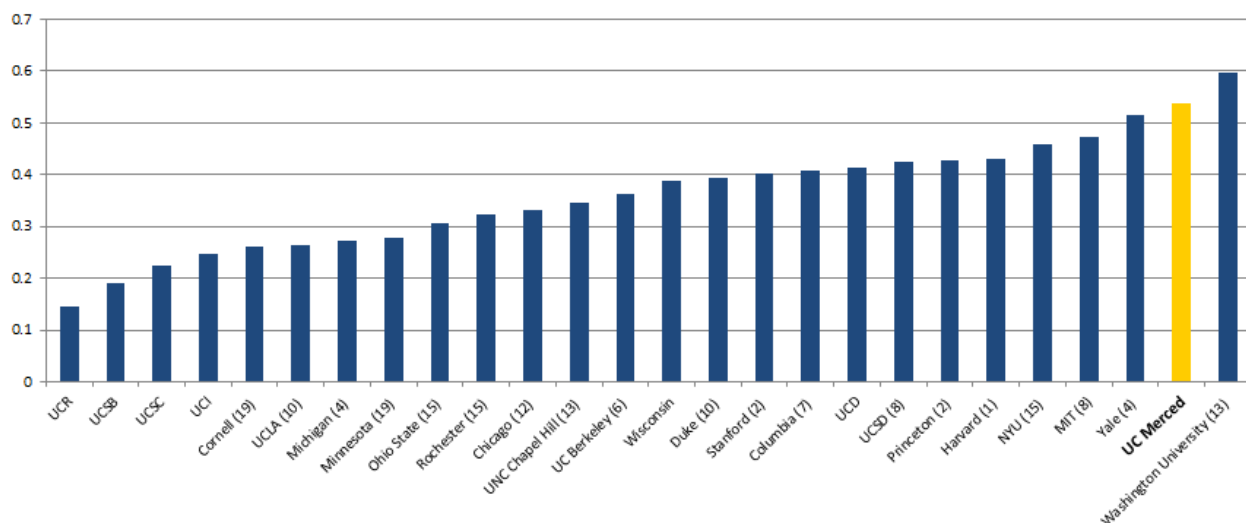


A Ranking of Political Science Programs Based on Publications in Top Academic Journals and Book Presses

November 12, 2013

One of the principal missions of faculty at research universities, including the University of California (UC), is to publish high quality research in top academic outlets. In political science, where grant dollars are scarce, peer-reviewed journal and book publications are *the most important* metric of faculty success. In this study, we present a ranking of political science programs based on the achievement of this core goal. Using data on faculty publications in the top six academic journals and book presses in the field of political science, we develop a measure of the average annual rate of publication per faculty member for the top 20 political science programs ranked by *U.S. News and World Report*, as well as the five additional UC programs. We find that for a combined measure of article and book publication rates, UC Merced's political science program ranks second among these elite programs, behind only Washington University and ahead of, for example, Yale, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Harvard, Princeton, UC San Diego, Stanford, UC Berkeley, Michigan, and UC Los Angeles. If we consider the research productivity of only faculty with PhDs earned in 1998 or later, UC Merced ranks seventh in our sample. However, if we look only at journal publications, UC Merced is *the top ranked program* in our sample.

Mean Rate of Publication in Top 6 Journals and Top 6 University Presses



*This data was collected as a means of providing a “metric of success for evaluation of scholarly excellence,” as part of the strategic focusing initiative at UC Merced. For questions or for a copy of the data, please contact Nathan Monroe, Chair and Associate Professor of Political Science, at nmonroe2@ucmerced.edu. We thank Kristen Renberg for excellent research assistance.

Introduction

One of the principle missions of academic programs at research universities, including the University of California (UC), is to publish high quality research in top academic outlets. Success on this dimension, along with placement of PhD students at other research universities, is the hallmark of top political science programs. Because most of the major rankings of programs, including those by *U.S. News and World Report* and the National Research Council, are completed only periodically, UC Merced's program has not yet been ranked.¹ Moreover, many of the metrics commonly used to assess graduate programs – such as PhD graduation rates and placement – will not manifest at UC Merced for at least several more years.

To gauge the relative success of UC Merced's political science program vis-à-vis other political science programs in the country, we present a ranking system based on publications in top academic outlets. Specifically, we gathered data on publications in the top six academic journals and book presses in the field of political science by faculty in all of the top 20 political science programs according to *U.S. News and World Report*, as well as all additional UC Campuses. This list includes: Harvard, Yale, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Stanford, Columbia, Princeton, Michigan, Chicago, Duke, UC Berkeley, UC San Diego (UCSD), UC Los Angeles (UCLA), , New York University (NYU), Wisconsin, Rochester, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Ohio State, Minnesota, Cornell, UC Davis, UC Irvine, UC Riverside, UC Santa Barbara, UC Santa Cruz, and UC Merced.

For each of the political science programs at these 25 universities, we collected data on the department's average "rate" of publication. That is, we divided each faculty member's number of top publications by the number of years since they received their PhD, yielding a publication rate, per year, for each faculty member. We then calculated the average rate of publication for each university's program.

As we discuss in more detail below, UC Merced fares exceptionally well in these rankings. For a combined measure of article and book publication rates, using all faculty in all programs, UC Merced ranks second. One concern is that UC Merced's young faculty may favorably bias our ranking relative to departments with faculty towards the end of their careers. To account for this, we recalculate the rankings using only faculty from other programs with PhDs earned no earlier than 1998 (the year of the oldest PhD on UC Merced's faculty). In other words, we compare the younger faculty of other departments to our relatively young faculty. Even for this ranking, UC Merced makes a very strong showing as the seventh most productive program in our sample. Under both versions of the ranking, UC Merced shows particular strength in article publications: UC Merced ranks second for the post-1998 measure and is *the*

¹ UC Merced's PhD program admitted its first class of students in Fall 2012 and has only gained interim approval from WASC as a standalone PhD program.

top ranked program in our sample using the full faculty measure for articles published in the top six political science journals.

Methodology

Selecting the Journals and Book Presses

There is broad agreement among political scientists that the (1) *American Political Science Review*, (2) *American Journal of Political Science*, and (2) *Journal of Politics* are the top three outlets (in that order) for article publication in the discipline. This widely accepted “top 3” cluster is reflected in Garand and Giles (2003) “GG Impact” ranking of journals, based on their survey of political scientists regarding quality ratings of journal publications. Moreover, these journals have very high rejection rates; consistently 90 to 95% of submissions to these three journals are ultimately rejected.

Despite these journals’ stated intent to appeal to a broad political science audience, as well as the fact that they typically publish a fairly even mix of articles in American and Comparative politics and International Relations, some may argue that these journals (slightly) favor work on American politics. To address this concern, we include the third through sixth ranked journals according to the “GG Impact” ranking: (4) *World Politics*, (5) *International Organization*, and (6) *British Journal of Political Science* (Garand and Giles 2003) to ensure that we are not biasing our results in favor of UC Merced’s relatively American politics heavy faculty.²

When we consider only publications in the top three journals, UC Merced’s publication rate strengthens relative to other programs. In fact, with only two exceptions, *all* of UC Merced faculty members’ “top six” publications are in “top three” journals. Consequently, the inclusion of journals ranked fourth through sixth depresses the value of UC Merced’s productivity.

There is less agreement on the top three academic presses for publishing books in political science. However, the ranking created by Goodson, Dillman, and Hira (1999), which uses a similar survey based methodology to Gerand and Giles (1999) identifies a top six cluster: (1) Cambridge, (2) Princeton, (3) Oxford, (3) Chicago, (5) Yale, and (6) Harvard.

Identifying program faculty

The basic decision rule for identifying which faculty “count” toward the average of a program is as follows. We counted ladder-rank faculty primarily located within a political science department or analogous unit (e.g. “Government” department), including “within department” administrators such as Chairs and Directors of Graduate Studies, but excluding “out-of-

² Although faculty do not always fit neatly into subfields within political science, UC Merced’s present breakdown is roughly as follows: six faculty in American politics, two faculty in comparative politics, and two faculty in international relations.

department administrators” such as Deans and Provosts. UC Merced does not have any of the latter type. Where other universities do have these types of affiliated faculty, they are primarily focused on tasks other than research. By including them, we may be biasing the rankings in our favor. We made decisions to exclude other types of affiliate faculty – such as those with appointments primarily in law schools, policy schools, and business schools – based on a similar rationale. Even in as much as they are focused on research, their split appointment may mean that they are targeting non-political science outlets for publishing some or all of their work.

Coding Article and Book Publications, and year of PhD

Once we identified all relevant faculty for each political science program in our sample, we used several approaches to identify their publications and PhD years. First, whenever possible, we began by looking at curriculum vitae posted on faculty or program webpages. If these were unavailable or out of date, we used the advanced search function in Google Scholar to search for iterations of their name, along with the journals and book presses of interest. In some cases, we also used Amazon.com to find book publications. After verification, we also counted all publications listed as “forthcoming” or “in press” as of October 2013. For book publications, we did not count edited volumes.

Putting Articles and Books into a single ranking

The field of political science is increasingly moving away from books and toward a more article-centric approach to publishing. Because UC Merced is a relatively young department, we expect that, on average, our faculty will focus more heavily on publishing articles than books, though several faculty members have published top-6 books. Although it could be to our advantage to look exclusively at article publication, we create a measure of publication productivity that combines both top six articles and top six books. To do so, we weight books by a factor determined by the ratio of top 6 books published to top 6 articles published for all faculty in all 25 programs. Based on this ratio, each book was counted as 2.56 articles in the combined measure reported below. In what follows, we also present results when we consider only top six journal articles in our measure of publication success/research productivity.

Results

Below, we include four figures, which show the rate of publication for each of the 25 programs in the sample for: (1) journal articles and books combined, (2) journal articles and books (post-1998 PhDs only), (3) journal articles, and (4) journal articles (post-1998 PhDs only). Note that rankings according to the top 20 *US News and World Reports* are listed in parentheses after the school’s name.

In these four categories, UC Merced’s political science program ranks second, seventh, first, and second, respectively.

Figure 1
Mean Rate of Publication in Top 6 Journals and Top 6 University Presses

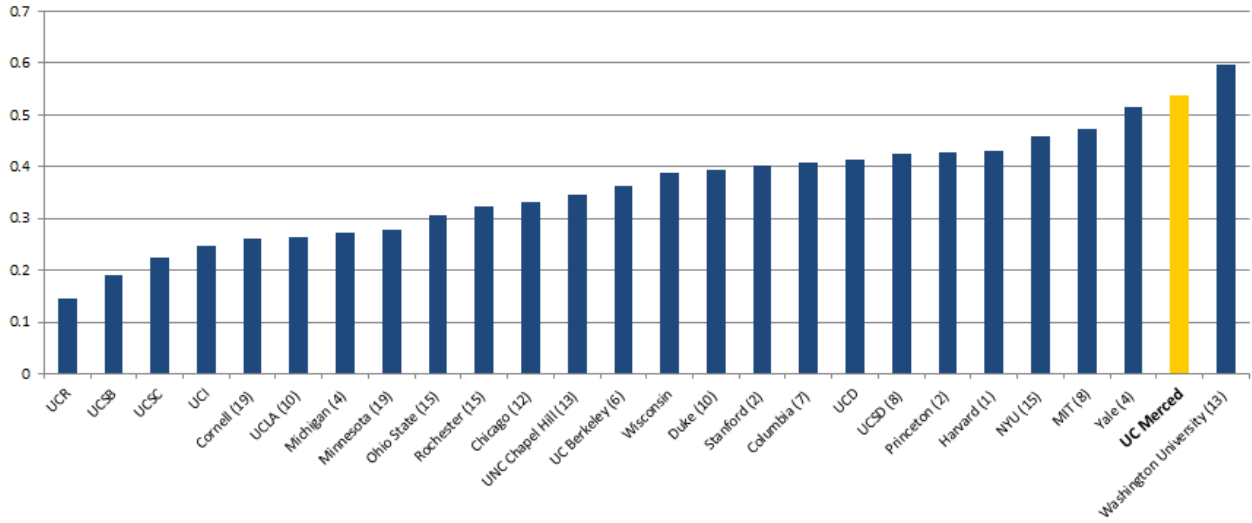


Figure 2
**Mean Rate of Publications in Top 6 Journals and Top 6 University Presses:
 Faculty with Ph.Ds Since 1998**

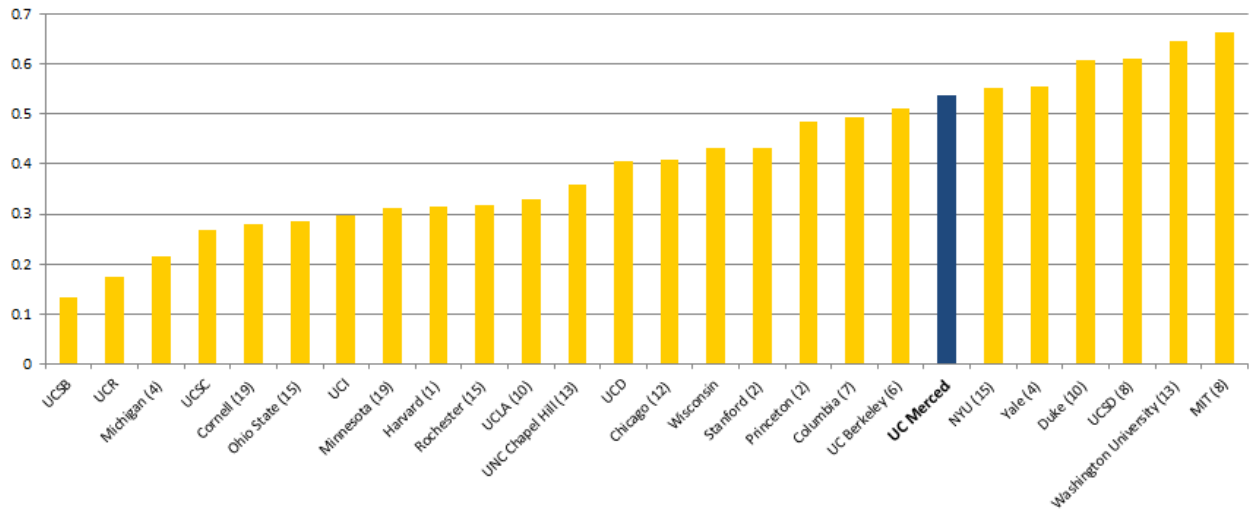


Figure 3
Mean Rate of Publications in Top 6 Journals

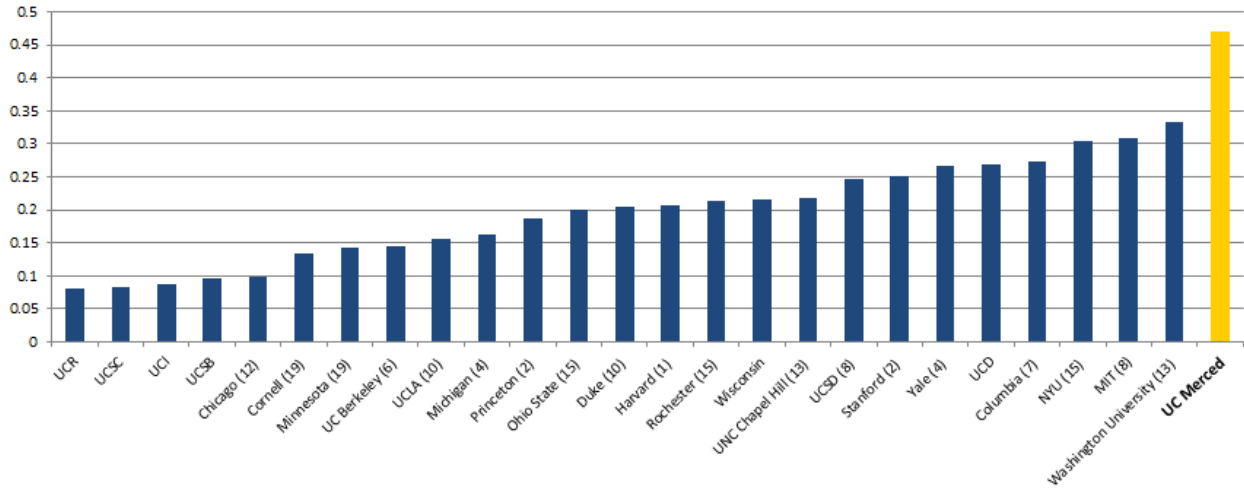
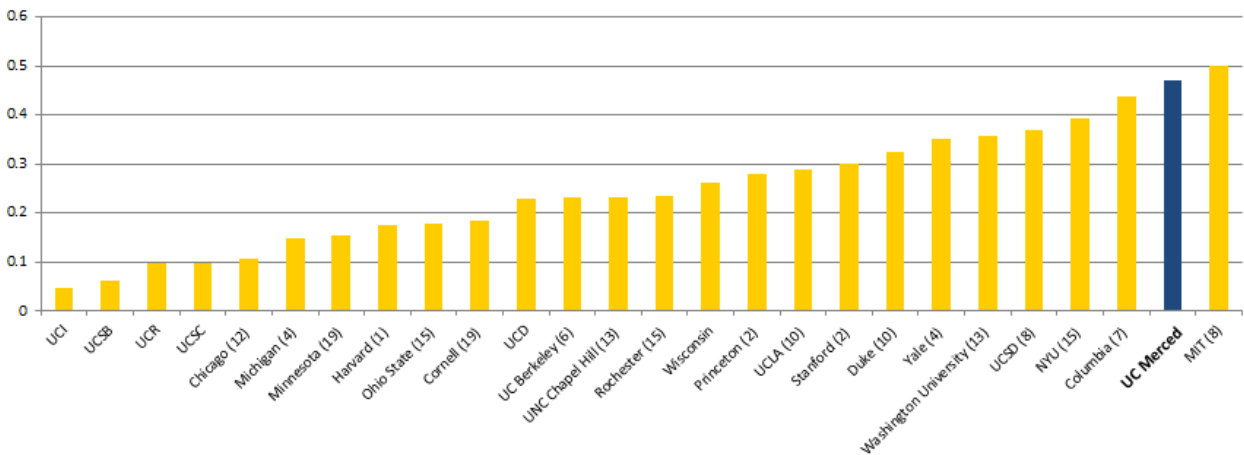


Figure 4
**Mean Rate of Publications in Top 6 Journals:
 Faculty with Ph.Ds Since 1998**



Conclusion

Our study developed a ranking of political science programs based on publications in the top journals and book presses in the field, which represents a primary form of success for faculty at a research university. We find that UC Merced’s political science program ranks very highly on this key metric. This is particularly true where the focus is on article publications, where *UC Merced ranks as the top political science program* for rate of publication in the top six political science journals when all faculty in all programs are considered.

In sum, while it may take an additional five to ten years before UC Merced shows up on official rankings lists, using this objective indicator of publication success suggests that UC Merced is on track to become a leading political science program.