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SU rises, ESF falls in college rankings

Harvard, Princeton tie for top spot. Cornell remains highest rated local school.

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By Nancy Buczek
Staff writer

Eleven Central New York colleges and universities are listed among the top schools in the nation in U.S. News & World Report's annual college rankings, which are scheduled to be released today.

"I'm just pleased that the rankings affirm the quality of higher education in Central New York," said Cornelius "Neil" Murphy Jr., president of the State University College of Environmental Science and Forestry.

ESF was included in several categories in America's Best Colleges 2005 edition, including "great schools, great prices," which Murphy said he was particularly pleased about.

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This is the 21st year the magazine has ranked the colleges, based on such factors as graduation and retention rates, faculty salaries and alumni giving. A school's academic reputation has the most weight. That variable is determined by officials from rival institutions.

David Smith, Syracuse University's vice president of enrollment management, said students and their parents can use college rankings and guidebooks as a tool during their college search, but he warned against relying on the rankings alone.

"If you find yourself moved by these things, I think that may be a mistake," Smith said. "Do you want to make your college choice by someone else's opinion?"

Three local schools were listed among the colleges and universities ranked as the best in the nation among private and public institutions granting doctoral degrees.

Cornell University, in Ithaca, has held steady at the 14th spot in this category for the past three years. This year, it shares the ranking with Johns Hopkins University, in Maryland, and the University of Chicago.

SU moved up on the list from the 55th spot last year to 52nd this year. It shares its rank with George Washington University, in Washington, D.C.,

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and Pepperdine University, in California.

ESF dropped from 78th last year to 98th this year. ESF shares its spot with seven other universities, including Ohio University and the University of Arizona.

Harvard University, in Massachusetts, and Princeton University, in New Jersey, tied for the

top spot, as they did last year.

Among the top 50 public institutions that grant doctoral degrees, ESF came in at 46, sharing the spot with five other universities. Last year ESF was ranked 35th in this category.

Murphy said he wasn't too concerned his college's ranking dropped because many colleges shifted positions.

"You don't have to move much in one way or another for the score to change," Murphy said.

Four local colleges were listed among the best public and private universities that grant master's programs in the northern region.

Ithaca College ranked eighth, tying with Bentley College, in Massachusetts. Last year it was ranked seventh. Le Moyne College again shares the 22nd spot with Gallaudet University, in Washington, D.C.

The State University College at Oswego again landed in the third tier, where schools are not assigned a ranking. The tier includes schools ranked 84th through 122nd. The State University College at Cortland ranked in the third tier again, as it did last year.

Three other local schools were named in the best liberal arts college granting bachelor's degrees category, which includes 217 schools.

Colgate University, in Hamilton, tied for the 16th spot with Grinnell College, in Iowa, and Harvey Mudd College, in California. Last year, Colgate was ranked 17th.

Hamilton College, in Clinton, shares the 19th spot with Colby College, in Maine. Last year, it was ranked 21st.

Wells College, in Aurora, climbed one spot to the 105th ranking, compared with last year. This year, it shares its rank with five other schools, including Lake Forest College, in Illinois, and Wittenberg University, in Ohio.

Cazenovia College is ranked 34th in the northern region in the best comprehensive college, bachelor's degree category. Last year, it was ranked in a tier between 53rd and 69th.

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