PRESS RELEASE

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DATE: Friday, 1 April 2016
EMBARGOED: Monday, 4 April 2016 at 10:30 CET

U-Multirank releases third global university rankings:
US research dominance hides diverse strengths in global higher education

Monday 4 April: Today U-Multirank, the largest global university ranking, has published its latest release of data online (www.umultirank.org), revealing that, while American universities continue to dominate research performance, the picture is far more diverse when it comes to teaching and other strengths.

The third annual edition of U-Multirank is the largest since its launch in 2014 featuring over 1,300 universities, from more than 90 countries, with more than 3,250 faculties and 10,700 study programmes. It includes over 27,000 performance scores at an institutional level alone and another 66,000 in 13 subject areas, many of which are included for the first time.

Among the wealth of data published today is a set of 10 performance lists, each showing 25 top-performing universities according to a different U-Multirank indicator. These paint a picture of great diversity among high performers and show that the long-held esteem for American universities relies on a particularly narrow view of the purpose of higher education.

The results, which are exclusive to U-Multirank, look at performance indicators ranging from staff-student ratios in teaching to citation rates for research publications.

The ‘top cited publications’ indicator is just one measure of research excellence and it is dominated by 18 US universities out of the 25 top performers. In particular Rockefeller University, MIT, Stanford and Harvard outperformed the rest of the world. There are only 6 European universities in this specific list: one from Finland, two from France, one from Switzerland and two from the UK. For the largest volume of research publications, the picture is similar: 12 US universities, and only five European (four UK and one from France), five Asian, two Canadian and one from Brazil.

The situation is reversed, however, for ‘co-publications with industrial partners’, a key measure of ‘knowledge transfer’. In this indicator 17 out of the 25 top performers are from Europe, including many technical universities and universities of applied sciences, such as the top three performers: Reutlingen UAS, Nuremberg IoT and Munich UAS – all from Germany.

For interdisciplinary publications, both European (12) and Asian (11) universities outperform US institutions (only 1). And the top 25 university performers on the indicator ‘regional joint publications’ indicates that 21 European universities have a strong publishing culture with organisations in their own region, while not a single US university is on this list.
Thus, universities’ role as global centres of excellence is reflected in many measures, not only of research but also of teaching and learning, knowledge transfer, internationalisation and regional engagement.

The U-Multirank lists make it clear that top performance is for instance also found in ‘student mobility’ where patterns of strength are not geographic at all. The list of top performers here is dominated by business schools. And some of the best student-staff ratios, which are often regarded as more supportive to students’ learning, are found in a number of European countries (Belgium, Germany, Italy, Poland and Spain) as well as in Brazil and Japan.

Safi Sabuni, president of the Erasmus Student Network (ESN), welcomed the latest edition of U-Multirank: “With the increasing number of mobile students around the world, there is a need for university comparisons across all different aspects of performance excellence like internationalisation and teaching and learning, and U-Multirank does just that with its multi-dimensional approach while giving a voice to students for students.”

Professor Dr. Frans van Vught, U-Multirank’s joint project leader, commented: “The latest release from U-Multirank shows again that there are many different ways in which universities can demonstrate excellence. Research is obviously an important one, but diversity of purpose is critical to the strength of higher education as a whole.”

Professor Dr. Frank Ziegele, U-Multirank’s joint project leader, added: “Students want to find the university that’s best for them, according to their own preferences. To do that, they need the full picture and a user-driven approach. U-Multirank makes it possible for users to rank universities their own way – and is even easier now for users on the go with its new mobile version.”

In addition to the readymade ranking on ‘research & research linkages’ published today, further new readymade rankings will be released throughout the year, including a ranking of performance in teaching and learning next week. This will draw on findings from one of the world’s largest surveys of student opinion that reflects the feedback from over 105,000 student respondents.

U-Multirank’s readymade rankings show users how they can use U-Multirank’s unique web tool to create their own personalised rankings using dozens of criteria at an institutional and subject level and across five ‘dimensions’ (areas of performance). For the first time today, this interactive comparison tool for global higher education is now also available in a web-optimised version and as an app for smart phones and tablets.

With its multidimensional approach, U-Multirank is the first global ranking to offer a full picture of the diversity of university performance, providing users with data on more than just research. Users can also compare universities on teaching and learning, knowledge transfer, international orientation and regional engagement. Comparisons are also possible across 13 subject areas: electrical and mechanical engineering, business studies, physics, psychology, computer science and medicine, and new this year, biology, chemistry, mathematics, history, sociology and social work/welfare.

In addition, in cooperation with the Erasmus Student Network, top performance in student feedback will be recognised at the ESN Annual General Meeting in Warsaw.
Background and further information

U-Multirank is developed and implemented by an independent consortium led by the Centre for Higher Education (CHE) in Germany, the Center for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS) at the University of Twente and the Centre for Science and Technology Studies (CWTS) from Leiden University, both in the Netherlands. The consortium is headed by Professor Dr. Frans van Vught of CHEPS and Professor Dr. Frank Ziegele of CHE. Other partner organisations include the Bertelsmann Foundation, student advice organisation Push and software firm Folge 3, as well as a range of national partners and stakeholder organisations.

U-Multirank’s multi-dimensional approach compares university performance across a range of different activities grading them from “A” (very good) to “E” (weak). It allows users to create personalised rankings and identify a university’s strengths and weaknesses, or the aspects that most interest them. The data included in U-Multirank are drawn from a number of sources, providing users with a comprehensive set of information: data supplied by institutions; from international bibliometric and patent databases; and surveys of more than 105,000 students at participating universities.

The fourth U-Multirank rankings will be released in March 2017. Institutions that would like to participate can express their interest on the U-Multirank website.

U-Multirank is supported by the European Commission and receives €4 million in funding from the European Union Erasmus+ programme for the years 2013-2017. The future goal is for an independent non-profit organisation to manage the ranking as an open source for international comparisons serving the needs of various stakeholder groups in higher education.

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Appendices:
  a. A set of 10 lists of the 25 top performing higher education institutions on specific indicators
  b. Readymade ranking ‘research & research linkages’
  c. Master list of included higher education institutions
  d. Q+A memo

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