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U.S. News gives WKU online programs high rankings

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Western Kentucky University students on campus and off have access to a highly rated online learning program through the university.

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Western Kentucky University's online bachelor's program is one of the best in Kentucky and the nation, according to new U.S News & World Report rankings.

The university ranked 55th out of 1,730 colleges and universities in the 2023 rankings. WKU bested all other Kentucky higher education institutions except the University of Kentucky, which was ranked 49th by U.S. News.

WKU also placed in some of the contest's subcategories, including:

- 26th in Best Online Master's in Education Programs for Veterans;
- 34th in Best Online Bachelor's Programs for Veterans;
- 44th in Best Online Bachelor's in Business Programs; and
- 52nd in Best Online MBA Programs for Veterans.

The rankings measure to what extent online degree programs meet academic standards of the same quality of comparable in-person programs.

Factors accounted for in the calculations include program engagement, provided services, technology, faculty credentials and training and peer assessment. Standardized tests are not included.

"The fact that WKU is consistently ranked so highly among online degree programs across the United States is a testament to two factors: the high quality of instruction and stellar student support services," said Dr. Marko Dumančić, Western Kentucky University Assistant Provost of Faculty Development and Student Success, in a news release.

WKU offers over 80 online programs in business, health and human services, education and behavioral sciences, science and engineering and liberal arts, according to its website.

Classes are taught by instructors who also teach face-to-face courses, which helps ensure comparable quality.

WKU sets itself apart with the resources it provides its online students, said Tanya Vincent, Online Services program director.

Online students have access to a testing center for proctored exams, tutoring services and coaching to help connect them to resources. WKU also offers "on demand" courses that can be started at any time during the year.

Many online learners are non-traditional students, Vincent said, and so they may need more guidance through the college experience.

"We're trying to meet the needs of the growing online learner," she said.

One of the biggest complaints online students have is the lack of connection they feel with the campus community, she added. Online Services tries to be that "pathway" for

them to get connected.

"They're not just a name," Vincent said. "They want to be a part of WKU."

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