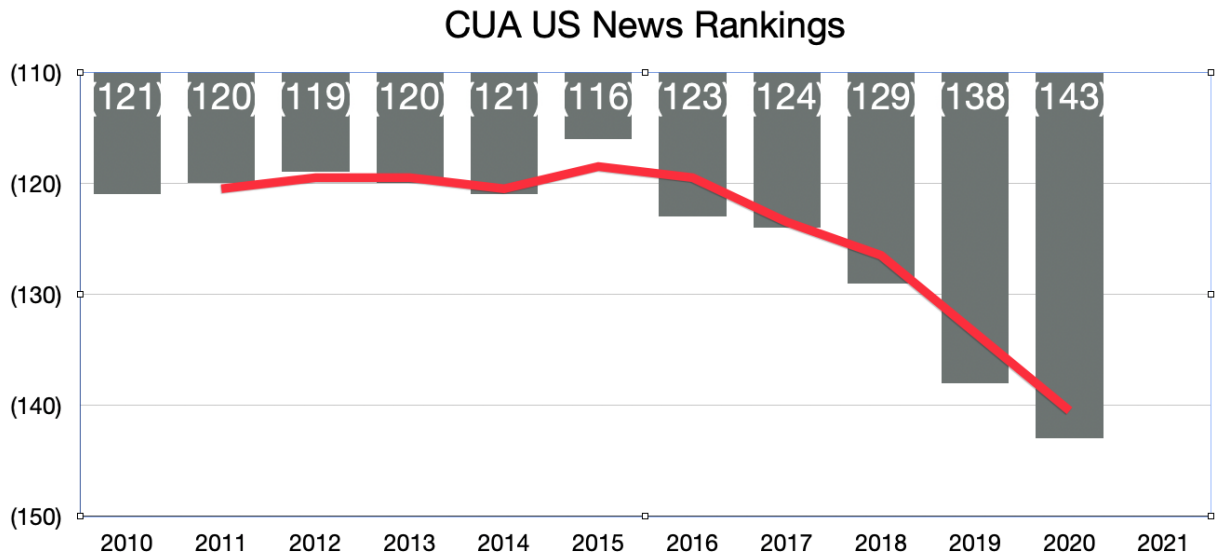# Faculty Assembly Statement on CUA US News Rankings

The CUA Faculty Assembly is concerned that our institution's ranking has significantly declined in recent years and is in danger of falling further without careful planning and strategic action.

While there is considerable debate in higher education about the validity and utility of college rankings, they nevertheless serve as practical metrics in a number of ways:

- Students and their families rely on college rankings, especially the US News College Rankings (USNCR), throughout the college search process.
- Rankings are a source of pride and validation for members of the university community, including trustees, faculty, students, alumni, and parents.
- Rankings convey a university's perceived value and academic reputation to the wider world.

By improving its ranking, CUA can increase tuition and auxiliary revenues, boost advancement efforts, and facilitate faculty hiring and retention.

**Figure 1**: CUA's USNCR is trending in the wrong direction. Indeed, the recent decline in ranking is quite dramatic.



Between 2010-2016, CUA's average USNCR held steady around #120. However, over the past 5 years, CUA's ranking has fallen each year and is now at #143, tied with 10 other institutions.

US News publishes a transparent and detailed methodology on their website for how rankings were determined, including evaluation criteria and associated weight factors. Evaluation criteria include:

- graduation and retention rates (22%)
- social mobility (5%)

- graduating rate performance (8%)
- academic reputation (20%)
- faculty resources (20%)
- student selectivity (7%)
- financial resources per student (10%)
- alumni giving (3%)
- graduate indebtedness (5%).
- The "faculty resources" criteria, accounting for 20% of the overall score, can be broken down further into several sub-categories:
  - class-size index (8%)
  - faculty compensation (7%)
  - percentage of faculty with terminal degree (3%)
  - percentage of  F/T faculty (1%)
  - student-faculty ratio (1%).

The Faculty Assembly analyzed CUA data for each USNCR criteria compared to the average of IPEDS designated peer institutions in the "national university" category. (A summary of CUA vs. an average for the peer group is provided in the Appendix.)

Based on its analysis of the data, the Faculty Assembly recommends implementing the following steps to improve our rankings:

1. The Academic Senate and leadership should make improvement of rankings a key strategic priority in order to improve the university's reputation and long-term viability (and growth).
2. The Office of Financial Planning, Institutional Research and Assessment should report to USN the percent of CUA students who graduated in the top 10% of their high school class. There is no cost to this recommendation.
3. The University should implement a strategy to improve graduation rates for Pell Grant students (currently 62% vs 74% for peers).
4. The University should implement a strategy to lower graduate indebtedness (CUA ranks #278 vs #188.4 for IPEDS peers). While private institutions may be at a disadvantage over public universities in this criterion, CUA is in the bottom 30% of IPEDS peers, which includes private institutions.
5. CUA should improve faculty compensation. As this factor accounts for 7% of the overall ranking score and CUA has not awarded raises essentially for the past decade, this misstep is clearly impacting CUA's rankings. Furthermore, the proposed 4% cuts to faculty (and staff) salaries will further reduce ranking in this category. While CUA's class size index is likely in the top 25% of institutions, this excellent performance is weighted down by poor CUA faculty compensation, resulting in an overall ranking of #326 out of 388 institutions.

# Appendix I:
## CUA ranking by USNCR criteria vs. average of IPEDS Peer group.

| Ranking Criteria | Weight | CUA | IPED Peers |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. **Graduation and Retention Rates** | _22%_ | | |
| • Avg 6-Year Graduation Rate | 17.6% | 73% | 78.3% |
| • Avg 1st Year Student Retention Rate | 4.4% | 86% | 89.8% |
| 2. **Social Mobility** | _5%_ | #373 | #236 |
| • Pell Grant Graduation Rates | 2.5% | 62% | 74.1% |
| • Pell Grant Graduation Rate Performance | 2.5% | 74% | 77.9% |
| 3. **Graduation Rate Performance** | _8%_ | 75% | 73.3% |
| 4. **Undergraduate Academic Reputation** | _20%_ | #167 | #106.7 |
| • Peer Survey Assessment | | 3.2 | 2.9 |
| 5. **Faculty Resources** | _20%_ | #326 | #139.4 |
| • Class Size Index (<20; > 50) | 8% | 60%; 4% | 44.7%; 9.4% |
| • Faculty Compensation | 7% | $91.9K | $99.7K |
| _By rank vs DC area universities_ | _Ord Prof_ | _$118.4K_ | _$132.8K_ |
| | _Assoc Prof_ | _$86.9K_ | _$99.7K_ |
| | _Asst Prof_ | _$74.1K_ | _$85.5K_ |
| • % Faculty w/Terminal Degree in Field | 3% | 87% | 90.3% |
| • % Faculty Full-Time | 1% | 78.1% | 82.2% |
| • Student-Faculty Ratio | 1% | 10:1 | 14.1:1 |
| 6. **Student Selectivity-Fall Class (Current Yr)** | _7%_ | 85% | 57% |
| • Math/Reading/Writing-SAT/ACT Scores (some schools are test opt; others use ACT or SAT) | 5% | | |
| • High School Class Standing-Top 10% | 2% | No Report | 40.2% |
| 7. **Financial Resources Per Student** | _10%_ | #95 ($31.9K) | #132.7 ($27.8K) |
| 8. **Average Alumni Giving Rate** | _3%_ | #114 (10.2%) | #137.8 (10.4%) |
| 9. **Graduate Indebtedness** | _5%_ | #279 | #188.4 |
| • Total Graduate Indebtedness (Avg amount federal loans) | 3% | $25.7K | $24.2K |
| • % who borrowed Federal Loans | 2% | 63% | 54.6% |

## Notes:
- For September 2020 rankings (USNCR refers to this as 2021 rankings), there were 388 institutions categorized as "national universities".
- Ranked data are designated with # where a small number designates the top rank (i.e. #1) out of 388 institutions. GREEN text denotes categories where CUA is above the average of the IPEDS peers. RED text denotes categories where CUA is substantially below the average of IPEDS peers and/or outside of the top 50% of national universities (>#194).

# Appendix II:
## Peer Institutions Analyzed

- American
- Creighton*
- Dayton*
- Delaware
- Depaul*
- Drake*
- Drexel
- Duquesne
- Florida St
- Fordham
- George Washington U
- George Mason U
- Loyola (Illinois)*

- Penn State U
- U. Pittsburgh
- Sacred Heart
- Seton Hall*
- St. John's
- South Carolina
- Syracuse
- Temple
- U Connecticut
- U Maryland-College Park
- U Maryland-Balt County
- Virginia Tech

Note:

- Initially, the group of peer institutions selected were those obtained from Institutional Research and used by Admissions for benchmarking. However, nine universities on the list are categorized by USNCR as "regional universities" (Loyola-Baltimore, St. Joseph's, Fairfield, Providence, Scranton, James Madision U, Franciscan, Manhattan), As such, they were removed from consideration in Appendix I. Additional "national universities" with religious affiliations were added to the peer group (*) in order to increase the comparison pool.