

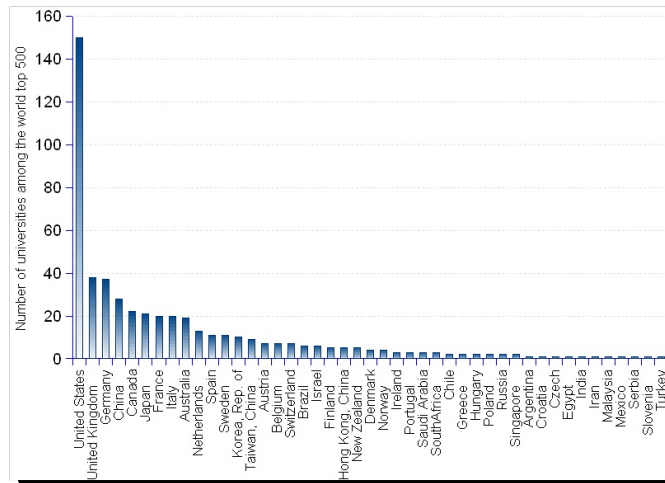
World Best Universities¹ 500 top universities by nation 2003-2012

The United States maintain the absolute world hegemony as regards the perceived standing of their universities. With 150 universities or 30% of the top 500, and 19 or 76% among the 25 top ranked universities worldwide, one cannot but bow in recognition of their academic achievement.

Notwithstanding, the trend betrays a slow erosion of their supremacy. The times are over when the US counted 160 or 170 universities — that is 33% or 34% of the total — in the top 500.

Other nations have learned to play the game and are forcing the door, thus undermining the status of the powers that be.

The list suggests that the university world belongs to the economy heavy-weights. Most top universities are located in the wealthy North American and European countries. Latin America is represented only by the 4 biggest regional nations : Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico with a consolidated total of 10 universities. Africa is represented by only 4 universities in Egypt and South Africa. Southeast Asia, however, has a strong presence. The Chinese nation, upon consolidation of Hong Kong and Taiwan, places 42 universities in the list, or 8.4% of the total. Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, India are also present and assert the vitality of this part of the world.



The Shanghai ranking, used by areppim to establish these lists, has been violently criticized, and many biases and flaws have been blamed on it — especially, as one would expect, by those that are not cast in the most


favorable light and feel like losing their face. However, by focusing on methodological issues, the critics miss the crucial point.

It is not the procedure, but the spirit of this sort of lists that should be blamed. They rest upon the belief that

the good of mankind depends upon the progress of civilization, which in turn is supposed to derive from the systematic application of positive knowledge to the realms of technology, law, economy and social relationships. This heritage of the modern philosophy of "enlightenment" was a blessing for starters. The 19th century industrial surge, improvement of the material well-being, new and more humane codes of justice and new and fairer social rules, all these and other benefits provided the western masses with prosperity and longer life spans to enjoy it. But even then, it was a poisonous gift served to the nations of Africa, Asia and America, oppressed, reduced to slavery or slaughtered in the name of Stanley's infamous "3 C's" : civilization, commerce and Christianity. For some fellow human beings progress was indeed an expensive commodity.

Western peoples were struck by the backlash of positive knowledge since the early years of the 20th century. Material progress generated unexpected and unwelcome consequences including ecological catastrophes, alarmingly high depletion rates of natural resources, scarcity of water and clean air, new and highly aggressive diseases, drug-resistant infectious agents, massive destruction weapons, cyclical economic crises, waves of unemployment and worrisome social unrest. Positive knowledge, the metric on which today's universities compete to shine, assumes a mechanical, linear vision of progress that values quantity, efficiency, consensus and immediacy, exactly the type of yeast instrumental to the cooking of the economic, financial, ecological, cultural, social and political jams that permeate today's world. At the dawn of the 21st century, chaos prevails across the planet. It would be

perfunctory to expect those universities to be the solution — they are in fact part of the problem. The temples of knowledge that universities are supposed to be should recognize the risk of positive knowledge, and change paths towards knowledge with conscience, according to the Renaissance lesson by Rabelais who claimed that "science without conscience is but the ruin of the soul".

Back to the Shanghai ranking, and whatever one may think thereof, it has the merit of being internationally acknowledged and cited, and allowing for comparisons that, although without scientific rigor, are stimulating and thought provoking. 

- 1 *Source : Academic Ranking of World Universities, <http://www.shanghairanking.com/>. Find the detailed lists in <http://stats.areppim.com/uni.htm>.*

500 World-Class Universities by Nation — 2003 - 2012																				
Country	2003		2004		2005		2006		2007		2008		2009		2010		2011		2012	
	Nbr	%	Nbr	%	Nbr	%	Nbr	%	Nbr	%	Nbr	%	Nbr	%	Nbr	%	Nbr	%	Nbr	%
Argentina	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%
Australia	13	2.6%	14	2.8%	14	2.8%	16	3.2%	17	3.3%	15	3.0%	17	3.4%	17	3.4%	20	4.0%	19	3.8%
Austria	4	0.8%	5	1.0%	6	1.2%	7	1.4%	7	1.4%	7	1.4%	7	1.4%	7	1.4%	7	1.4%	7	1.4%
Belgium	7	1.4%	7	1.4%	7	1.4%	7	1.4%	7	1.4%	7	1.4%	7	1.4%	7	1.4%	7	1.4%	7	1.4%
Brazil	4	0.8%	4	0.8%	4	0.8%	4	0.8%	5	1.0%	6	1.2%	6	1.2%	6	1.2%	7	1.4%	6	1.2%
Canada	24	4.8%	23	4.6%	23	4.6%	22	4.4%	22	4.3%	21	4.2%	22	4.4%	23	4.6%	22	4.4%	22	4.4%
Chile	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%
China	9	1.8%	8	1.6%	8	1.6%	9	1.8%	14	2.7%	30	6.0%	30	6.0%	22	4.4%	23	4.6%	28	5.6%
Croatia	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%
Czech	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%
Denmark	6	1.2%	5	1.0%	5	1.0%	5	1.0%	4	0.8%	4	0.8%	4	0.8%	4	0.8%	4	0.8%	4	0.8%
Egypt	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%
Finland	6	1.2%	5	1.0%	5	1.0%	5	1.0%	5	1.0%	6	1.2%	5	1.0%	6	1.2%	5	1.0%	5	1.0%
France	22	4.4%	22	4.4%	21	4.2%	21	4.2%	23	4.5%	23	4.6%	23	4.6%	22	4.4%	21	4.2%	20	4.0%
Germany	42	8.4%	43	8.6%	40	8.0%	40	8.0%	41	8.0%	40	8.0%	40	8.0%	39	7.8%	39	7.7%	37	7.4%
Greece	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%
Hong Kong, China	5	1.0%	5	1.0%	5	1.0%	5	1.0%	5	1.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5	1.0%	5	1.0%	5	1.0%
Hungary	2	0.4%	3	0.6%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%
India	3	0.6%	3	0.6%	3	0.6%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%
Iran	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%
Ireland	3	0.6%	3	0.6%	3	0.6%	3	0.6%	3	0.6%	3	0.6%	3	0.6%	3	0.6%	3	0.6%	3	0.6%
Israel	6	1.2%	7	1.4%	7	1.4%	7	1.4%	7	1.4%	6	1.2%	7	1.4%	7	1.4%	7	1.4%	6	1.2%
Italy	22	4.4%	23	4.6%	23	4.6%	23	4.6%	20	3.9%	22	4.4%	21	4.2%	22	4.4%	22	4.4%	20	4.0%
Japan	36	7.2%	36	7.2%	34	6.8%	32	6.4%	33	6.5%	31	6.2%	31	6.2%	25	5.0%	24	4.8%	21	4.2%
Korea, Rep. of	8	1.6%	8	1.6%	8	1.6%	9	1.8%	8	1.6%	8	1.6%	9	1.8%	10	2.0%	11	2.2%	10	2.0%
Malaysia	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%
Mexico	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%
Netherlands	12	2.4%	12	2.4%	12	2.4%	12	2.4%	12	2.4%	12	2.4%	12	2.4%	12	2.4%	13	2.6%	13	2.6%
New Zealand	3	0.6%	3	0.6%	5	1.0%	5	1.0%	5	1.0%	5	1.0%	5	1.0%	5	1.0%	5	1.0%	5	1.0%
Norway	3	0.6%	4	0.8%	4	0.8%	4	0.8%	4	0.8%	4	0.8%	4	0.8%	4	0.8%	4	0.8%	4	0.8%
Poland	3	0.6%	2	0.4%	3	0.6%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	3	0.6%	2	0.4%
Portugal	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	0	0.0%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	3	0.6%
Russia	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%
Saudi Arabia	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.2%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	3	0.6%
Serbia																			1	0.2%
Singapore	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%
Slovenia	1	0.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%
South Africa	4	0.8%	4	0.8%	4	0.8%	4	0.8%	4	0.8%	3	0.6%	3	0.6%	3	0.6%	3	0.6%	3	0.6%
Spain	13	2.6%	9	1.8%	9	1.8%	9	1.8%	9	1.8%	9	1.8%	11	2.2%	10	2.0%	11	2.2%	11	2.2%
Sweden	10	2.0%	10	2.0%	11	2.2%	11	2.2%	11	2.2%	11	2.2%	11	2.2%	11	2.2%	11	2.2%	11	2.2%
Switzerland	8	1.6%	8	1.6%	8	1.6%	8	1.6%	8	1.6%	8	1.6%	8	1.6%	7	1.4%	7	1.4%	7	1.4%
Taiwan, China	5	1.0%	3	0.6%	5	1.0%	5	1.0%	6	1.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	7	1.4%	7	1.4%	9	1.8%
Turkey	2	0.4%	0	0.0%	2	0.4%	0	0.0%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	2	0.4%	1	0.2%
United Kingdom	42	8.4%	42	8.4%	40	8.0%	43	8.6%	42	8.2%	42	8.3%	40	8.0%	38	7.6%	37	7.3%	38	7.6%
United States	161	32.2%	170	33.9%	168	33.6%	167	33.4%	166	32.5%	159	31.6%	152	30.3%	154	30.8%	151	30.0%	150	30.0%
Total	500	100%	502	100%	500	100%	500	100%	510	100%	503	100%	501	100%	500	100%	504	100%	500	100%