

College Baseball

Who Leads in Program Quality?

What defines a high-quality college baseball program today? The short answer, of course, is “it depends” — mostly on the student-athlete and what they value. Yet while everyone may have their own interpretation of quality, there are key factors that consistently drive a great experience, and those are things we can objectively measure. We launched a research project to do just that, and we call it the *College Baseball Match Finder*. After extensive analysis, one theme jumps out: a quality college baseball experience is about far more than winning.

Match Finder is designed to provide aspiring student-athletes with analytics that can actually inform better decisions about where to find that quality experience. After all, making a baseball roster is one of the most challenging things to do in all of college sports. So our goal is to help players focus those efforts on the programs that reflect their priorities. It’s about better direction as they forge their own college baseball path.

Determining quality leaders

Match Finder includes more than 30,000 season-level data points — built from roughly 200,000 underlying records such as game results and roster entries — spanning up to six seasons (2021–2026) and 644 programs across all three NCAA divisions. Using *Match Finder*, we created a Program Quality Index (PQI) to provide a means for benchmarking overall program quality for Division I, II and III alike. We customized PQI to rate every covered program on 11 key metrics in Division I and 9 in Divisions II and III (where travel and roster-transfer data are less consistent).

- Academic Reputation
- Graduate Earnings
- Winning Percentage
- Net Cost (separate from athletics aid)
- Coaching Stability
- Estimated Program Budget
- Title Contention
- University Location
- Weather
- Travel Burden (D1 only)
- Transfer Turnover (D1 only)

From this we then built a composite PQI rating, which is used to rank programs within each division. The top programs in our model win, and they do a lot more for their student-athletes.

The Top 10 by division

Here are the leaders from our full populations: 229 Division I, 230 Division II and 185 Division III programs.

NCAA Division I

Ranked by overall PQI rating

#	SCHOOL	CONFERENCE	CITY, STATE
1	 Vanderbilt	SEC	Nashville, TN
2	 Stanford	ACC	Stanford, CA
3	 UCLA	Big Ten	Los Angeles, CA
4	 Texas	SEC	Austin, TX
5	 North Carolina	ACC	Chapel Hill, NC
6	 Florida	SEC	Gainesville, FL
7	 Tennessee	SEC	Knoxville, TN
8	 Arkansas	SEC	Fayetteville, AR
9	 UCSB	Big West	Santa Barbara, CA
10	 Virginia	ACC	Charlottesville, VA

TAKEAWAYS

1. **Vanderbilt** is the quintessential example of what a quality program looks like. It's the most complete student-athlete offering we could find in college baseball. The program's track record is remarkable on all fronts, in particular merging elite academics with perennially being an on-field powerhouse at the highest level in the sport.
2. **Power, with balance.** Notably, every Top 10 program ranks in the top half of all D1 for Institutional strength, Budget, Winning, Titles & postseason and Location.
3. **Little surprise.** As expected, top conferences SEC and ACC are well represented, placing five and three programs, respectively, among the Top 10. UC Santa Barbara (UCSB, Big West) is the lone Mid-Major and clearly punches above its weight when you consider the resources available to larger Power 4 schools. The Big 12 is the only Power 4 conference not represented among our 10 best for program quality.

NCAA Division I — Mid-Major

Ranked by overall PQI rating · overall D1 rank at right

#	SCHOOL	CONFERENCE	CITY, STATE	D1 RANK
1	 UCSB	Big West	Santa Barbara, CA	#9
2	 Cal Poly	Big West	San Luis Obispo, CA	#12
3	 Columbia	Ivy League	New York, NY	#13
4	 UCSD	Big West	La Jolla, CA	#15
5	 Penn	Ivy League	Philadelphia, PA	#22
6	 UC Irvine	Big West	Irvine, CA	#25
7	 Northeastern	CAA	Boston, MA	#28
8	 Princeton	Ivy League	Princeton, NJ	#33
9	 Davidson	Atlantic 10	Davidson, NC	#35
10	 Navy	Patriot	Annapolis, MD	#38

TAKEAWAYS

- UCSB** is so strong that it displaced a number of bigger Power 4 teams and budgets to make the overall D1 Top 10. It's hard to beat the program's win rate (including against strong non-conference opponents) and playoff presence, combined with nearly idyllic weather and an excellent school location.
- California** state schools tend to perform well among the D1 Mid-Major pool, as reflected in the Big West placing four California programs (UCSB, Cal Poly, UCSD and UC Irvine). In spite of realignment, the West remains a Mid-Major stronghold: it's home to 21% of Mid-Major programs (35 of 165) but four of the Top 10.
- Ivies** ride on their academic strength and steady development of a homegrown roster. The Ivy League has three Top 10s (Columbia, Penn and Princeton). Plus, all three rank top 15 in D1 for Institutional strength and Earnings, which more than offsets modest win percentages.
- Again, far more than winning.** Only three of the 10 (UCSB, Northeastern and UC Irvine) rank top 10 among Mid-Majors in win%. The two Mid-Major win% leaders, Southern Miss and Dallas Baptist, rank 116th and 122nd overall. Princeton (#8) ranks 214th of 229 D1 programs in win% but top 5 in D1 for Institutional strength and Earnings.

NCAA Division II

Ranked by overall PQI rating

#	SCHOOL	CONFERENCE	CITY, STATE
1	 Tampa	SSC	Tampa, FL
2	 Colorado Mesa	RMAC	Grand Junction, CO
3	 Point Loma Nazarene	PacWest	San Diego, CA
4	 Rollins	SSC	Winter Park, FL
5	 Bentley	NE10	Waltham, MA
6	 Cal Poly Pomona	CCAA	Pomona, CA
7	 Flagler	Peach Belt	St. Augustine, FL
8	 Angelo State	LSC	San Angelo, TX
9	 Chico State	CCAA	Chico, CA
10	 Cal State Monterey Bay	CCAA	Seaside, CA

TAKEAWAYS

1. **Tampa** sets the standard. The Spartans rank 1st in D2 in win%, Titles & postseason, Budget and Location. They lead the field by the widest margin of any division's No. 1.
2. **Sunshine — and price tags.** Seven of the 10 are in California (4) or Florida (3), and the CCAA places three; Bentley is the lone cold-weather entry. The flip side: five of the Top 10 (Tampa, Point Loma Nazarene, Rollins, Bentley and Flagler) rank in the bottom 20 of D2 for net price — worth weighing given D2's scholarship limits.

NCAA Division III

Ranked by overall PQI rating

#	SCHOOL	CONFERENCE	CITY, STATE
1	 Johns Hopkins	Centennial	Baltimore, MD
2	 Pomona-Pitzer	SCIAC	Claremont, CA
3	 Trinity (Texas)	SAA	San Antonio, TX
4	 Chicago	UAA	Chicago, IL
5	 Claremont-Mudd-Scripps	SCIAC	Claremont, CA
6	 New York University	UAA	New York, NY
7	 Denison	NCAC	Granville, OH
8	 Emory	UAA	Atlanta, GA
9	 Washington U.	UAA	St. Louis, MO
10	 MIT	NEWMAC	Cambridge, MA

TAKEAWAYS

- No. 1 Johns Hopkins** stands out in D3 with top-5 marks in both Title Contention and Academic Reputation, plus 6th in win%.
- D3 as the clearest “more than winning” case.** We thought a lot of high-academic schools would feature prominently, but the top group exceeded those expectations. Six of the Top 10 are overall leaders for Institutional strength. In fact, the academic clout held so much sway that only two of the Top 10 rank top 10 in win%: Denison (1st) and Johns Hopkins (6th).
The University Athletic Association (UAA) paces the leaders, placing four: Chicago, NYU, Emory and Washington U. MIT makes the list at #10 despite ranking 130th in win% (yet 1st place in Earnings); NYU (#6) ranks 84th in win%.
- Location matters, and the best deliver the complete package.** Seven of the Top 10 rank top 10 in Location, and the SCIAC's Claremont programs have top spring weather to boot.

#1s by Region

No. 1 by overall PQI rating in each Match Finder region.

Here's the No. 1 program by overall PQI rating in each of Match Finder's seven regions, from D1 Power to D3.

REGION	D1 POWER	D1 MID-MAJOR	D2	D3
Mid-Atlantic	 Virginia	 Navy	 Charleston (WV)	 Johns Hopkins
Midwest	 Michigan	 UIC	 Minnesota State	 Chicago
Northeast	 Boston College	 Columbia	 Bentley	 New York University
South	 Vanderbilt	 Tulane	 Harding	 Rhodes
Southeast	 North Carolina	 Davidson	 Tampa	 Emory
Texas & Plains	 Texas	 Rice	 Angelo State	 Trinity (Texas)
West	 Stanford	 UCSB	 Colorado Mesa	 Pomona-Pitzer

Your Top List Is the Only One That Matters

These Top 10 lists are based on our institutional PQI scoring. However, the most important ranking is the one you build — one that is tailored to the priorities you set for yourself. *Match Finder* gives that level of customization, so you can weigh what matters most to you, from academics and cost to weather and region, and see which programs rise to the top for you.

Find the programs that fit your priorities at bsbmatchfinder.com.