

Reed, BYU ranked as most secular, religious: Reed strong on academics, weak on religion

by [Religion News Service staff](#) in the [September 20, 2005](#) issue

If you are about to spend \$40,000 a year to send your offspring to Reed College in Portland, Oregon, you can rest assured that he or she will get the nation's top-ranked overall academic experience for undergrads. The one thing the Reed student won't get, however, is much time with God, at least according to the newest rankings from the *Princeton Review*.

Reed, a private liberal arts and sciences school, placed first in overall academic excellence in the annual survey of 110,000 college students, but it also topped the category of schools where "students ignore God on a regular basis."

"Sometimes perception is a little different than reality," said Reed spokesperson Beth Sorenson, who downplayed the religion score but happily trumpeted the academic rating released August 22.

Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, the mecca of Mormon higher education, was rated the nation's most religious university. Perhaps not surprisingly, BYU also was dubbed the "most stone-cold sober" campus in the country.

Princeton Review ratings, like the flurry of other annual college rankings, change from year to year. Colleges usually take them for what they're worth—embracing the good scores while ignoring the ones they'd prefer to forget.

Ratings are based on student responses to a 70-question survey at 361 colleges and universities. Students were also surveyed on the best dorms (Loyola College in Baltimore), worst food (St. Bonaventure in St. Bonaventure, New York), biggest parties (University of Wisconsin-Madison) and highest percentage of students nostalgic for Bill Clinton (Mills College in Oakland, California), among other categories.

Sorenson said Reed takes the ratings in stride—it doesn't participate in similar surveys by *U.S. News and World Report*, for example. "It's a survey of over 100,000 students, so there's bound to be some categories in there that are a little irreverent," she said.

Experts say the college experience has a dramatic impact on student spirituality. An ongoing \$1.9-million study at the University of California–Los Angeles has shown that most students have found few outlets on campus to foster their spiritual development.

The UCLA surveys found, for example, that regular attendance at worship services drops from 52 percent for freshmen to 29 percent for juniors.

Following BYU on the most-religious list were Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois, considered the Harvard of evangelicalism; Grove City College in Grove City, Pennsylvania; the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, perhaps the country's best-known Catholic school; and Samford University, a Baptist school in Birmingham, Alabama.

The schools ranked next highest on religiosity were: University of Dallas, in Texas; Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, Michigan; College of the Ozarks, Point Lookout, Missouri; University of Utah, Salt Lake City; and Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

Ironically, ranked 11th in religiosity was the U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colorado, which has been under scrutiny this year for the evangelical aggressiveness of students, faculty and staff. *–Religion News Service*