UC Santa Barbara's doctoral engineering programs have been rated among the best in the nation, according to an assessment released today by the National Research Council (NRC).

The evaluation covers more than 5,000 doctorate programs in 62 fields at 212 universities around the country. Rather than giving each program an absolute rank, the NRC, which is part of the National Academies, came up with ranking ranges to reflect how rankings can vary depending on how much weight is given to the different kinds of data used in the assessment.

All five departments in the College of Engineering—Materials, Chemical Engineering, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Computer Science and Mechanical Engineering—earned ranking ranges within the top ten in the country. They all received higher ratings in this assessment than in the NRC's last evaluation, released in 1995, with Computer Science and Mechanical Engineering making particularly big leaps. The Materials, Chemical Engineering, and Electrical and Computer Engineering departments earned ranking ranges within the top five in the country. The Materials Department scored the highest of any engineering doctoral program in the country, and was the top rated doctoral program at UCSB.

"These are extraordinary rankings," said Larry Coldren, Acting Dean of Engineering at UCSB. "Finally, we have an objective, in-depth study that verifies what we have known for some years."

According to data from the NRC assessment, UCSB's engineering school ranks among the top five in the country, after Stanford, MIT and UC Berkeley; Caltech is also in the top five, but its position relative to UCSB depends on the weighting given to the various kinds of data used in the assessment.

The NRC assessment, based on data from the 2005-2006 academic year, evaluated 31 doctoral programs at UCSB. Of those, 20 were given ranking ranges that fell within the top 20 nationwide.

These high ratings for UCSB's engineering programs come less than a week after Times Higher Education ranked the university 17th in the world for engineering and technology.

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