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the survey were asked to select 10 schools providing the "best" undergraduate education from among those classified in the same category as their own. In other words, each college was judged by a jury of its peers. The criteria that the respondents were requested to consider included cohesiveness of the curriculum, quality of teaching, relationship between faculty and students and the overall atmosphere of learning fostered by the campus. Response rates to the surveys in the individual categories ranged from a high of almost 75 per cent from presidents of the very competitive national liberal-arts colleges to slightly less than 50 per cent among presidents of Eastern liberal-arts schools.

In addition, this year the questionnaire asked for lists of schools excelling particularly in the humanities and in science and technology. Respondents were also asked to single out colleges noted for their academic innovations as well as schools making exemplary efforts to develop students' moral character. In conclusion, the survey asked one two-pronged question: Whether the quality of undergraduate education in the US was getting better or worse, and what the college presidents viewed as the nation's

chief educational concerns.

The survey's list of "best" colleges was compiled by category based on the number of times a college was mentioned as being among the top 10 by the presidents of schools in its grouping. Obviously, the lists of winners do not necessarily represent the only quality undergraduate colleges in America or the best choice for every individual student. As most high-school guidance counselors and college admissions officers realize, there are many quality institutions that did not make the US News listings that may provide a more appropriate academic and social match for a given student than some colleges that did make the list.

More than anything, the US News survey demonstrates the extraordinary richness of American higher education, a variety of sizes, styles and intellectual approaches available nowhere else in the world. The lists of top-ranked schools represent the academic kaleidoscope in all its changes and variations: The large publicly supported "multiversities" designed primarily to serve students within their states; elite Ivy League institutions that accept only the best of the best of the nation's high-school graduates; tiny Catholic women's colleges that keep their doors open extra hours to educate older, working students; rigorous Jesuit institutions that insist all men and women examine the moral as well as the factual content of what they learn, and avant-garde liberal-arts colleges where students debate Plato and presidential politics over dinner at a professor's home. It is this richness and variety that has made US higher education the envy of so many students in other countries and why this year more than 300,000 of them are enrolled in American colleges and universities.