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Clemson stays at No. 22

USC keeps U.S. News' top ranking for international business

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CLEMSON — Clemson University remains No. 22 among national public universities, not backsliding but still shy of its top 20 goal in U.S. News & World Report rankings released today.

And the University of South Carolina ranked first for the 13th consecutive year for its undergraduate international business program at the Darla Moore School of Business in the magazine rankings now on newsstands. The school also ranked 42nd for overall business education nationally and 24th among business schools at public institutions.

While Clemson's ranking is unchanged, President James Barker said the university has improved in categories including record high retention and graduation rates, higher SAT scores, and increased faculty resources.

"This shows that Clemson has the right priorities and is improving in areas that are meaningful to students and parents," Barker said.

Clemson also remained 61st among all of the nation's universities — public and private — and the University of South Carolina was ranked 110th, down from 108th last year, and 55th among public universities.

Clemson and USC ranked 11th in a four-way tie with Rice and Emory universities in a listing of national universities leading the way with promising and innovative changes in academics, faculty, students, campus or facilities.

Four other South Carolina schools also made the list of innovative leaders: Furman University ranked second among the nation's liberal arts colleges; Winthrop University was 13th among Southern schools granting master's degrees; and Anderson and Claflin universities tied for second place among Southern baccalaureate colleges.

Furman ranked 40th among liberal arts colleges, down from 37th last year.

The rankings reflect, in part, the brain power of students, faculty resources and alumni support at the institutions entrusted with teaching some of South Carolina's best and brightest. Seventy percent of undergraduates at Clemson and 73 percent of undergraduates at USC are South Carolinians, according to university data.

"The U.S. News guide comes as colleges and universities throughout the United States are striving to offer the best possible education in a time of declining resources," USC President Harris Pastides said. "These rankings are proof that Carolina students will have a solid foundation for their futures."

Yet the rankings have sparked controversy. Furman President David Shi is among liberal arts college presidents who no longer participate in a peer-review segment of the rankings.

Opponents say it carries too much weight — 25 percent — and that presidents, provosts and admissions directors asked to complete the reviews don't necessarily have adequate knowledge of all schools they are asked to rate.

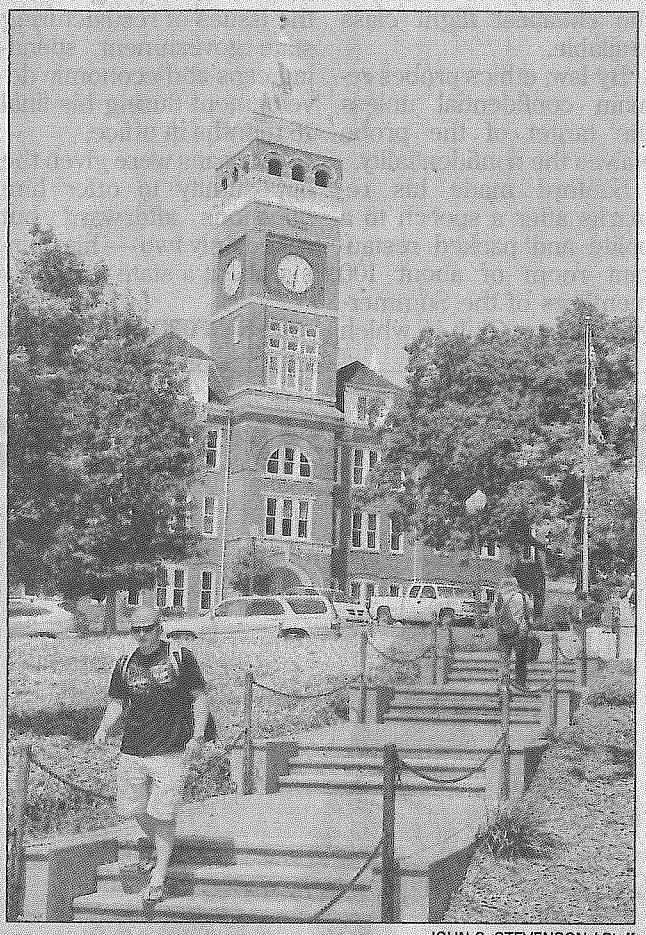
"It has become increasingly evident that the mania over such rankings leads some colleges and universities to 'game' the data, thereby making it even more problematic to place much faith in the integrity of the rankings and the process by which they are created," Shi said.

A Clemson researcher at a recent higher education conference told participants that Clemson's president gave low marks to all other schools on the peer survey and that she was confident that others did also. The university issued a statement denying any unethical conduct or manipulation of data.

Barker marked Clemson higher than all other universities on peer surveys obtained by *The Greenville News*, including his 2009 survey for the new rankings, while Provost Dori Helms ranked some schools as highly as Clemson. In an interview, Barker told *The Greenville News* he believes Clemson is superior.

In wake of the incident, Barker had internal auditors review data-gathering processes and actual data. The results confirmed the integrity of Clemson's processes and data, said Clemson spokeswoman Cathy Sams.

Bob Morse, director of data research for U.S. News, said he sees "little outright gaming." Any "strategic voting washes away statistically," and the two highest and lowest votes for each school are discarded as a safeguard, he said. "Clemson did what they did, but there's other research, and the results remain stable over time."



JOHN C. STEVENSON / Staff

Clemson University welcomed students back to class Wednesday. The school reported a record freshman enrollment this year.