

Benchmarking & the Baseline Comparison Group: Rationale & Methodology

The UT System has been collecting, analyzing, and reporting data on institutional performance for a variety of metrics. When possible this data has also been presented for institutionally selected peers and for state and/or national averages in order to provide some comparison and context for performance. Recently, the question, “Performance compared to what?” has become increasingly important, leading to an intensified focus on benchmarking.

What is Benchmarking?

Benchmarking is the process where policymakers compare the performance, practices, and policies of institutions or groups of institutions to gain insight.

Why is Benchmarking Important?

So that policymakers can more accurately answer a question such as, “All else being equal – why do some institutions outperform others?”

What is a Baseline Comparison Group?

A set of institutions which are similar to each other in baseline characteristics such as size, student/faculty characteristics, academic programs, and research emphases. The Office of Strategic Initiatives used nationally recognized best-practice statistical methodology to identify a baseline group of similar institutions for our nine academic universities. These baseline comparisons groups will be used to benchmark performance nationally.

Why are Baseline Comparison Groups Important for Benchmarking?

Accounting properly for differences in missions, programs, and student/faculty characteristics is required for meaningful benchmarking. These more specific baseline comparisons allow for the objective evaluation of performance relative to other statistically similar institutions and also to isolate differences in performance that the institution has the ability to impact.

How were the Baseline Comparison Groups Chosen?

The statistical technique for selecting the baseline comparison group involves a “similarity score” which is calculated for each potential peer or comparison institution. The score measures how closely a potential peer institution resembles each UT institution based on the factors in the model. The baseline comparison groups for each UT institution were selected based on the 10 public institutions most similar in enrollment size, percentage of undergraduates, student income and preparation levels, degree program mix, and research intensiveness. The factors in the model are summarized below.

Model Factors for the Baseline Comparison Group

Institutional Size	Program Mix
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Total Headcount Enrollment ▪ Total Full-time Instructional Faculty Count <p>Student Population</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Percent Pell Eligible ▪ Percent in 25th Percentile SAT ▪ Percent in 75th Percentile SAT ▪ Undergraduate Enrollment as Percentage of Total Headcount Enrollment ▪ Full-Time Headcount Enrollment as Percentage of Total Headcount Enrollment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Associates Degrees as Percentage of Total Degrees Awarded ▪ Bachelor’s Degrees as Percentage of Total Degrees Awarded ▪ Graduate Degrees as Percentage of Total Degrees Awarded ▪ First Professional Degrees as Percentage of Total Degrees Awarded ▪ Degrees in Humanities and Social Sciences as Percentage of Total Degrees Awarded (by level: bachelor’s and graduate) ▪ Degrees in Education as Percentage of Total Degrees Awarded (by level: bachelor’s and graduate) ▪ Degrees in Agriculture, Science, Engineering, and Architecture as Percentage of Total Degrees Awarded (by level: bachelor’s and graduate) ▪ Degrees in Business and Public Administration as Percentage of Total Degrees Awarded (by level: bachelor’s and graduate) ▪ Degrees in Visual and Performing Arts as Percentage of Total Degrees Awarded (by level: bachelor’s and graduate) ▪ Degrees in Health Professions as a Percentage of Total Degrees Awarded (by level: bachelor’s, graduate, and first professional) ▪ Degrees in Law (first professional) as a Percentage of Total Degrees Awarded
<p>Research Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research Expenditures as a Percentage of Total Expenditures ▪ Research Expenditures ▪ Ratio of Research to Instructional Expenditures ▪ Federally Funded Research ▪ Doctoral Degrees Awarded ▪ Federally Funded Research/Faculty FTE ▪ Doctoral Degrees Awarded/Faculty FTE 	