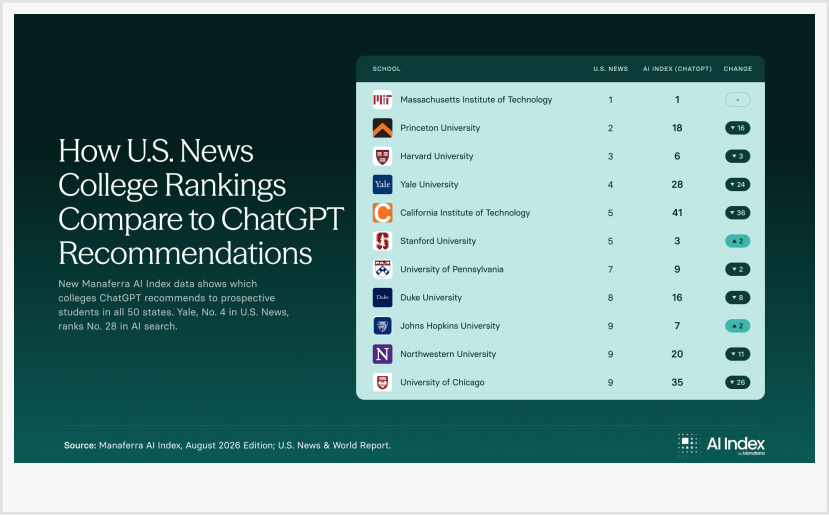
U.S. News Ranked America's Best Colleges for 2027. ChatGPT Recommends a Different List

New Manaferra AI Index data shows which colleges ChatGPT recommends to prospective students. Yale, No. 4 in U.S. News, ranks No. 28 in AI search



NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, September 23, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- A day after U.S. News & World Report published its 2027 Best Colleges rankings, new data from Manaferra AI Index shows that the colleges ChatGPT recommends to students often look very different from the rankings list.

The AI Index measures how often ChatGPT recommends 5,000+ U.S. colleges and universities. It is based on 200,000+ real student prompts across 100+ programs, run in all 50 states. Each school receives an AI Index Score (AIS) from 0 to 100. The score measures how visible a school is in ChatGPT's answers, not its academic quality.

> Rankings season used to end the conversation. Now it starts one in ChatGPT. Schools that win in AI aren't always the most selective, but the ones with clear information about their programs on the web"
>
> *Granit Doshlaku*

The lists agree on No. 1. MIT, which on Tuesday ended Princeton's 15-year run at the top of U.S. News, is also No. 1 in ChatGPT. After that, they split:

- Princeton: No. 2 in U.S. News, No. 18 in ChatGPT
- Harvard: No. 3 in U.S. News, No. 6 in ChatGPT
- Yale: No. 4 in U.S. News, No. 28 in ChatGPT
- Stanford: No. 5 in U.S. News, No. 3 in ChatGPT

The gap matters because students are already asking AI for college advice. In a May 2026 Manaferra survey, 37% of high school students said they use AI tools such as ChatGPT in their college search, up from 25% a year earlier, and 18% have completely removed a college from

consideration because of AI answers.
"Rankings season used to end the conversation. Now it starts one in ChatGPT," said Granit Doshlaku, co-founder and CSO of Manaferra. "Rankings haven't stopped mattering, but the list a student acts on is increasingly the one AI writes."

The differences between the U.S. News and Manaferra AI Index rankings also appear when comparing universities within individual states:

- Illinois: U.S. News ties Northwestern and the University of Chicago at No. 9 nationally. In AI search, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign leads the state, and UChicago ranks third.
- Texas: Rice University, ranked at No. 16, is the state's highest-ranked school in U.S. News. In AI search, it ranks third in the state, behind UT Austin and Texas A&M.
- California: U.S. News names UCLA and UC Berkeley the nation's top public universities. In AI search, Berkeley ranks No. 5 nationally, while UCLA is No. 42 nationally and fifth in California.

"The schools that win in AI aren't always the most selective," Doshlaku said. "They're the ones with clear, specific information about their programs across the web. That's good news for strong public and regional universities that have never cracked the top-25 list, and a warning for well-known names that assume their reputation carries over."

The 10 colleges ChatGPT recommends most nationally are:
(2027 U.S. News National Universities rank in parentheses)

1. Massachusetts Institute of Technology (No. 1)
2. University of Michigan-Ann Arbor (No. 25)
3. Stanford University (tied for No. 5)
4. Carnegie Mellon University (tied for No. 14)
5. University of California-Berkeley (tied for No. 20)
6. Harvard University (No. 3)
7. Johns Hopkins University (tied for No. 9)
8. Georgia Institute of Technology (tied for No. 29)
9. University of Pennsylvania (No. 7)
10. University of Southern California (tied for No. 27)

Full rankings for every institution are at ai.manaferra.com/universities

Methodology
Manaferra AI Index (August edition) is built from more than 200,000 student prompts drawn from Manaferra's State of College Search survey research, search keyword data, and Reddit. Prompts were run on ChatGPT across 50 states during August 2026. The AI Index Score combines how often a school is recommended, how prominently it appears, and how many programs it appears in. The score measures visibility in AI answers, not academic quality. Manaferra provides AI search optimization services to colleges. The rankings are generated

automatically, and clients receive no preferential treatment.

About Manaferra
Manaferra is a discovery marketing agency specializing in SEO and generative engine optimization (GEO) exclusively for colleges and universities. It publishes the AI Index at ai.manaferra.com and the annual State of College Search research series. Learn more at manaferra.com.

Granit Doshlaku
Manaferra Inc.
+1 347-634-9681
granit.doshlaku@manaferra.com

This press release can be viewed online at: https://www.einpresswire.com/article/944529857

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.
© 1995-2026 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.