Loyola moves up in national rankings

By Esther Catillejo
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Loyola was ranked No. 106 among the nation’s top universities and colleges, according to the U.S. News and World Report 2013 university ranking.

The report lists the rankings of colleges and universities across the nation based on the type of academic institution and academic quality.

Loyola moved up the list from its former position at No. 119, outperforming the local Illinois Institute of Technology, ranked No. 113; DePaul University, 134; University of Illinois, Chicago, 147; Illinois State University, 156; Southern Illinois University, 179; and Northern Illinois University, 189.

The Rev. Michael J. Garanzini S.J., president of Loyola, acknowledged that the university has improved in many areas, such as hiring more full time faculty members, acquiring more alumni donations and increasing class sizes, retention rate and on-time graduation.

“The vice presidents [of the different schools] and the provost developed deliberate programs to address areas of deficiency and the faculty have agreed to teaching loads that allow us to be competitive with the top 100 institutions,” said Garanzini, who has been president since 2001.

However, he also said that there are aspects in the way the ranking evaluates, such as the peer review score, he believes are defective.

“As president, I get the score form and am asked to give my opinion of hundreds of colleges and institutions I know nothing about. Naturally, an institution with a national or even international reputation is likely to get high scores,” Garanzini said.

Indicators for academic quality include the school’s assessment by administrators at other institutions, retention of students, faculty resources, student selectivity, financial resources and alumni giving, according to the U.S. News and World Report website.

“When it comes to undergraduate education, I would put Loyola up there with the best institution ... I have seen enough to know it is very difficult to measure quality, and quality is easily confused with our conflicted opinions and beliefs about what constitutes a great university,” Garanzini added.

Claudia Castañeda, a sophomore political science major, agrees with Garanzini.

“Loyola started as a commuter school and was known as that for so long... now we’re finally becoming a real university,” Castañeda said. “There’s so much being built and I feel like more and more people are applying and recognizing Loyola as a top institution.”
Lori Greene, Loyola’s director of undergraduate admissions, believes that college rankings are not the best source to help students find the place that suits them best.

“Rankings don’t change much over the years, so there are many great schools to choose from that might go unnoticed if you only looked at the rankings,” she wrote on a blog post on the College Admission at Loyola’s website.

Nevertheless, she is pleased to see the school’s efforts are being reflected by the rankings.

“I admit it’s an added bonus to move up in the rankings … I am happy to see that our long-term community efforts and investments pay off for future students,” she wrote.

Some students are also happy about Loyola’s improved ranking.

“I think the ranking compliments us well. I like it, I like it a lot,” said Holly Scheltens, 19, a sophomore nursing major.

Still, others shared Garanzini’s views on Loyola’s real value.

“I’m proud that we moved up, however I don’t think the rank really reflects the real value of the school. As a transfer student, I know some schools ranked above us are not nearly as competitive and hard as Loyola is,” said Stephanie Granowicz, 19, a sophomore advertising and public relations major. “I like [that] we beat DePaul, though,” she added.

For this year’s list, U.S. News and World Report ranked 1,391 colleges and universities across the country, 92 percent of which turned in their statistical information to the magazine during the spring and summer 2012 data collection.

At the top of the list were Harvard University and Princeton University, tied at No. 1, Yale University ranked No. 3; Columbia University and University of Chicago tied at No. 4; Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Stanford University tied at No. 6; Duke and the University of Pennsylvania tied at No. 8; and California Institute of Technology ranked No. 10.

Fellow Illinois schools Northwestern University and University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, ranked among the top 50 schools in the nation.