way. With contributions in 2006 from 94% of seniors who graduated that year, the school's giving rate was 54%, up from 47% in 2000. Counting seniors "obviously helps your numbers," says Barbara-Jan Wilson, vice president for university relations.

<http://online.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/info-alumchrtbk0703-1.html>

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INCREASED SCRUTINY OF REPORTING PRACTICES



(<http://www.insidehighered.com>)

Iona admits ex-official misreported data to outside entities ^[1]

Submitted by [Doug Lederman](#) ^[2] on November 9, 2011 - 3:00am

Iona College [acknowledged Tuesday](#) ^[3] that its former provost had, for nearly a decade, manipulated and misreported student-related data to government officials, accrediting bodies, bond rating agencies, and others.

As the new president of the New York Roman Catholic college described the steps it had taken to prevent such individual unethical behavior in the future, some observers in higher education said they believed the case indicated the existence of a larger problem.

"I do think there probably is a pattern" in the case at Iona and other recent incidents involving law schools at the [University of Illinois](#) ^[4] and [Villanova University](#), ^[5] Clemson University's reporting to *U.S. News and World Report*, and even the grade-changing scandal in the Atlanta public schools, said Jane Robbins, senior lecturer in innovation, entrepreneurship, and institutional leadership at the University of Arizona.

<http://www.insidehighered.com/print/news/2011/11/09/iona-admits-ex-official-misreported-data-...>



INCREASED SCRUTINY OF REPORTING PRACTICES

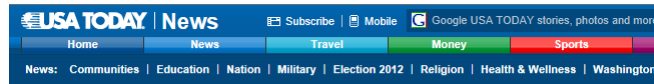
In [the report from that investigation](#) ^[6] Tuesday, Nyre and Iona's board chairman said the review had found a "consistent pattern of overstating student data" for a decade, beginning in 2002. The statistics covered a wide array of key institutional data points related to students, including admissions results (acceptance and yield rates), SAT scores, faculty-student ratio, retention and graduation rates, and alumni giving rates.

The extent of the exaggerations varied by category, with the most severe misrepresentations occurring in categories focused on by *U.S. News* and other rankings. As seen in the table below, Iona reported on average that twice as many alumni made donations as actually did; overstated its students' SAT scores by roughly 15 percent a year and its four-year graduation rate by 20 percent; and understated its student-faculty ratio by about 13 percent.

<http://www.insidehighered.com/print/news/2011/11/09/iona-admits-ex-official-misreported-data-...>



INCREASED SCRUTINY OF REPORTING PRACTICES



College administrator faked SAT scores to boost ranking

Updated 1/31/2012 1:01 PM

NEW YORK (AP) – A senior administrator at California's Claremont McKenna College resigned after admitting that for years he falsified SAT scores to publications such as *U.S. News & World Report* to inflate the small, prestigious school's ranking among the nation's colleges and universities, according to the college's president.

<http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/education/story/2012-01-31/administrator-resigns-sat-faked/52900906/1>



INCREASED SCRUTINY OF REPORTING PRACTICES



Morse Code: Inside the College Rankings

Update to George Washington University's 2013 Best Colleges Ranking

By ROBERT MORSE
November 14, 2012

On November 8, George Washington University in Washington, D.C., advised *U.S. News* that it had erroneously reported its high school class standing information for more than a decade. This misreporting resulted in George Washington submitting to *U.S. News* a value for the percent of the fall 2011 entering class in the top tenth of their high school class that was inflated by 20 percentage points.

This incorrect data was used in the calculation of GW's overall rank in the 2013 edition of the *Best Colleges* rankings, published in September, thereby making its rank in the National Universities category higher than it otherwise would have been. The proportion of enrolled freshmen at National Universities who graduated in the top 10 percent of their high school classes counted for 6 percent of the *Best Colleges* rankings methodology.

Because of the discrepancy in the rankings, *U.S. News* has changed George Washington University from being a ranked school to an "Unranked" school in the *Best Colleges* section of *usnews.com*. Unranked means that *U.S. News* did not calculate a numerical ranking for this school.

This Unranked status will last until next fall's publication of the 2014 edition of the *Best Colleges* rankings, and until George Washington confirms the accuracy of the school's next data submission in accordance with *U.S. News*'s requirements.



George Washington University has been moved to the Unranked category in the *U.S. News* rankings.

<http://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/college-rankings-blog/2012/11/14/update-to-george-washington-universitys-2013-best-colleges-ranking>



INCREASED SCRUTINY OF REPORTING PRACTICES

Long Reads, Northeastern

How to Game the College Rankings

Northeastern University executed one of the most dramatic turnarounds in higher education. Its recipe for success? A single-minded focus on just one list.

By Max Kutner | Boston Magazine | September 2014

Figuring out how much Northeastern needed to adjust was one thing; actually doing it was another. Point by point, senior staff members tackled different criteria, always with an eye to *U.S. News's* methodology. Freeland added faculty, for instance, to reduce class size. "We did play other kinds of games," he says. "You get credit for the number of classes you have under 20 [students], so we lowered our caps on a lot of our classes to 19 just to make sure." From 1996 to the 2003 edition (released in 2002), Northeastern rose 20 spots.



<http://www.bostonmagazine.com/news/article/2014/09/26/how-northeastern-gamed-the-college-rankings/>

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THE *U.S. NEWS* RANKINGS AND THE *VOLUNTARY SUPPORT OF EDUCATION* *SURVEY (VSE)*

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■ THE *U.S. News* RANKINGS & THE VSE

- *U.S. News* has always intended that the calculation of alumni participation follow the VSE definitions and that its numbers should match the VSE, but didn't say so explicitly.
- *U.S. News* now does say so explicitly:
 - "Please follow the standards set by the Council for Aid to Education (CAE) and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), and used for reporting to CAE for the Voluntary Support of Education Survey when answering these questions."

-U.S. News, Best Colleges Main Survey, 2014 data collection



■ THE *U.S. News* RANKINGS & THE VSE

- The actual *U.S. News* main survey question about alumni donors references the VSE
 - "Note: The alumni giving data reported to U.S. News should be the same as what was reported to the Council for Aid to Education for undergraduate alumni in its annual Voluntary Support of Education Survey. If you do not break down undergraduate-only giving for the CAE survey, you must still do so for this report."

-U.S. News, Best Colleges Main Survey, 2014 data collection



■ THE *U.S. News* RANKINGS & THE VSE

- The numbers that *U.S. News* collects are the same numbers that the VSE collects, limited to degreed undergraduate alumni:
 - Alumni of Record
 - Alumni Solicited
 - Alumni Donors



■ THE *U.S. News* RANKINGS & THE VSE

- This only makes sense, because *U.S. News* doesn't completely define participation-related terms, issues
 - Collects the number of undergraduate alumni of record solicited, but nowhere defines the term!
 - Does not address
 - What counts as a "gift"!
 - Indirect giving (e.g. via donor-advised funds)
 - Counting alumni couples
 - Etc.



■ THE *U.S. News* RANKINGS & THE VSE

- Responses about issues raised about the *U.S. News* methodology come from CASE!
 - *Wall Street Journal* article “Math Lessons: To Boost Donor Numbers, Colleges Adopt New Tricks; Sinking Alumni Stats, Zeal for Rankings Spur Rate Inflation” in March 2007 focused in particular on inconsistent treatment of lost alumni and of counting giving by the graduating class to inflate participation
 - “CASE Alumni Giving FAQs” issued in October 2007 address exactly those same points!



■ THE *U.S. News* RANKINGS & THE VSE

- The *U.S. News* numbers are a subset of the what the VSE collects
 - Looking at the choices that *U.S. News* made in the context of the VSE provides important context for understanding reporting to *U.S. News*



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CALCULATING THE AVERAGE ALUMNI GIVING RATE



AVERAGE ALUMNI GIVING RATE

2015

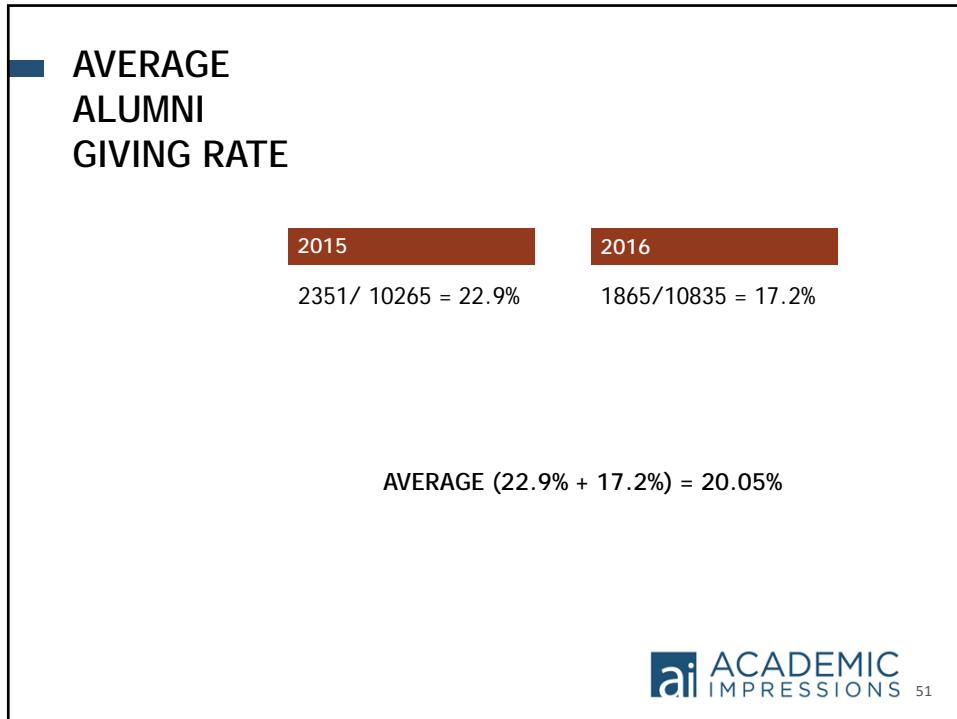
Alumni Donors /
Alumni of Record =
Alumni Participation
2015

2016

Alumni Donors /
Alumni of Record =
Alumni Participation
2016


Average (Alumni Participation 2015 + Alumni
Participation 2016) = Average Alumni Giving Rate





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CATEGORIES AND DEFINITIONS

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ALUMNI OF RECORD

- “Alumni of record are former full- or part-time students with an undergraduate degree from your institution and for whom you believe you have a valid address or other way to make contact (telephone, email, etc.)”

-U.S. News, Best Colleges Main Survey, 2014 data collection

- Now clarifies that “undergraduate” means “bachelors”
 - “...the average percentage of living alumni with bachelor's degrees who gave to their ...”

-U.S. News, How U.S. News Calculated the 2014 Best Colleges Rankings



ALUMNI SOLICITED

- U.S. News collects the number of undergraduate alumni of record solicited, but:
 - calculates participation using the number of undergraduate alumni of record
 - Does not define the term!



ALUMNI DONORS

- “Undergraduate alumni donors are alumni with undergraduate degrees from an institution **who made one or more gifts** for either current operations or capital expenses during the specified academic year.”

-U.S. News, Undergraduate Ranking Criteria and Weights



ALUMNI DONORS

- *U.S. News* added some additional detail to the survey form:
 - “Alumni donors are alumni with undergraduate degrees from your institution who made one or more tax-deductible gifts from either themselves or their legal spouse/partner for either current operations or capital expenses during the specified fiscal year.) Exclude all soft-credit only contributions - only report on IRS reportable gifts.”

-U.S. News, Best Colleges Main Survey, 2014 data collection



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LOOKING AT THE DETAILS



■ ALUMNI VS. DEGREED ALUMNI

- Data issue for comparisons
- In general, degreed alumni give at a higher rate
- Including non-degreed alumni may reduce apparent participation rates



ALUMNI VS. DEGREED ALUMNI

- Data for all alumni (including non-degreed alumni) really comparable only if treatment of non-degreed alumni is similar
- Data for degreed alumni generally comparable since data/practices are generally comparable
- If a school does not report using the alumni subcategories, don't have the data to compare degreed alumni
 - (Use the subcategories on the VSE!)



ALUMNI VS. DEGREED ALUMNI

- Records for degreed alumni are usually complete
- Data/practices for non-degreed alumni vary widely
 - Load all alumni at matriculation
 - Non-degreed records relatively complete
 - Load alumni only at graduation, non-degreed alumni only if donors
 - Non-degreed alumni data is relatively incomplete
 - Non-degreed alumni in the database are generally all donors!



■ ALUMNI VS. DEGREED ALUMNI

- Exclusion of non-degreed alumni from *U.S. News* doesn't mean that it's not helpful to look at them for internal management purposes
 - Can be significant donors!
 - Want to analyze, manage that population to see what solicitations are effective, whether solicitation is cost-effective, etc.
 - Exclusion from *U.S. News* more about comparability across institutions



■ UNDERGRADUATE VS. GRADUATE ALUMNI

- Undergraduate alumni often more closely affiliated than graduate alumni
 - Particularly in the case of traditional, residential undergraduate alumni
- Some institutions don't have graduate alumni!



NUMBER OF RECORD

- *U.S. News* definition
 - “Alumni of record are former full- or part-time students with an undergraduate degree from your institution and for whom you believe you have a valid address or other way to make contact (telephone, email, etc.)”
 - For calculating participation, this is the population that could make a gift, if so inclined
 - Based on data, not management choices
 - May elect to solicit or not solicit different portions of the “of record” population
 - Still counted as part of the population



NUMBER OF RECORD

- *U.S. News* definition
 - “Alumni of record are former full- or part-time students with an undergraduate degree from your institution and for whom you believe you have a valid address or other way to make contact (telephone, email, etc.)”
-U.S. News, Best Colleges Main Survey, 2014 data collection
 - “[H]ave a valid address” when?



NUMBER OF RECORD

- Reporting covers a one-year period
- Going to count donors who gave at any time during that year
- So, anyone that you could contact at any time during the year would be “of record”
 - However, alumni/development systems not typically set to track changes over the full year
 - Fairly common practice to “snapshot” the “of Record” population on one date



NUMBER OF RECORD

- Snapshot taken at any one point are necessarily incomplete
 - Constituents may be “found” after snapshot of number of record at the beginning of the year
 - Constituents may die/become lost before snapshot of number of record at the end of the year
 - Some of those constituents who get left out of the “of record” population are donors!



NUMBER OF RECORD

- Variety of practices
 - Snapshot at the beginning of the year
 - Snapshot at the end of the year
 - Snapshot at another date (e.g. September 1st)
 - Snapshot at one date but add in any donors from the year who aren't included in the snapshot
 - Count anyone that you could contact at any time during the year



NUMBER OF RECORD

- Counting everyone that you could contact at some time during the year
 - Look at constituent records
 - Coded as alumni
 - With a degree awarded prior to the end of the reporting year
 - With at least one active address/ phone number/ email address
 - Save the ID Numbers of those records in a table
 - Repeat every night/ week/ month



NUMBER OF RECORD

- Counting everyone that you could contact at some time during the year
 - Look at constituent records
 - Coded as alumni
 - With a degree awarded prior to the end of the reporting year
 - With at least one address/ phone number/ email address
 - » With a start date before the end of the year (identifies addresses that became active before the year was over)
 - » With a stop date that is blank or after the beginning of the year (to identify addresses that are still active or did not become inactive until after the year began)



ALUMNI SOLICITED

- *U.S. News* collects the number of undergraduate alumni of record solicited, but
 - calculates participation using the number of undergraduate alumni of record
 - Does not define the term!



■ ALUMNI SOLICITED

- The VSE **does** define the Number Solicited, as the number contacted in some formal manner (mail, phone, visit) during the year
 - For calculating participation, this is the population actually asked for a gift! So why doesn't *U.S. News* use the number solicited?



■ ALUMNI SOLICITED

- Reflects choices made in managing the fund-raising program
 - Some alumni request:
 - Not to be solicited
 - Not to be contacted in any way
 - May decide not to solicit alumni who haven't made a gift in 40 years
 - Solicitation efforts do cost money



ALUMNI SOLICITED

- Which alumni are solicited reflects choices made in managing the fund-raising program
 - As a business practice, it's a perfectly reasonable choice not to expend scarce resources soliciting those who are not likely to give
 - However, for purposes of comparison, calculating participation based on alumni solicited tends to inflate participation when you don't solicit those who are unlikely to give
 - Not too many fewer donors
 - Many fewer in comparison population



NUMBER OF RECORD VS. NUMBER SOLICITED

- "Number of Record" a fairly reliable/comparable figure
 - All living alumni except "lost" alumni
- "Number Solicited" less comparable
 - May only be soliciting those who are most likely to give, so the response rate is better



NUMBER OF RECORD VS. NUMBER SOLICITED

- “Number of Record” a better gauge of participation/satisfaction than “Number Solicited”
 - With “Number Solicited,” can improve participation by just not soliciting long-time non-donors (who are less likely to give)
 - Numerator about the same
 - Denominator lower
 - Non-donors may be non-donors precisely because they’re unhappy!



NUMBER OF RECORD VS. NUMBER SOLICITED

Same issue!

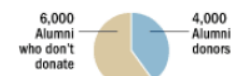
'Lost' Alumni

Some schools improve their alumni donor rates by excluding alumni for whom they don't have accurate contact information, effectively making those alumni who do donate account for a larger slice of the pie.

Below, what the sample university's rate would be if 20% of its alumni, or 2,000, were classified as “lost.”

Begin with a pool of 10,000 alumni, 4,000 of whom donate.

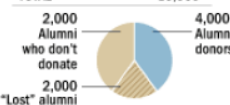
Alumni who don't give	6,000
Alumni who give	4,000
TOTAL	10,000



TOTAL GIVING RATE: 40%

The school may say, “We can’t reach 20% of our alumni,” or in this case 2,000 graduates.

Alumni who don't give	4,000
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Schools don't count the missing alumni as part of the overall alumni group. This raises their giving percentage.

Alumni who don't give	4,000
Alumni who give	4,000
TOTAL	8,000



TOTAL GIVING RATE: 50%

Some universities have very low numbers of “lost” alumni, such as Princeton, which says it is in touch with 98% of its graduates. But Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pa., which reports a 40% alumni giving rate, considers one-fifth of its graduates lost. Transylvania University in Lexington, Ky., classifies about 1,400 alumni, or 17%, as lost. Among the remaining approximately 7,000 alumni, the school reports a 50% giving rate.

<http://online.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/info-alumchrtbk0703-1.html>



■ NUMBER OF RECORD VS. NUMBER SOLICITED

- Participation calculation “Number Solicited” can be useful for internal management purposes
 - When you’re figuring out the percentage who responded, no point in including those that you didn’t even ask!



■ NUMBER OF DONORS

- *U.S. News* definition: “Undergraduate alumni donors are alumni with undergraduate degrees from an institution **who made** one or more **gifts** for either current operations or capital expenses during the specified academic year.”
- OK, so there are some questions
 - What does “...who made...” mean in this context?
 - What does “gifts” mean in this context?



NUMBER OF DONORS

- *U.S. News* now provide more detail on these questions:
 - Alumni donors are alumni with undergraduate degrees from your institution who made one or more tax-deductible gifts from either themselves or their legal spouse/partner for either current operations or capital expenses during the specified fiscal year.) Exclude all soft-credit only contributions - only report on IRS reportable gifts.



NUMBER OF DONORS

- Essentially a shorthand of the VSE (and related CASE standards) instructions about these questions
 - As on the rest of the VSE, gifts are reported according to their legal (hard-credit) donors
 - As a result, alumni are not counted as donors based on
 - Gifts from associated companies
 - Gifts through family or personal foundations
 - Gifts through donor-advised funds
 - When spouses make joint gifts, both spouses are counted as donors



NUMBER OF DONORS

- The VSE (and related CASE standards) provide additional detailed guidance on these questions
 - Contributed services
 - Use of a donor's property (partial interest)
 - Investment earnings
 - Student financial aid or other support directed to a specified individual
 - Pledges
 - Bequest intentions
 - Alumni dues



NUMBER OF DONORS

- Recall that participation is used as a surrogate for alumni satisfaction
 - Donors who give through companies, foundations, donor-advised funds, etc. are sometimes your biggest donors!
 - Are they really unsatisfied because they gave you that big gift indirectly?
 - May under-represent "participation" by a percentage point or more



NUMBER OF DONORS

- The VSE is, first-and-foremost, a report of support, e.g. giving
- The number of donors (along with number of record and number solicited) is in a follow-up section of “additional details”
- Supposed to be every donor whose gifts are counted in the given category in Section 3
 - Section 4 is additional detail on data from Section 3
 - If you leave out donors, calculations like average gift (total amount divided by number of donors) lose validity



DEFINITION: REPORTING ON THE VSE

	No. of Record	No. Solicited	No. Donors	Amount \$
1a. Alumni undergraduate degree or diploma holders				
1b. Alumni graduate only degree or diploma holders				
1c. Alumni without a degree or diploma				
1d. Enter Totals here ONLY if you have left 1a-1c above blank				
1e. Alumni Total				



NUMBER OF DONORS

- Section 4 of the VSE is supposed to include every donor whose gifts are counted in the given category in Section 3
 - “Number of Donors” may well include donors who are not “of Record” if you snapshot “of Record” at one moment
 - Donor who made a gift, then passed away, if you snapshot at the end of the year
 - Donor who was lost at the beginning of the year, then sent in a gift, if you snapshot at the beginning of the year
 - No issue if you reflect donors who are “of Record” at any time during the year
 - (Except maybe estate gifts)



NUMBER OF DONORS

- The VSE says that the number of individuals in the given category who made one or more contributions during the reporting year.
 - Does **not** say “number of individuals who are ‘of record’ in the given category who made one or more contributions...”
 - Does **not** say “number of living individuals in the given category for whom the institution believes it has a valid address or way to contact who made one or more contributions...”



■ NUMBER OF DONORS

- *U.S. News* is a little different in this regard
 - Only includes donor counts
 - No calculations including giving totals, like averages
- This is a good thing!
 - The amount of the gifts doesn't play any part in the ranking, which would give a huge advantage to institutions with rich alumni!



■ NUMBER OF DONORS

- Recall the *U.S. News* definitions
 - "Average alumni giving rate: The average percentage of undergraduate alumni of record who donated money to the college or university."
 - "The alumni giving rate is calculated by dividing the number of alumni donors during a given academic year by the number of alumni of record for that same year."



NUMBER OF DONORS

- To a statistician, the *U.S. News* definitions mean that you can't count someone in the numerator (i.e. as a donor) if you don't also count them in the denominator (e.g. as of record)
 - Alumni donors supposed to be a subset of alumni!
 - Important for statistical validity, which is important to Institutional Research/Effectiveness officers



NUMBER OF DONORS

- However, as previously noted, the "Number of Donors" may well include donors who are **not** "of Record" if you snapshot "of Record" at one moment
 - Donor who made a gift, then passed away, if you snapshot at the end of the year
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NUMBER OF DONORS

- Institutional Research/Effectiveness Office may say that you can only count donors if they are in the “of Record” population
 - Somewhat alarming to exclude any donors who are not in your “of Record” population, even though they’re perfectly legitimate donors!
 - Not an issue if your “of Record” population includes everyone that you were able to contact at any time during the year (or at least a very small issue!)
 - Likely a fairly small issue in any case



“LOST” ALUMNI

- Noted earlier that “Number of Record” is a fairly reliable/ comparable figure
 - All living alumni except “lost” alumni
- “Number Solicited” less comparable
 - May only be soliciting those who are most likely to give, so the response rate is better
- But what if you decide to “lose” those alumni who are least likely to give....



"LOST" ALUMNI

'Lost' Alumni

Some schools improve their alumni donor rates by excluding alumni for whom they don't have accurate contact information, effectively making those alumni who do donate account for a larger slice of the pie.

Below, what the sample university's rate would be if 20% of its alumni, or 2,000, were classified as "lost."

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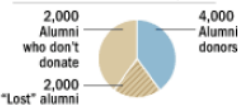
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<http://online.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/info-alumchrtbk0703-1.html>

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"LOST" ALUMNI

- From the "CASE Alumni Giving FAQs (October 2007)"
 - Q: Is it appropriate to avoid keeping track of alumni or avoid taking steps to find "lost" alumni as a means to boost alumni giving participation?
 - A: No. Advancement professionals have an obligation to update alumni data whenever feasibly possible. Many best practices are available to advancement professionals on keeping alumni data current. In addition, several commercial vendors provide services to assist institutions in finding and tracking alumni. Not tracking or finding alumni is not in the long term best interests of the institution nor is it ethical.

WHAT ABOUT THE GRADUATING CLASS?

- Are they reported as students, or as alumni?
 - Solicited all year as students
 - Alumni by the time that the year ends
- Effect on participation
 - Traditionally, low participation rate
 - With a successful senior class gift program, may be a high participation rate

WHAT ABOUT THE GRADUATING CLASS?

Counting the Seniors, I

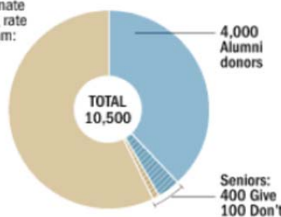
Procedures vary when it comes to counting gifts from seniors, who give before graduating but are alumni by the time the paperwork is filed. Some schools simply count the entire class of seniors -- donors and nondonors -- as if they had already graduated, increasing both the pool of total alumni and donor count.

Below, how this could affect a university with 500 graduating seniors and 10,000 pre-existing alumni.

If 400 seniors and 4,000 alumni donate in a given year, this is how the giving rate is calculated under the above program:

	Donors	Total
Alumni	4,000	10,000
Seniors	400	500
TOTAL	4,400	10,500

TOTAL GIVING RATE: 41.9%



Because seniors are not alumni, many colleges leave them out of the alumni-giving rate. Here's what it would look like:

	Donors	Total
Alumni	4,000	10,000
Seniors	0	0
TOTAL	4,000	10,000

TOTAL GIVING RATE: 40%

Wesleyan University is among the schools that count senior gifts this way. With contributions in 2006 from 94% of seniors who graduated that year, the school's giving rate was 54%, up from 47% in 2000. Counting seniors "obviously helps your numbers," says Barbara-Jan Wilson, vice president for university relations.

<http://online.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/info-alumchrtbk0703-1.html>

WHAT ABOUT THE GRADUATING CLASS?

- From the “CASE Alumni Giving FAQs (October 2007)”
 - Q: Should graduating seniors be included in alumni giving data?
 - A: Graduating seniors present an interesting dilemma. Often seniors make a gift in the latter part of their senior year but by the time the data is reported, they are alumni. Therefore, counting philanthropic gifts from seniors is acceptable as long as all seniors are counted among alumni of record.



WHAT ABOUT THE GRADUATING CLASS?

- From the “CASE Alumni Giving FAQs (October 2007)”
 - In other words, if gifts from graduating seniors are included in alumni giving data, then the complete cohort—all graduating seniors—must be included in the total alumni census. It is not acceptable to include seniors who donate but to exclude seniors who do not donate when calculating overall alumni giving. To report fair and accurate data, any donors reported in the numerator must have their entire cohort in the denominator.”



WHAT ABOUT THE GRADUATING CLASS?

- From the *U.S. News* 2014 best colleges survey data collection instructions
 - “Additionally, exclude all student giving (e.g., senior class gift) unless you count the entire senior student body in the alumni of record total.”



DONORS WHO GIVE INDIRECTLY

- What about donors who give through businesses, family foundation, donor advised funds?
 - Standards say they are not counted as donors
 - Do you let them know that, despite their gifts, they don't count toward participation?
 - Do you solicit them for a direct gift, so they can be counted?



DONORS WHO GIVE INDIRECTLY

- CASE says you don't solicit donors for a token gift
 - Q: Is it appropriate to ask alumni for a miniscule amount of money (\$1, for example) just to boost the percentage of alumni giving?
 - A: No. Our mission to build support for our institutions is not properly served by attempting to manipulate reporting data. Energies are best spent on sound practices to increase institutional support from alumni. Whether initiated by advancement staff or volunteers, it does not build greater support for the institution to ask alumni for "an extra dollar" to boost the class participation percentage. On the other hand, asking seniors in the Class of 2008 to give \$20.08 as a means to capture their interest and encourage a habit of giving would be acceptable.



#Altraining

BEST PRACTICES WITH *U.S. NEWS*



■ SELECTED THE *BEST* OF THE MEASURES AVAILABLE FROM THE VSE

- Alumni of Record
 - Not Alumni Solicited, which is less comparable
- Degreed undergraduate alumni
 - Not all alumni, where data quality varies widely
- Based on gifts of any size
 - Doesn't advantage institutions with wealthy alumni



■ OPEN ISSUES AND POSSIBLE INCONSISTENCIES

- Treatment of graduating class
 - Free to do whatever provides the best results (as long as you do it consistently!)



■ OPEN ISSUES AND POSSIBLE INCONSISTENCIES

- Alumni of Record as snapshot or reflecting the entire year
 - "... for whom you believe you have a valid address or other way to make contact" (When?)
 - Reflecting the entire year
 - Allows all alumni donors to be counted
 - Is more accurate
 - Is more difficult
 - Results in higher numbers/lower participation



■ INCREASING CLARITY ABOUT UNETHICAL PRACTICES

- Inflate donor counts
 - Escrow gift at graduation or reunion, the release/count over multiple years



■ INCREASING CLARITY ABOUT UNETHICAL PRACTICES

- Also addressed by “CASE Alumni Giving FAQs”
 - Q: Is it appropriate to count a single donation over multiple years to boost the percentage of alumni giving?
 - A: When a donor makes a single gift with the expectation that the gift is a one-time gift, it is not appropriate to count the donor in more than one reporting year. Multi-year gifts and pledges are acceptable as long as the donor made the intention of a multiple-year commitment. Taking a single gift and counting it over multiple years without the donor’s knowledge or intention is not appropriate.
- This is not talking about multi-year pledges and annual payments!
 - This is about counting one gift in multiple years



■ INCREASING CLARITY ABOUT UNETHICAL PRACTICES

- Under-report “of record” population
 - Intentionally lose underperforming alumni
 - Adjust counts down, figuring some are probably lost that you just don’t know about
 - Exclude “no contact” alumni, figuring they might have moved since contact and are therefore lost



STILL QUESTIONS OF FAIRNESS / VALIDITY

- Excludes indirect giving
 - May have different impact on different institutions
- Does not account for institutional differences
 - For example, traditional full-time residential vs. continuing part-time commuter
- Whether giving participation fairly represents alumni satisfaction



INCREASED SCRUTINY OF REPORTING PRACTICES

- “Math Lessons: To Boost Donor Numbers, Colleges Adopt New Tricks; Sinking Alumni Stats, Zeal for Rankings Spur Rate Inflation”

-Daniel Golden. Wall Street Journal. (Eastern edition). New York, N.Y.: Mar 2, 2007. pg. A.1

- “Rankings Methodology Hurts Public Institutions”

-Martin van der Werf. The Chronicle of Higher Education. May 25, 2007

- “A U.S. News Effect on College Funding?”

-Elia Powers, Inside Higher Ed., Mar 2, 2007

- “Iona admits ex-official misreported data to outside entities”

-Doug Lederman, Inside Higher Ed., Nov 11, 2011



#Altraining

THE CHALLENGE



■ YOUR GOAL

- You want to “put your best foot forward”
 - Take full credit for your achievements
- Want to maintain the integrity of the report, and the integrity of your institution
 - Respect the standards
 - In a recent survey of advancement service professionals, professional ethics one of the top priorities
 - If nothing else, don’t want your institution to be the subject of a media exposé



■ YOUR GOAL

- Make sure your donors are getting credit for their gifts
 - Counting both alumni spouses for their joint gifts
 - Counting alumni as donors when non-alumni spouses make gifts



■ KNOW THE STANDARDS

- Get a copy of the actual “Alumni Giving Questions” data collection form for your institution
- Be able to address, explain the definitions and rules
 - Alumni of Record
 - Alumni Donors
 - Alumni participation
 - Lost alumni
 - Alumni with only indirect gifts



■ KNOW THE NUMBERS FOR YOUR INSTITUTION

- Alumni of Record
- Alumni donors
- Alumni participation
- Lost alumni
- Alumni with only indirect gifts
- Graduating class giving
- Populations with high, low participation rates and/or increasing/decreasing participation rates



■ UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT OF BUSINESS PROCESS DECISIONS

- Lost alumni searches
 - Best done at the start of a fund-raising year, so that they can be cultivated/solicited all year
 - Prioritize finding previous donors?
- Counting the graduating class
 - Since there is a choice to be made, what works in your institution's interest?
- Alumni with only indirect giving
 - Is some follow-up in your institution's best interest?



■ UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT OF BUSINESS PROCESS DECISIONS

- Limiting alumni solicitation
 - If you don't solicit certain alumni populations, they probably won't make gifts!
 - Unsolicited alumni still count as Alumni of Record
 - On balance, underperforming populations may still not warrant expense of solicitation, but participation considerations should be part of the evaluation



■ UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT OF BUSINESS PROCESS DECISIONS

- Try to understand why non-donor alumni aren't supporting the institution
 - Quality of student experience?
 - Changes in the nature, mission of the institution?
 - Ineffective solicitation strategy?
 - Statistically valid alumni surveys can be useful
- Provide value to alumni



■ UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT OF BUSINESS PROCESS DECISIONS

- Pursue/support strategies that increase the number of alumni donors!
 - Recognize consistent/consecutive giving
 - Test different “asks”
 - Recruit/support class agents, peer solicitation
 - Consider taking advantage of “peer pressure”
 - Take advantage of the Internet
 - Identify, track specific interests
 - Use targeted, focused “mini-campaigns”



■ UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT OF BUSINESS PROCESS DECISIONS

- Pursue/support strategies that increase the number of alumni donors!
 - Include giving opportunities in event registrations
 - Reunion
 - Homecoming
 - Alumni Club events
 - Set up ongoing giving vehicles
 - Recurring credit card gifts
 - Recurring EFT/ATM/electronic check gifts





QUESTIONS



EVALUATION

Thank you!

Please remember to complete the event evaluation.
Your comments will help us continually improve the
quality of our programs.

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