

## WHAT EVERY MARKETING FACULTY MEMBER NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT THOSE BUSINESS SCHOOL RANKINGS

### SESSION CHAIRS

**John A. Schibrowsky**, University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
**James C. Cross**, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

### PRESENTERS

**Paul Hugstad**, California State University, Fullerton  
**Michael Mejza**, University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
**Gillian Naylor**, University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
**Alexander Nill**, University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
**Gail Ball**, Management Consultant

Like it or not, business school rankings are here to stay. For schools that make the list, they are great marketing tools. For schools that have dropped in the rankings or worse yet are not ranked, they are a thorn in the side. Many academics believe that the rankings are inaccurate, irrelevant and/or detrimental to improving the quality of business education. On the other hand, many current and prospective students along with alumni believe the rankings provide meaningful information and that they accurately evaluate the quality of the education at business schools, much like collegiate sports team rankings.

Business school rankings are a topic that should be of interest to every marketing faculty member. Nearly all of us have questioned by prospective students, alumni, local business leaders and potential donors about our school's ranking. Some schools have decided to use the rankings as a goal (i.e., to develop a top 25 MBA program); while others argue that it is a case of "the tail wagging the dog."

Business Schools are not the only group concerned about the rankings. "Some deans are fed up with law school ratings by U.S. News & World Report and have launched an anti-ranking campaign. Others pay lip service to those efforts while figuring out how to boost their own positions on the list," (Carter, 1998). Many observers believe it is not the rankings that are to blame but rather the colleges who promote themselves based on the rankings. "Although college rankings published in the mass media may not be the best way of comparing colleges, they provide more useful information than accrediting agencies, college catalogs, and most college guides. Administrators, not magazines, are to blame for their misuse. Rankings can help motivate programs, departments, and institutions to improve themselves," (Webster, 1992).

Whether you believe the rankings are meaningful or not, you should be knowledgeable about their criteria and methodologies. This special session was designed to provide the marketing faculty member with accurate information pertaining to the business school rankings.

Specific topics will include:

- What are the various rankings (there are at least 10 business school rankings)?

- How are the various rankings different?
- Which criteria are used by the ranking agencies?
- Methodological issues.
- How much do the rankings change from year to year?
- Strategies for getting into the rankings or gaining national recognition in other ways.

Participants will leave this session with a better understanding of the rankings, their differences and similarities in terms of criteria and methodologies. As a result, they should be better prepared to discuss the rankings with the college's constituents and debate the potential uses and misuses of the rankings with colleagues.

### References:

- Carter, Terry. "Rankled by the Rankings." *ABA Journal*. v84 (March 1998): p.46-53.
- Garigliano, Jeff. "U.S. News College Rankings Rankle Critics." *Folio*. v26 n4 (1997): p.19.
- Graham, Hugh Davis and Nancy Diamond. "Academic Departments and the Ratings Game." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 45 (41) (June 18, 1999): p.B6.
- Hossler, Don and Erin M. Foley. "Reducing the Noise in the College Choice Process: The Use of College Guidebooks and Ratings." *New Directions for Institutional Research*. n88 (Winter 1995): p.21-30.
- Machung, Anne. "Playing the Rankings Game." *Change*. v30 n4 (July/August 1998): p.12-16.
- Monks, James and Ronald G. Ehrenberg. "U.S. News & World Report's College Rankings: Why They Do Matter." *Change*. v31, n6 (Nov-Dec 1999): p.42-51.
- Schatz, Martin D. "What's Wrong With MBA Ranking Surveys?" *Management Research News*. v16 n7 (1993): p.15-18.
- Staroba, K. "The Rankings Ruckus: PR Pros Talk about How - and How Not -to Publicize College Rankings." *Currents*. v23 n6 (1997): p.30.
- Webster, David S. "Academic Rankings: First on a List of One." *Academe*. v78 n5 (Sept-Oct 1992): p.19-22.
- Wright, B. Ann. "A Little Learning Is a Dangerous Thing: A Look at Two Popular College Rankings." *College Board Review*. n163 (Spr 1992): p.6-16.