

The Problem With Local News Organizations: They Don't Ask Questions

["Affordable Colleges Online ranks Southern Miss in its top 20](#)

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This is a news release from USM

Affordable Colleges Foundation (ACF), a resource for online learning and college affordability information, has included The University of Southern Mississippi in the top 20 of its new ranking of 2015's Best Online Colleges..."

The key words in WDAM's report are: "This is a news release from USM."

WDAM offers no facts other than what was in the "USM news release." No perspective is offered by WDAM which WDAM doesn't hesitate to offer otherwise.

Here are facts WDAM could have offered readers [in addition](#) to the public relations report USM released:

"The Affordable Colleges Foundation (ACF), which operates AffordableCollegesOnline.org, has tried to make the search easier by listing the institutions it says offer the [most economical online degrees](#). The 46 colleges that made the cut are nonprofit and state institutions that offer a wide variety of online degrees, as well as demonstrate a history of what the organization calls 'demonstrated academic excellence and financial support.' "

Not only is the University of Southern Mississippi not one of the top 20, it is not one of the 46 colleges the AFC lists as an "institution offering the most economical online degrees."

What's going on here? Does USM have an explanation? What are these lists offering readers? How reliable are they?

These are the types of questions a real news organization would ask.