U.S. News & World Report 2026 Best Colleges Rankings

Office of Institutional Research and Assessment Summary Report

U.S. News and World Report releases the Best Colleges Rankings each fall. These undergraduate rankings are used by students to help them decide where to apply to college. Rankings are based on the following criteria: outcomes, peer assessments, faculty and financial resources, student excellence, and faculty research. Rankings serve a purpose, but only measure a small portion of what we use as an institution to measure our success.

This report presents the 2026 U.S. News Best Colleges Rankings for the University of Tennessee - Knoxville and our peers.

The University of Tennessee - Knoxville	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**	**2026**
Overall Rankings				
National Universities	115	105	109	102
Public School	53	51	52	49
Institutional Scores/Rankings				
Overall Score	59	63	62	64
Expert Opinion	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.4
Outcomes Rank	171	202	200	188
Six-year graduation rate	72%	73%	73%	74%
Freshmen retention rate	88%	89%	91%	92%
Over/Under Predicted graduation rate	-6	-6	-2	-1
Median Federal Indebtedness	$19,810	20500	$20,500	$20,500
College grads earning more than high school grads	-	80%	86%	86%
Social Mobility Rank	250	312	300	294
Pell grad rate	60%	61%	63%	64%
Faculty Resources Rank	198	78	82	91
Faculty Compensation Rank	55	63	63	71
Percentage of faculty that is full time	94%	94%	94%	94%
Student/Faculty Ratio	17/1	18/1	18/1	18/1
SAT/ACT 25th-75th percentile	25-31	25-31	25-31	25-31
Financial Resources Rank	132	133	134	155
Faculty Research	-	41	52	69

The University of Tennessee - Knoxville

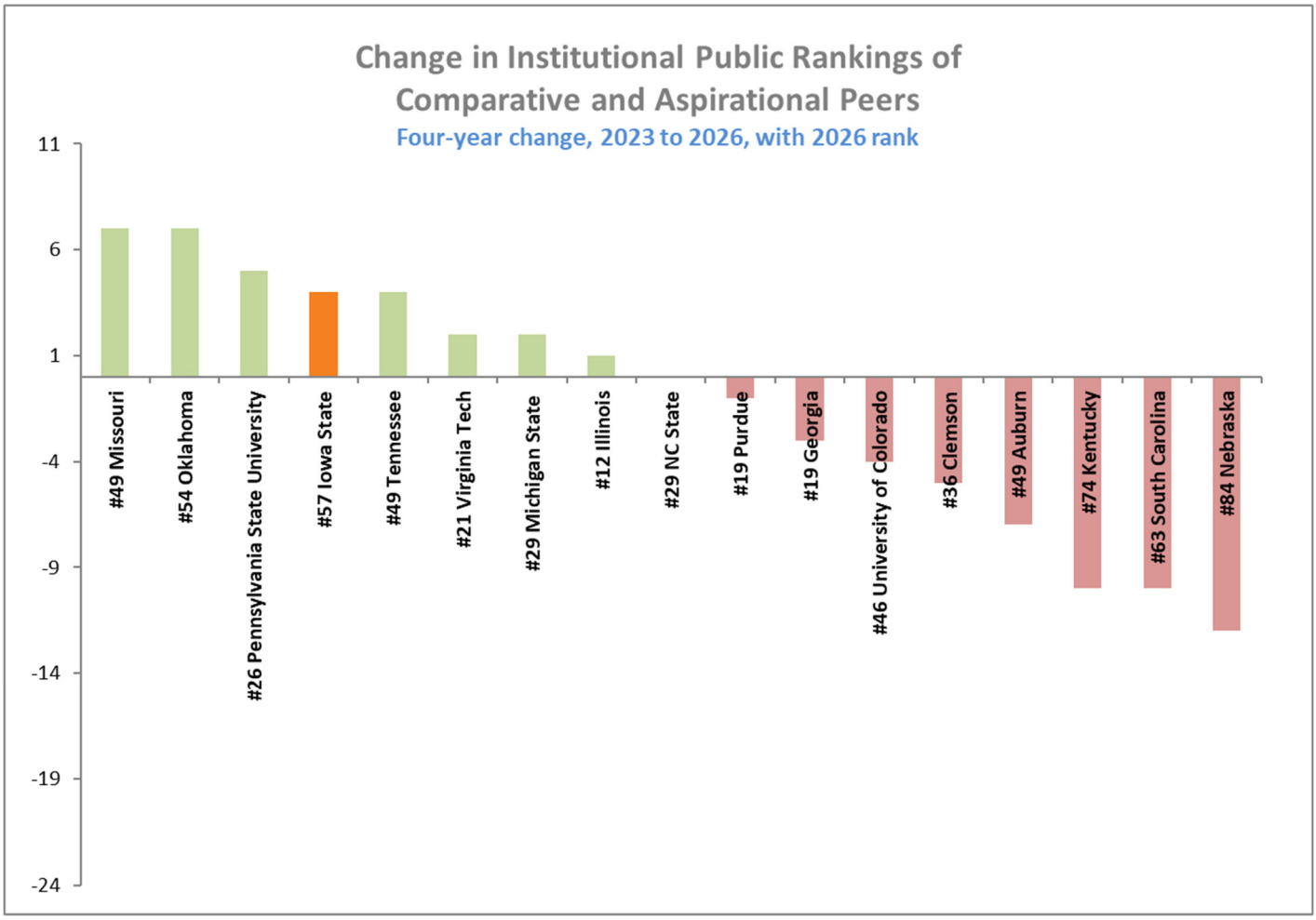
In the 2026 rankings, the University of Tennessee – Knoxville (UTK) rose seven spots to #102 in the national rankings and to #49 in the public school rankings. In the national rankings, UTK tied with seven other institutions and with four in the public ranking.

The university has once again been included in the Best Value Schools rankings at 89th nationally (up 6 places) and 23rd among publics. We are also listed in the Most Innovative Schools rankings rising significantly to 28th nationally (up 35) and 14th among public schools (up 19). UTK was also ranked in the Best Colleges for Veterans rankings at 67th (up 3) nationally and 48st among publics.

Our undergraduate business program ranked 37th nationally (up 3) and again at 25th among publics. The supply chain/logistics program is once again highly ranked at 3rd (up 1) nationally and 3rd among public schools. Accounting rose to 30th nationally (up 12) and 15th among publics (up 3). Undergraduate engineering is ranked 64th (up 2) nationally and 37th among publics. Nursing decreased slightly to 28th (down 2) nationally and rose to 18th among publics (up 1). Computer Science ranked 71st nationally (down 18) and 39th among publics (down 10). Economics (99th nationally and 43rd public) and Psychology (113th nationally and 58th public) were also ranked. These discipline rankings are based solely on the peer surveys of deans and senior faculty members of the different programs.

UTK once again increased in the Outcomes rank (which makes up over half of the rankings), moving up from 200 to 188. The Expert Opinion score (a rating by presidents, provosts, and deans that is 20% of the rankings) increased from 3.3 to 3.4 out of 5. Our Social Mobility Rank also increased, rising from 300 to 294. We had ranking decreases in Financial Resources (134 to 155), Faculty Resources (82 to 91), Faculty Compensation (63 to 71), and in Faculty Research (52 to 69).

The following chart shows the changes in Public Ranking of our comparative and aspirational peers over a four-year period, from 2023 to 2026. Over this period, 7 peers increased in rank, 1 peer remained the same, and 8 peers decreased.



Peer Comparisons

The University of Tennessee – Knoxville has two sets of comparison peers: Comparative (10) and Aspirational (6). In the following section, we list the schools that exhibited the largest increases or decreases in the different categories. The movement in the rankings are in our opinion mostly caused by our improvement in the Outcomes rank, Expert Opinion score, and the movement of those ranked around us, including the number of ties in the rankings ahead of us and several institutions moving with or above us. Two of our comparable and three of our aspirational peers fell in the overall rankings. One comparable peer, the University of Oklahoma, rose significantly.

UTK Peers	2026 National Universities	2025 National Universities	Change	2026 Public Schools	2025 Public Schools	Change
University of Tennessee - Knoxville	102	109	**7**	49	52	**3**
Comparable Peers						
Auburn University	102	105	**3**	49	51	**2**
Clemson University	75	80	**5**	36	39	**3**
Iowa State University	117	121	**4**	57	61	**4**
University of Colorado	97	98	**1**	46	46	**0**
University of Kentucky	143	152	**9**	74	81	**7**
University of Missouri	102	109	**7**	49	52	**3**
University of Nebraska	158	152	**-6**	84	81	**-3**
University of Oklahoma	110	132	**22**	54	68	**14**
University of South Carolina	127	121	**-6**	63	61	**-2**
Virginia Tech	51	51	**0**	21	21	**0**
Aspirational Peers						
Michigan State University	64	63	**-1**	29	30	**1**
North Carolina State University	64	58	**-6**	29	26	**-3**
Purdue University	46	46	**0**	19	18	**-1**
University of Georgia	46	46	**0**	19	18	**-1**
Pennsylvania State University	59	63	**4**	26	30	**4**
University of Illinois	36	33	**-3**	12	9	**-3**

<u>Comparative Peers</u>

- National Universities Ranking
  - Increased in rank: University of Oklahoma (22), University of Kentucky (9), UTK (7), University of Missouri (7), Clemson University (5), and Iowa State (4)
  - Decreased in rank: University of Nebraska (-6) and University of South Carolina (-6)
- Public Universities Ranking
  - Increased in rank: University of Oklahoma (14), University of Kentucky (7), and Iowa State (4)
  - Decreased in rank: University of Nebraska (-3) and the University of South Carolina (-2)
- Outcomes Rank
  - Increased in rank: University of Oklahoma (28), University of South Carolina (20), University of Missouri (16), Auburn University (15), Clemson University (13), UTK (12), and the University of Kentucky (10)

Decreased in rank: University of Colorado Boulder (-12) and the University of Nebraska (-7)

- Social Mobility Rank
  - Increased in rank: University of Oklahoma (31), Clemson University (17), University of Missouri (17), and UTK (6)
  - Decreased in rank: University of Nebraska (-20), University of Colorado Boulder (-9) and Virginia Tech (-8)
- Faculty Resources Rank
  - Increased in Rank: University of Oklahoma (13) and Clemson University (7)
  - Decreased in rank: Iowa State (-29), University of Nebraska (-29), University of South Carolina (-14), University of Colorado Boulder (-13), University of Missouri (-9), and UTK (-9)
- Faculty Compensation Rank
  - Increased in Rank: University of Oklahoma (30)
  - Decreased in rank: Iowa State (-17), University of Colorado Boulder (-11), and UTK (-8)
- Financial Resources Rank:
  - Increased in Rank: University of Missouri (39), University of Nebraska (22), and Auburn University (18)
  - Decreased in rank: University of South Carolina (-35), UTK (-21), University of Colorado Boulder (-13), and Virginia Tech (-9)
- Faculty Research
  - Increased in rank: University of Missouri (11) and University of Oklahoma (5)
  - Decreased in rank: UTK (-17), Iowa State (-15), University of Colorado Boulder (-12), and the University of Nebraska (-11)

<u>Aspirational Peers</u>

- National Universities Ranking
  - Increased in rank: UTK (7) and Penn State (4)
  - Decreased in rank: NC State (-6), University of Illinois (-3), and Michigan State University (-1)
- Public Universities Ranking
  - Increased in rank: Penn State (4), UTK (3) and Michigan State University (1)
  - Decreased in rank: NC State (-3), University of Illinois (-3), Purdue University (-1), and the University of Georgia (-1)

- Outcomes Rank
  - Increased in rank: Michigan State University (17), NC State (13), UTK (12), Penn State (5), and the University of Georgia (5)
  - Decreased in rank: Purdue University (-17)
- Social Mobility Rank
  - Increased in rank: Penn State (15), Michigan State University (8), University of Georgia (8), and UTK (6)
  - Decreased in rank: NC State (-32) and Purdue University (-3)
- Faculty Resources Rank
  - Increased in Rank: NC State (5), University of Georgia (5), and Michigan State University (2)
  - Decreased in rank: UTK (-9), Purdue University (-3), Penn State (-2), and the University of Illinois (-1)
- Faculty Compensation Rank
  - Increased in Rank: Penn State (7) and Michigan State University (4)
  - Decreased in rank: UTK (-8), Purdue University (-4), University of Georgia (-3), NC State (-2), and the University of Illinois (-1)
- Financial Resources Rank
  - Increased in Rank: NC State (8) and Penn State (5)
  - Decreased in rank: University of Illinois (-74), University of Georgia (-39), UTK (-21), and Purdue University (-5)
- Faculty Research
  - Increased in rank: Michigan State University (10) and the University of Georgia (5)
  - Decreased in rank: Penn State (-27), UTK (-17), Purdue University (-9), NC State (-4), and the University of Illinois (-3)

<u>SEC</u>

- National Universities ranking
  - Increased in rank: University of Oklahoma (22), LSU (10), University of Kentucky (8), University of Missouri (7), and UTK (7)
  - Decreased in rank: University of South Carolina (-6)
- Public Universities ranking
  - Increased in rank: University of Oklahoma (14), University of Kentucky (7), LSU (5), University of Missouri (3), and UTK (3)
  - Decreased in rank: University of South Carolina (-2) and the University of Georgia (-1)

- Outcomes Rank
    - Increased in rank: University of Oklahoma (28), University of South Carolina (20), University of Missouri (16), Auburn University (15), UTK (12), University of Mississippi (11), Mississippi State (10), University of Alabama (10), University of Arkansas (10), and the University of Kentucky (10)
    - Decreased in rank: University of Texas (-10), Texas A&M (-2), University of Florida (-2), and Vanderbilt University (-2)
- Social Mobility
    - Increased in rank: University of Oklahoma (31), LSU (20), University of Missouri (17), University of Georgia (8), University of Mississippi (7), and UTK (6)
    - Decreased in rank: University of Florida (-8) and the University of South Carolina (-4)
- Faculty Resources Rank
    - Increased in Rank: Mississippi State (17), University of Oklahoma (13), University of Georgia (5), and the University of Texas (5)
    - Decreased in rank: University of Alabama (-24), Texas A&M (-16), University of Arkansas (-15), University of South Carolina (-14), University of Missouri (-9), and UTK (-9)
- Faculty Compensation Rank
    - Increased in Rank: University of Oklahoma (30) and Mississippi State (18)
    - Decreased in rank: University of Alabama (-23), University of Arkansas (-13), UTK (-8), University of Mississippi (-7), and the University of Kentucky (-6)
- Financial Resources Rank:
    - Increased in Rank: LSU (39), University of Missouri (39), Mississippi State (21), Auburn University (18), University of Florida (17), University of Texas (13), and the University of Alabama (9)
    - Decreased in rank: University of Georgia (-39), University of South Carolina (-35), University of Mississippi (-34), and UTK (-21)
- Faculty Research
    - Increased in rank: University of Missouri (11), Texas A&M (8), University of Georgia (5), and the University of Oklahoma (5)
    - Decreased in rank: LSU (-18), UTK (-17), University of Arkansas (-11), and the University of Alabama (-9)

In the 2026 national rankings the University of Tennessee – Knoxville tied with seven other universities. The public institutions that are tied with UTK include Auburn University, Temple University, University of Iowa, and the University of Missouri. The private institutions that tied with us are Gonzaga University, Loyola Marymount University, and Saint Louis University.