The Key

For this year's rankings, we scored schools using six broad categories. Each category consists of four to 18 factors, which are described below. We've also provided explanations of what each letter grade means. Please note that each category contributes a different weight to the overall score; for example, a school's Infrastructure grade makes up 28 percent of its total score, while Wireless Access is worth only 4 percent. This ranking includes the 20 most competitive wired institutions offering only 2-year degree programs.

RANKING	2-YEAR INSTITUTIONS	FINAL SCORE	INFRASTRUCTURE	STUDENT RESOURCES	WEB PORTAL	E-LEARNING	TECH SUPPORT	WIRELESS
1	SUNY College at Morrisville www.marwww.morrisville.edu	94.10	A	A	A	B+	A-	A
2	Florida Community College at Jacksonville fccj.org	92.33	B	A	A-	A	A	A
3	SUNYCollege of Technology at Alfred www.alfredstate.edu	86.42	A-	A	B	C+	D-	A
4	Montgomery County Community College www.mc3.edu	85.71	B-	A	B+	A-	C+	D
5	Santa Rosa Junior College www.santarosa.edu	83.53	B	A-	A-	A	D-	D-
6	Harford Community College www.harford.cc.md.us	81.86	B	C-	B+	A	A	C-
7	Community College of Rhode Island www.ccri.cc.ri.us	81.06	C+	C+	A-	A	B-	D-
8	Skyline College skylinecollege.net	79.53	B+	D+	C+	B-	B	A
9	Alexandria Technical College www.alextech.org	77.05	A-	C	C	C-	D	C-
10	Vincennes University www.vinu.edu	76.41	C+	C+	C+	C+	C+	D
11	Minneapolis Community College www.mctc.mnscu.edu	76.22	D+	C-	B+	A	D-	C+
12	Monroe Community College www.monroecc.edu	76.02	B	D+	B	C-	B+	D+
13	Pine Technical College www.ptc.tec.mn.us	75.84	C	C	B-	A	D+	D-
14	Raritan Valley Community College www.raritanval.edu	75.44	C+	C-	B	B+	D+	D-
15	Ozarka College www.ozarka.edu	74.77	C	B+	C+	C-	D	D+
16	Walters State Community College www.wscc.cc.tn.us	74.69	B-	C-	B	C+	D-	C-
17	Central Pennsylvania College www.centralpenn.edu	74.44	A-	D-	A	D+	D-	D-
18	Finger Lakes Community College www.flcc.edu	74.13	B+	D-	C+	B-	B-	B+
19	Hudson Valley Community College www.hvcc.edu	74.05	B+	D-	B+	D+	C+	C+
20	Rio Salado College www.rio.maricopa.edu	73.34	D+	D-	B+	B+	B	B+

28% OF SCORE Infrastructure

At the core of any institution's wired effort is the campus technology infrastructure, the underlying backbone of the university network. This includes everything from the cabling and computer ports in the dormitory walls to the desktop systems in the computer labs.

Major factors: Percentage of new public computers purchased in each of the last five years; percentage of public computers available 24/7; percentage of classrooms with high-speed network access; percentage of classrooms with active Ethernet ports per desk; availability of network ports in campus facilities for mobile computing; gigabit networking; and frequency of network outages.

Grades

A The university's network is lightning-quick and can be accessed by students nearly anywhere on campus, including most classrooms and public facilities.

B All or most buildings are connected to the Net. The school could offer better hours of access to public labs, and more ports on campus for mobile computing.

C High-speed access to the Net is available, but the school is not likely a participant in a major gigabit project. The school lacks around-the-clock access to labs, and PCs may be upgraded infrequently.

D The school tends to keep older PCs longer than most institutions, has inadequate lab hours, and experiences frequent or unusually long network outages.

28% OF SCORE Student Resources

Today, students can go online—instead of waiting in line—to access critical campus resources, including faculty advisers and the registrar. The best schools also provide students with access to the latest computer peripherals, such as digital video cameras and wireless LAN cards.

Major factors: Online class registration and drop/add; online grade reports, advising, and career-counseling; online bookstore; online course catalog and evaluations; online campus news; Web-based tuition payment; campus-supported Web space and shared network file space for students; computer purchasing plans; equipment available for temporary use by students.

Grades

A Nearly all university administrative services are accessible via the Web, and computer labs are state-of-the-art. The school provides network file space and gives students one or more options for purchasing computers at a discount.

B Some Web-based services are offered, including registration, course catalog, and campus announcements; students also receive space on university servers to build sites.

C Limited Web and network file space is available; either the computer labs or the libraries are unequipped with the latest gadgetry.

D Students can access only a handful of such ordinary computer peripherals as scanners. Also, students can't likely register for classes via the Web—a major drawback at large universities.

21% OF SCORE Web Portal

An institution's Web site is its online ambassador, addressing the school's academic goals and strengths. It's a place where the university community and prospective students can find information, such as admission requirements and a calendar of campus events. A well-designed portal is vital to students and alumni, who rely on the site to access news updates and administrative services.

Major factors: Design and navigability; usefulness of admissions Web site; availability of an online application; availability of information for prospective and current students, as well as parents; online alumni resources.

Grades

A A work of art: the school's site offers a wide array of services, such as Web-based access to the campus Intranet, campus maps, and alumni discussion groups.

B The site is comprehensive, but its design is convoluted or chaotic, which makes it hard for surfers to navigate.

C Time for a redesign. The site lacks many key services (for example, detailed financial aid info), and what is offered is presented poorly.

D Surf elsewhere, because this site is a mess. It can only serve to embarrass the institution.

12% OF SCORE E-Learning

As a classroom tool, Internet technology has become as essential to professors as blackboard chalk. Innovations allow educators to digitally archive reading materials, build interactive courses, and create online exams (to be taken by students remotely and securely via PC). And at many universities, the Internet is fast becoming an area of study for students looking for a career in technology.

Major factors: Available technologies for instruction (LCD projectors, laptop stations, and course management software); Net-related courses (not including classes in engineering or basic computer science); library services available to faculty; library digital archiving projects.

Grades

A Students can choose from numerous Net-related courses. Some classes are taught entirely online, and instructors have access to the latest technologies, including video teleconferencing.

B Many courses incorporate the Net using such tools as online chat forums. Few courses are taught entirely online. Excellent technologies are available for use in classrooms, but they may not be widely adopted by professors.

C Most university courses do not use the Net as a teaching aid in any capacity. Some course syllabi may be online, but you can forget about majoring—or even minoring—in most Net-related subjects.

D The school has been slow to integrate technology into the classroom and does not offer distance-learning courses. And no, you can't hand in your papers via e-mail.

7% OF SCORE Tech Support

For many students—especially those prone to such accidents as deleting homework assignments and research papers from their computers—no university service is as critical as tech support. Top schools provide 24/7 service, as well as on-site support and training.

Major factors: Hours of free technical support; Web-based technical support; on-site technical support; human-taught computer and Internet orientation for students and faculty.

Grades

A More than 14 hours of support are available per day. Many top schools pay student advisers to handle weekend or late-night emergencies and provide free Net instruction.

B Tech support hours are respectable, but the school skimps on all-important weekend hours. Like "A" schools, the institution provides students and faculty with free tech instruction.

C Don't expect live help when your system crashes at 3 A.M. Also, Net and PC training may be unavailable or inaccessible for students and faculty.

D Pray that you can make sense of your computer manual. At best, tech support is available from 9 to 5 on weekdays. Expect to haul your system to the computer lab for repairs.

Wireless Access

4% OF SCORE

While most major universities and colleges offer high-speed Net access on campus, only a select few have rolled out wireless networks. Though this category counted the least in our rankings, it's a good indicator of whether a school is an early adopter of new technologies.

Major factors: Availability of wireless data networking to institution buildings and grounds, including on-campus housing and academic buildings.

Grades

A The school is a wireless pioneer; access is already available in many academic buildings, and plans are in place to expand coverage to the rest of the campus this year.

B Some buildings on campus offer wireless access; these usually include the library and computing center.

C Trial-only, folks. The school has just begun to test the wireless waters, and a few lucky students may get to play beta-tester.

D Mired in wires: The school has no plans to develop a wireless network before the fall 2002 semester.

Scores reflect technology resources as of Spring 2001.

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