UC SANTA BARBARA
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UCSB praised for excellence, access and value in national rankings

Painting a rich picture of a campus known for its innovative spirit, dynamic culture and vibrant community, a host of recent rankings uphold UC Santa Barbara's status as a leading university across a range of categories — from veterans support to social mobility to academic excellence.

"It is gratifying to see UC Santa Barbara is once again recognized among the best universities in an array of national rankings for research, value, access, outcomes and more," said Chancellor Dennis Assanis. "While rankings don't tell the whole story of a university and its success, they are a testimony to UC Santa Barbara's eminence across disciplines, and a result of the passion and continued hard work of our distinguished faculty, our amazing students, and our dedicated staff."

In its 2026 America's Top Colleges rankings, Forbes Magazine rated UCSB as the No. 12 public university in the nation, and No. 42 overall. Forbes' rankings emphasize return on investment, weighing alumni salaries, debt, graduation rates and overall academic performance.

"As public universities brace for the impact of slashed research funding and future enrollment declines, they're still doing the bulk of the work of educating America's students, and doing it at a lower price than their private counterparts," Forbes editors noted, citing estimates that public schools educate more than twice as many students as their private, four-year counterparts. UCSB enrolls a significant share of

Pell Grant recipients, at 28%.

The U.S. News & World Report 2026 Best Colleges report included UCSB in multiple rankings. The campus was named the No. 14 public school among national universities and the No. 41 overall national university, as well as the No. 21 best college for veterans and the No. 19 best national university for social mobility.

U.S. News also ranked UCSB undergraduate programs in psychology (33), computer science (35), engineering (42) and economics (44) among the top 50 programs of their kind nationwide, along with graduate programs in materials (3), physics (9), ecology and evolutionary biology (12), chemistry (24) and sociology (36), among several others.

For the first time in 2025, Washington Monthly has produced a research specific ranking. Described as “an MRI” of university-based research and development nationwide, the Best Colleges for Research ranking rates 139 institutions that each spend at least $100 million annually on research based on total research spending, science and engineering doctorates awarded, faculty receiving major national awards, and the share of faculty elected to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. In that ranking, UCSB was rated the No. 21 Best College for Research among public universities, and No. 38 overall.

Among its Best Bang for the Buck – West schools, which are measured by access, affordability and outcomes metrics, Washington Monthly ranked UCSB No. 34 for affordability and No. 35 for access.

Princeton Review also gave UC Santa Barbara good marks for value, ranking it the No. 13 Best Value College among public universities. In addition, UCSB landed at No. 12 among publics on Princeton’s list of Top 20 Best Career Placement universities.

Money Magazine, which uses a star system rather than numbered rankings, again issued UCSB 4-½ stars in its Best Colleges 2025 report, which showcases the country’s top value schools based on graduation rates, cost of attendance, financial aid, alumni salaries and more.

And PitchBook, which assesses schools known to attract and produce future founders, rated UCSB No. 61 among its 2025 Top 100 Universities for Entrepreneurship. The annual ranking compares colleges based on the number of

undergraduate alumni entrepreneurs who have raised venture capital in the last decade, using PitchBook data and analysis of more than 173,000 VC-backed founders.

On the global front, UCSB ranked No. 179 overall — out of more than 1,500 institutions from more than 100 locations — in the QS World University Rankings 2026. The QS global rankings by subject placed UCSB at No. 25 worldwide for physics and astronomy.

Additionally the Times Higher Education (THE) Interdisciplinary Science Rankings for 2026 rank UCSB No. 12. In association with Schmidt Science Fellows, the THE Interdisciplinary Science Rankings were created to recognize, incentivize and celebrate interdisciplinary science in higher education across the globe. The list of the best universities for interdisciplinary science includes 911 institutions from 94 countries or territories.

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About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.