

UIS makes annual list of best colleges

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STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER

Posted Aug 22, 2008 @ 12:01 AM

In its first year of eligibility, the University of Illinois at Springfield has made U.S. News and World Report's annual list of America's Best Colleges.

For the 2009 edition, the magazine ranked UIS as the best public university (master's category) in the state of Illinois and the fourth best public university in that category in the entire Midwest.

The master's category includes colleges and universities that provide a full range of undergraduate and master's programs, but few, if any, doctoral programs.

Chancellor Richard Ringeisen said the faculty was both pleased and surprised at the ranking.

"We were looking forward to seeing how we would do. Never in our dreams did we think we would be ranked fourth out of this large 12-state area," Ringeisen said Thursday.

"We were not eligible to be ranked by U.S. News until two years after we graduated our first class of freshmen," Ringeisen added. "That fact alone — being given such high marks the first time we were eligible to receive them — is particularly gratifying."

UIS enrolled its first class of Capital Scholars Honors Program freshmen in the fall of 2001.

Other Illinois schools in the same category as UIS include Western Illinois University in Macomb and Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville.

The state's largest public universities, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for example, are in a different category.

On another list that included both public and private colleges and universities in the 12-state region, UIS ranked 26 out of 71 schools.

The 12-state Midwest region includes Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, Kansas, Nebraska and North and South Dakota.

Even though the category is based in UIS' master's program, evaluators looked at the entire school when calculating the rankings, according to a UIS press release. The rankings are based on several key measures of quality, including peer assessment, graduation and retention rates, faculty resources, student selectivity, financial resources and alumni giving.

Ringeisen said a lot of people deserve credit for UIS' ranking, including staff members, students and alumni.

U.S. News and World Report also gave UIS a high ranking in a category called "Great Schools, Great Prices" for being among the top five public universities in the master's category in the Midwest with students who graduate with the least debt. UIS was third best on the list, with 71 percent of its students graduating with an average debt of \$12,309.

While pleased with its initial ranking, Ringeisen said the school will not rest on its laurels.

"Now the trick is to keep all of these good things going," he said, "and keep moving up."

UIS offers 22 bachelor's degrees, 20 master's degrees and one doctoral degree in public administration.

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