Clemson No. 1 'jock school'

School tops 2 other categories in review

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Clemson is No. 1. Again.

The university ranked at the top in three categories, including "jock schools," in the Princeton Review's "The Best 378 Colleges" publication released Tuesday.

The rankings, based on student surveys, also put Clemson at the top of the list in the categories, "everyone plays intramural sports," and "town-gown relations are great."

The jock schools ranking is based on the popularity of intercollegiate and intramural sports and the Greek system.

Clemson, which was the top jock school in 2007, 2009 and 2010, bumped off the University of Florida, which held the title the past two years.

Clemson has held the top ranking for the university's relationship with the town every year since 2009.

"It's no surprise that Clemson ranked No. 1 in those categories," said Kayley Seawright, student body president. "We have a very active and competitive student body with a majority of our students participating in intramural and club sports. You always see students running Perimeter Road, playing sports on Bowman Field, or enjoying the lake."

The campus' location adjoining the city of Clemson also fosters a great relationship with the city, she said.

"Many students work in the community and the local businesses are actively involved in supporting events on campus," she said. "No matter where you go in the city of Clemson, you're likely to see your fellow classmates and a lot of orange and tiger paws. We couldn't ask for a better relationship."

Clemson Mayor J.C. Cook said the cooperative town-gown spirit goes back to the mid-1980's, when his predecessor, Larry Abernathy, and then-Clemson President Walter Cox used to sit on a park bench and talk through the issues that sometimes strain town-gown relationships.

See CLEMSON, Page 5B

CLEMSON

Continued from Page 1B

The city and university formed a joint committee to meet nine months a year to help smooth things along.

"From the city side one of the biggest problems is that students' lifestyle is not necessarily the same as working people and families," Cook said.

Most students, after their freshman year, move off campus, he said, which sometimes led to conflicts in neighborhoods where groups of students lived near families. The city over the past few years developed ordinances and rules to reduce the potential for problems, he said.

"We have ways of dealing with it now that we didn't several years ago," he said.

Clemson also placed No. 7 for "their students love these colleges," No. 9 for "students pack the stadium" for intercollegiate sports events, No. 11 for "best career services," No. 12 for "happiest students" and No. 13 for "most (politically) conservative students."

The University of South Carolina's highest rankings were No. 10 for "best college newspaper" and "jock schools," No. 13 for "best athletic facilities," and No. 20 for "students pack the stadiums."

The only other South Carolina school with a top 10 ranking was Furman University, ranked No. 5 by students for "little race/class interaction" between students of different backgrounds.

Furman spokesman Vince Moore said the university takes the rankings "with a grain of salt."

Furman has seen increases in enrollment of minorities, with ethnic diversity in its freshman class rising from 15 percent to 21 percent in two years, he said.

"We also continue to provide generous financial aid packages to make a Furman education accessible to everybody," he said. "But we also recognize there is always room for improvement, and we're committed to making Furman an academic community where everyone can feel welcome, no matter their background."

The Princeton Review survey asked 126,000 students at 378 colleges to rate their schools on 62 topics and report on their experiences at them.

"Every college in our book offers outstanding academics," said Robert Franek, the guide's author and The Princeton Review senior vice president and publisher. "We don't rank them academically, 1 to 378, because they differ importantly in their academics, services, and campus culture. That variety is their strength. Our purpose is not to crown one college best overall, but to give applicants the resources and campus feedback they need to choose, get into, pay for, and graduate with a job from the college that's best for them."

The rankings are online at www.princetonreview.com/college-rankings.aspx.