

**PRESIDENT HAGERTY  
SIGNS LETTER  
ON SHORTCOMINGS  
OF NATIONAL  
RANKINGS**

by Cheryl Jensen

**D**r. George J. Hagerty, President of Franklin Pierce University, was one of 61 college and university presidents across the country and the only one in New Hampshire to pledge not to provide data for the *U.S. News & World Report* annual rankings survey.

**“It’s a beauty contest,” he said, “based on institutional longevity and long-established reputations. You learn nothing about what institution would be the best one for an individual student. It’s predicated on one size fits all.”**

President Hagerty signed a letter in May written by the Education Conservancy, a national organization that seeks to improve college admission processes. Presidents who signed the letter agreed to refuse to fill out the *U.S. News & World Report* reputational survey and to not use the rankings by the magazine in any promotional efforts on behalf of their institution.

The annual U.S. News rankings of colleges and universities, titled America’s Best Colleges, have been a source of concern since they first came out in the 1980s. Many presidents, including President Hagerty, have long felt that the rankings are misleading and do not provide prospective students and their families with information that is both useful and meaningful.

“I never felt comfortable with a commercialized ranking system,” President Hagerty said. “The strength of American higher education is its

diversity and the rankings provide what I believe to be false comparisons that do not benefit student decision-making. They present higher education in a pecking order that just doesn’t exist.”

President Hagerty is particularly critical of the reputational part of the survey in which college and university presidents are asked to rate other institutions on a scale of one to five.

The results account for 25 percent of the overall ranking.

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In a national effort, led by the Education Conservancy, college and university presidents are trying to come up with a system of measurement that factors in information they feel is more relevant. A daylong conference was held in September at Yale University to discuss an alternative tool for comparing colleges and universities.

“We do not wish to portray ourselves as anything other than who we are,” President Hagerty said, “but we believe there are a number of measures which would more accurately portray the strengths of institutions in a way that would help students and families make good decisions.”