



January 24, 2020

Missouri State University  
Attn: Clifton M. Smart III  
901 South National; Springfield, MO 65897

Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, congratulations! Your institution has been selected to receive the 2020 Carnegie Community Engagement Classification endorsement.

The classification you have achieved is **valid until 2026**. You will need to apply for re-classification to retain your status. For the 2026 cycle, the framework will be available in January 2024 with an April 2025 deadline. You will be asked to provide evidence of how community engagement has become deeper, more pervasive, better integrated, and sustained on your campus.

Your campus is one of 359 institutions that now hold the Elective Carnegie Community Engagement Classification endorsement. It is heartening to see this level of commitment and activity. Clearly, higher education institutions are making significant strides in finding ways to engage with community partners, building on community assets, and addressing a wide array of community challenges. There is much to celebrate.

### **Areas for Continuous Improvement**

Your application documented excellent alignment among campus mission, culture, leadership, resources, and practices that support dynamic and noteworthy community engagement. It responded to the classification framework with descriptive, coherent, and compelling evidence of exemplary practices of institutionalized community engagement.

There are also areas for continuous improvement. During the selection process, the application reviewers noted that even among the most successful re-classification applications, there are areas of practice in need of further development. As a way of improving your institutional practices and to position your campus for successful applications in the future, we encourage you to attend to each of the interrelated areas below as relevant to your institutional type/context:

1. The **infrastructure** for sustaining and advancing community engagement on campuses has become more complex as community engagement is practiced with more depth and



is more pervasive across campuses. The architecture for engagement has to match the commitments to communities, to students, and to faculty scholarly work. In the same way that campuses have moved to a position of chief diversity officer, such that there is a senior leadership role focused on diversity, inclusion, and equity, campuses are seeing the need for a chief engagement officer to lead the campus engagement efforts. Infrastructure has been a focus of campus efforts since the early 1990s, and it remains a critical area of focus today. What the classification refers to as a “coordinating infrastructure” for community engagement is not exclusively about a centralized location where the engagement work of the campus happens. It is a place that facilitates engagement across the campus. It is particularly important for developing a culture of assessment and accountability around engagement work. It is also essential for providing faculty with opportunities for building their capacity through faculty professional development to be effective collaborators with community partners in their teaching and research. Lastly, with lively, issue-based engagement going in academic departments, interdisciplinary centers, and curricular and co-curricular units across campuses, it may be particularly useful to have a supra coordinating council or group across entities.

2. **Assessment** continues to be an area that needs further development. This is not only true for community engagement, but is a challenge more generally. The classification is asking campuses for evidence of the implementation of systems for tracking and gathering data on an ongoing basis. The assessment practices required by the Community Engagement Classification must meet a broad range of purposes: assessing community perceptions of institutional engagement; tracking and recording institution-wide engagement data; assessing the impact of community engagement on students, faculty, the institution, and the community on and off-campus; identifying and assessing student learning outcomes in curricular engagement; and providing ongoing feedback mechanisms for partnerships. While an array of vehicles were used by campuses for these purposes, those most successful were articulated and embedded in existing monitoring, measuring, and assessment strategies in ways that made clear the specific focus on and use of community engagement. That range of purposes calls for sophisticated understandings and approaches in order to achieve the respective assessment goals. Assessment is essential for accountability, particularly for accountability to community partners, as a key element of building trusting, authentic, generative relationships. We urge institutions to continue developing assessment toward those ends.
3. **Community partnerships** are at the core of the Foundations’ community engagement classification. Intentional practices of reciprocity and mutuality require a high level of understanding of the knowledge assets and cultural wealth that are found in communities, and which need to be validated by campus partners through community engaged teaching, learning, and research. Deepening and sustaining authentic and



respectful collaborative, two-way partnerships takes ongoing commitment, and we urge institutions to continue their attention to this critical aspect of community engagement. We also encourage campuses to think carefully about the differences in the variety of partnership questions asked in the framework. Community perceptions are not the same as community voice, nor is that the same as impact on community partners or assessing the quality of partnerships. While these questions all refer to partners, they are asking different questions that need different evidence. Finally, in this cycle we introduced a pilot to collect information from community partners. This information was enlightening. There was a clear difference in partner participation rate and the quality of the information provided by partners between campuses receiving the classification and those that did not. This is particularly telling as this information was not used in an evaluative manner in this pilot. Still, we found that the partner responses generally validated the broader assessment of a campus indicating a strong relationship between the variety of other indicators in the application framework and the likelihood of strong partnership.

4. When community engagement is part of the core institutional culture of the campus, then it is commonplace and expected in **the academic work of the campus** – in teaching and learning, in curricular structures, in student learning outcomes, and in faculty research and creative activities. The evidence around curricular engagement and community engagement scholarship, for many campuses, is not as robust as might be anticipated in light of the development of the field and the campus commitments. We encourage campuses to rededicate themselves to establishing a critical mass of curricular opportunities for students across the disciplines and pathways through the curriculum from a first year experience through senior capstone courses. Furthermore, in the midst of growing commitments at many campuses to a variety of forms of engaged learning, we encourage campuses to develop conceptual clarity about the distinguishing aspects of community engaged learning and to establish practices that help the community, students, staff, and faculty understand that conceptual distinction.
5. If there are not **faculty rewards** for community engagement at the time of promotion, then sustained curricular and scholarly engagement is extremely difficult. When there are not policies that create clear validation for faculty to collaborate with community partners in their teaching and/or research, then there are disincentives, and community engagement will not take hold in faculty culture. There are more and more examples of campuses that provide evidence of clear policies (explicitly stated and particularly recognized within existing teaching and learning and research and creative activities categories) for rewarding community engagement as scholarly work, along with criteria that validate appropriate methodologies and scholarly artifacts. However, more work needs to be done in this area. We urge Community Engagement Classified institutions to initiate study, dialogue, and reflection to explicitly promote and reward the scholarship of



engagement more fully.

6. The benefits of community engagement, for fulfilling the public purposes of higher education, for improving teaching and learning, and for increasing the relevance of research, can all be enhanced when there is a **deliberate and conscious awareness of how community engagement impacts historically underrepresented students and faculty**. Research indicates that women and faculty of color are more likely to integrate community engagement into their teaching, learning, and research agendas. They are more likely to orient their research towards public problem-solving in local communities, and they are more likely to cite these engagement experiences as critical to their scholarly identity and purpose in the academy. What is more, research indicates that underserved student groups who participate in high-impact teaching and learning with faculty – including the many forms of community engaged scholarship – are more likely to achieve academic success. Campuses that are committed to strategic priorities of equity, inclusion, diversity, and student success can do more to align these priorities with those of community engagement.

### **Carnegie's Digital Seal**

You can find linked on [bit.ly/CarnegieLogo](https://bit.ly/CarnegieLogo) a digital file of a seal signifying your achievement as a Carnegie Community Engaged campus. We hope you will use this seal as you publicize your accomplishments. We also hope that you will use our announcement of the classified campuses as an opportunity to capitalize on the self-study process you undertook in completing your application, creating opportunities to reflect on what you learned about community engagement on your campus and ways that you can advance and deepen your practice.

### **The Cycle**

The purpose behind the effort that launched the Elective Carnegie Community Engagement Classification was to honor those higher education institutions who chose to express their commitment to **public purpose** in and through community engagement, a commitment that undergirds American higher education. The classification identifies institutions that have achieved the highest distinction in this particular embodiment public purpose. Institutions of the highest distinction must be evaluated at regular intervals to assure fidelity and continuous improvement. Thus, the Foundation has asked institutions to reapply at regular intervals to demonstrate this continuous improvement. Over the last two cycles (2015, 2020) the Foundation experimented with a less frequent cycle schedule (open every 5 years) and an extended period of classification (held for 10 years).

During the same period, we have focused our core work on Improvement Science. We have learned from this focus that continuous improvement only works if it is indeed continuous. It is clear to us that the longer cycle does not represent the type of continuity we would hope to see. Additionally, several campuses contacted the Carnegie Management Team during the course of



this cycle to: 1) ask if they could reclassify early; 2) ask if there might be a possibility for a new cycle before 2025; and 3) ask if they would have to wait the full five years to reapply if they did not make it this year. Some campuses did reapply early, others decided they were not ready in this cycle and reluctantly decided they would wait, and others applied now, hoping they would make it, but were not quite ready to achieve classification status.

For these reasons, the Foundation is shifting the cycle for the Community Engagement Classification to a 2/6 schedule. Beginning in 2023 - when the next cycle opens - the cycle will take place every 2 years. All campuses that are classified in the 2020 cycle, and those classified in the 2023 cycle will hold the classification for 6 years before they must reclassify. More frequent cycles will allow campuses who have a desire to be recognized to have greater access to more frequent application cycles. More frequent cycles will also enhance continuous improvement in the field. Being a classified school for six years is a better balance of recognition and reapplication.

### **Improvement Science**

As we work on improving and streamlining the Classification Application Framework for future cycles, the Foundation has also asked that the Carnegie Management Team, together with their network of colleagues, work to integrate appropriate aspects of Improvement Science into the next iteration. How this will be manifest, and what forms it might take, is yet to be determined. However, one desire the Foundation has is that the next cycle might include a means for identifying clusters of campuses who are all working on the same community challenge with community partners. Our goal would be to bring these campuses together into Networked Improvement Communities, and support their focused improvement work between cycles. We are excited that the work on community engagement is at a point where this kind of focused, reciprocal, outcome oriented, community change work can become networked.

### **Internationalization**

Building on an earlier project in Ireland, a new project has been taking place in Canada and Australia with cohorts of institutions in both places working through the existing Community Engagement Classification application framework. The goal of the project is to assess: 1) if a classification would be useful in each context; 2) how the existing framework would need to be modified, redeveloped, and changed to be pertinent in each national context; and 3) to learn from these new contexts what might need to be rethought and changed for the U.S. classification framework and process. In this way, the project models the reciprocity we ask of campuses. The Carnegie Management Team has already identified learning that will influence the next U.S. cycle. We are hopeful that later this year, the Canadian and Australian cohorts will produce draft classifications for their contexts and for the Foundation's consideration as new Carnegie Classifications. We are also hopeful that new cohorts, from Asian, African, and Latin American countries, will join in this process.



## **New Classifications**

Finally, given the wide positive impact of the Community Engagement Classification, we are now ready to explore other potential classifications. We recognize that community engagement is one way a campus might want to identify as an institution that has achieved the highest distinction in its institutionalization of a public purpose. For that reason, we have asked the Carnegie Management Team to begin mapping out potential classifications for us to consider. We are excited by the work underway to explore a potential classification in leader/ship development. We anticipate new classifications may also present an opportunity to focus the Community Engagement Classification.

We hope your institution will consider supporting other campuses that are in earlier stages of institutionalizing community engagement. Your guidance will contribute significantly to the strength of community engagement across higher education.

Once again, congratulations to you, your faculty, staff, students, and community partners on this achievement. If you have any questions, please contact Georgina Manok at [carnegie@brown.edu](mailto:carnegie@brown.edu).

Sincerely,

The Carnegie Management Team  
Mathew Johnson, Georgina Manok, John Saltmarsh

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Mathew Johnson".

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Georgina Manok".

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "John A. Saltmarsh".