

In ‘value-added’ college rankings, these public schools step up

In our new report, “[Beyond College Rankings](#),” we score two- and four-year U.S. colleges by their “value-added,” meaning the degree to which students do better than expected given their personal characteristics and the kind of school it is. We define “doing better than expected” in three ways: earning more at mid-career, being more likely to pay off student loans, and landing jobs in well-paying occupations.

Private schools, it seems, have a leg up. In terms of the first measure—mid-career earnings potential—41 of the top 50 four-year schools are private.

But many public schools make it a race. The list of the top 10 public schools (also in terms of later earnings) includes some household names like Berkeley and Texas A&M, but also some smaller schools that may not be well known outside their respective regions.

The “predicted” column shows what you would expect a student at a school of this type to be making at mid-career. The “actual” column shows what they’re actually earning. And the difference, which in these cases is pretty substantial, represents the college’s value-added.

Top 10 public institutions by value-added (measured by mid-career earnings)

College Name	Actual Median Mid-Career Salary	Predicated Median Mid-Career Salary
SUNY Maritime College	\$121,700	\$79,637
Virginia Military Institute	\$115,000	\$78,444
Georgia Institute of Technology-Main Campus	\$111,700	\$79,195
Missouri University of Science and Technology	\$98,100	\$69,678
Michigan Technological University	\$97,300	\$69,975
University of California-Berkeley	\$114,200	\$82,368
Colorado School of Mines	\$107,300	\$77,665
Texas A & M University-College Station	\$97,700	\$72,854
Oregon Institute of Technology	\$86,500	\$65,058
University of Massachusetts-Lowell	\$96,600	\$72,837

What drives a college’s success? Much of it can be attributed to the school’s technical orientation. The curriculum at SUNY Maritime College, for example, is exclusively focused on technical degrees like marine transportation, engineering, and operations, which lead to high-paying careers. Other top public schools include institutes of technology and polytechnic universities. But schools may have other practices and attributes that are hard to or identify, such as strong alumni networks, the ability to draw stellar faculty (besides by paying more, which we included), or historical connections to particular high-paying firms and industries.

For more details on the “value-added” approach and to see how other schools perform, [visit the full report and interactive](#).