



How to Make Sense of College Rankings

By Kevin McMullin, Collegewise Founder and President

When it comes to utilizing college rankings, I've found that most families fall into one of three camps:

1. Those who don't consider them.
2. Those who plan to incorporate rankings into a variety of college factors.
3. Those who let the rankings drive their entire college process.

I've seen some families in that third camp arrive at their first Collegewise meeting with the latest US News college rankings in hand, intent on limiting their college list to schools in the top ten. Matchmaking, shmatchmaking—it's all about getting into the highest US News-ranked school possible.

I don't expect to effectively convince many folks in that camp to migrate, but if you're on the fence and might be willing to take a realistic look at whether or not any agency can effectively rank colleges, please check out Frank Bruni's *New York Times* piece, [How to Make Sense of College Rankings](#), the gist of which can be found in this excerpt:

"But [college] rankings cannot take into account, and thus ignore, the most consequential part of the equation, which isn't some spell that a given school casts on a student but a student's commitment, curiosity, daring. An obsession with rankings obscures and invariably minimizes this essential truth."

Want more expert application tips from Kevin? Check out his blog at [wiselikeus.com](#).

