

ALFP Debate: Schools of Pharmacy Should Stop Participating in the U.S. News Ranking System



Catherine M. Crill, *University of Tennessee Health Science Center College of Pharmacy*, Laura M. Frankart, *Virginia Commonwealth University School of Pharmacy*, Cameron C. Lindsey, *University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Pharmacy*, Jaime Maerten-Rivera, *University at Buffalo School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences*, Jacqueline E. McLaughlin, *University of North Carolina Eshelman School of Pharmacy*, Rebecca Moote, *University of Texas College of Pharmacy*, Anita Mosley, *University of the Incarnate Word Feik School of Pharmacy*, Shanna K. O'Connor, *South Dakota State University College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions*, Margie E. Padilla, *University of Texas at El Paso School of Pharmacy*, Jennifer Prisco, *Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences*, Caroline M. Sierra, *Loma Linda University School of Pharmacy*, Susan E. Smith, *University of Georgia College of Pharmacy*, Elizabeth Unni, *Touro College of Pharmacy – New York*, Megan N. Willson, *Washington State University College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences*, Arash Dabestani, *Long Island University Pharmacy*, Pam Heaton, *The University of Toledo College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences*

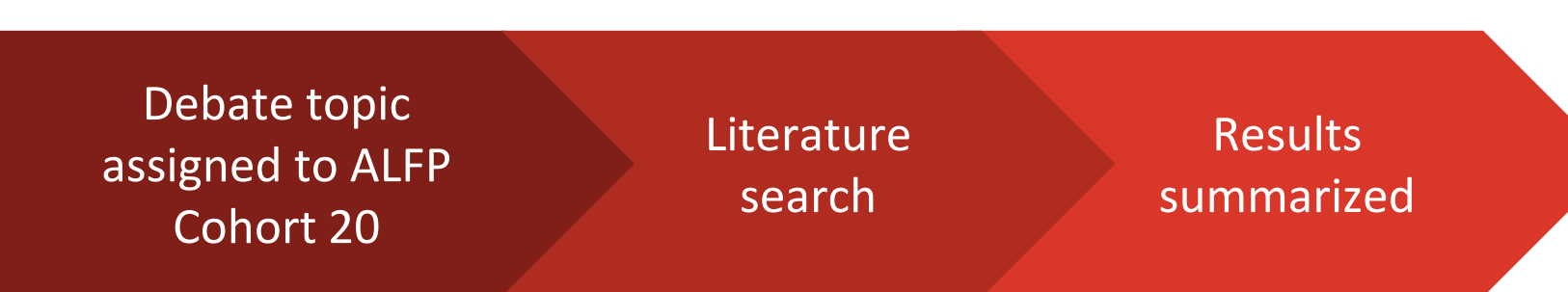
Background

- The AACP Academic Leadership Fellows Program (ALFP) aims to develop leaders in the pharmacy academy.
- ALFP Fellows participate in a debate on current topics in academic pharmacy.
- Two ALFP Cohort 20 teams were given the topic to debate for and against pharmacy programs' continued participation in the U.S. News and World Report Ranking System (USNWR-RS).
- While an internationally recognized system, USNWR-RS has been criticized for its approach to rankings.

Objective

- To describe advantages and disadvantages of Schools and Colleges of Pharmacy (S/COPs) continuing to participate in the USNWR-RS.

Methods



Team Owls and *Team UpBeets* were paired together to debate whether S/COPs should stop participating in the USNWR-RS as follows:

- *Team Owls*: Yes, stop participating!
- *Team UpBeets*: No way, continue to participate!

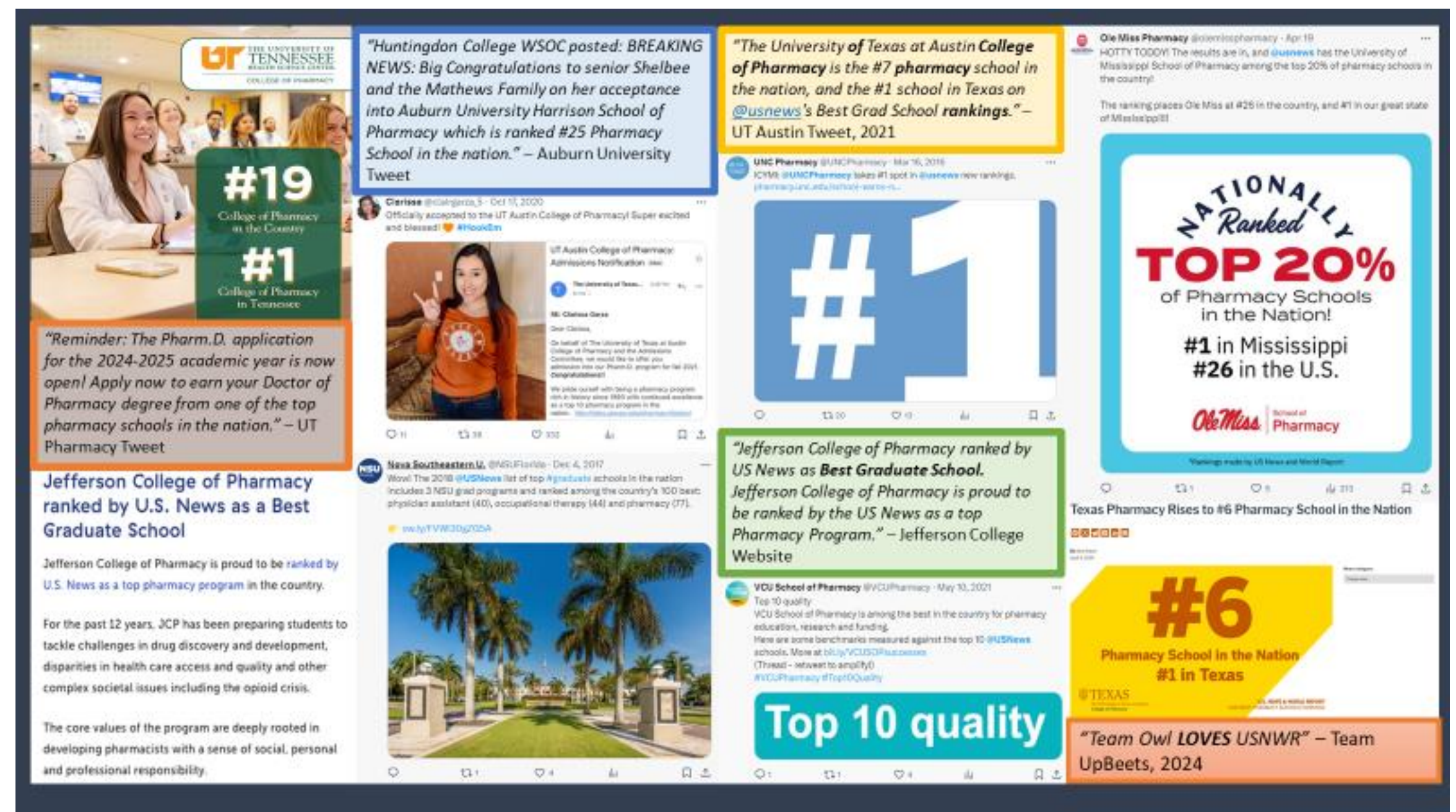
Resources:

- Institutional librarians
- Literature reviews of PubMed, Embase, Web of Science, and Google Scholar

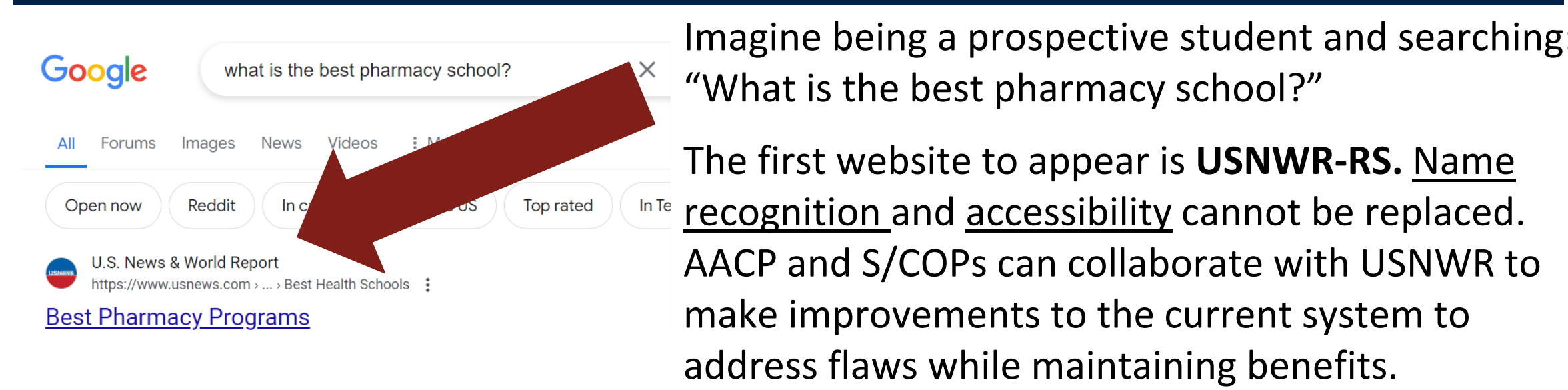
Search focus: identify publications discussing the utility of ranking systems for institutions of higher learning, both within and outside pharmacy education

Findings were summarized into reasons for and against continued participation and were presented at the AACP Interim Meeting in February 2024.

Reasons for Continued Participation: Enhanced Recruitment of Students and Faculty through Advertisement of Schools' Rank



Reasons for Continued Participation: Easily Accessible Information for Prospective Students & Name Recognition



Discussion

- ### Questions to Consider
- If S/COPs opt out of this ranking system, what benefits are lost?
 - If S/COPs continue to participate, what are the risks?
 - If AACP advocates for a modified system, what changes should be proposed?
 - If a new system is adopted, who is charged with its maintenance, fiscal support, and oversight to ensure neutrality?

Results

Reasons Against Continued Participation: Flaws Inherent to the Design and Development of the Ranking System

- **Flawed Design of Data Collection:** Single question is assessed by peers with low response rate; not evidence-based and not validated.
- **Objective Metrics Not Utilized:** Numerous objective quality indicators are available, but are not used in the evaluation (e.g., first-time NAPLEX pass rates, NIH research funding).
- **Suboptimal Responsiveness from USNWR:** Despite advocacy from AACP, USNWR has made only minimal concessions in response to recommendations for improvements in the system.

Reasons Against Continued Participation: Use of Peer Review as the Sole Source of Data Rather than Objective Data Similar to Medical or Nursing Schools

Criteria Included	USNWR-RS for Pharmacy	USNWR-RS for Medical, Nursing, Nurse Practitioner
Peer Assessment Score	X	X
Student Selectivity		X
Faculty Resources		X
Research Activity		X

Adapted from: Lebovitz L, et al. *Explor Res Clin Soc Pharm* 2022;7:100169

Discussion

- ### Next Steps
1. AACP should reach consensus on the S/COP metrics that are important to stakeholders and are amenable to ranking.
 2. AACP should develop infrastructure that supports valid and reliable evaluations of quality in pharmacy education and should advocate use of these metrics to USNWR.
 3. Individual faculty should remain aware of this issue and contribute to discussions moving forward.