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Campus Classification, Identity, and Change: The Elective Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement

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Abstract

To receive the Carnegie Elective Classification for Community Engagement, campuses must provide extensive documentation indicating a commitment to institutionalizing community engagement. When they do so, the Carnegie Foundation recognizes community engagement as part of the institutional identity of the campus. The Community Engagement Classification was designed to augment the basic classification (which all campuses receive) in a way that encouraged campus innovation and change. Based on our review of hundreds of applications for the classification, we propose that the Carnegie Foundation was not only encouraging campus change, but that the design of the classification suggests a theory of how institutionalization of community engagement happens. When working with campuses applying for the classification, we have found that understanding the theory of change implied by the classification has helped focus attention on the importance of locating community engagement in the core academic cultures, policies, structures, and practices of the campus.

Keywords: community engagement classification, Carnegie classification, innovation, change, institutionalization

We ask other college presidents to join us in seeking recognition of civic responsibility in accreditation procedures, Carnegie classifications, and national rankings, and to work with governors, state legislators, and state higher education offices on state expectations for civic engagement in public systems. *(Presidents' Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education, 2000, p. 2)*

The Carnegie Elective Classification for Community Engagement is probably the most important of the tools analysed so far, in terms of the level of recognition and influence that it has achieved at the national level in the U.S. In turn, it provides a source of inspiration at the global level for developing tools that assess, recognise and reward institutions for their community engagement achievements. *(Benneworth et al., 2018, p. 120)*

As of 2020, the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification has been through five cycles of campuses applying for classification. We have been leading the administration of the classification since 2009. Starting July 1, 2020, Albion College, where Mathew serves as president, became the administrative home for the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification. The classification was previously housed at the Swearer Center of Brown University from 2017 to 2020, where Mathew served as director of the Center. The classification was housed at the New England Resource Center for Higher Education from 2009 to 2017, where John served as director.

The 2015 classification cycle was the first time campuses that had achieved the clas-

sification submitted for reclassification. Through all these cycles of classification, and from hundreds of campus applications providing evidence of institutional community engagement, we have come to understand an implied theory of change central to the architecture of the evidentiary framework demonstrating institutionalization. We have found that sharing this theory of change has proved useful for campuses that are advancing community engagement and seeking classification. In this piece, we reflect on our experiences with the elective community engagement classification and draw on the literature on the origins and purpose of the classification to understand both what it suggests about how change takes place in institutions of higher education, and what the logic behind the framework reveals about an implied theory of change. We have found that sharing our understanding of this theory of change has been helpful for campuses as they strategize about deepening community engagement. It can also be of use when completing an application for the classification.

A New Classification

The Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement emerged as part of a growing community engagement movement in American higher education, which, by the late 1990s, was seeking greater legitimacy through recognition by established higher education power brokers. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching responded to the call from college and university presidents expressed in the *Campus Compact Presidents' Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education* (2000) by providing "a classification system maintained by an independent, reputable agent" (McCormick & Zhao, 2005, p. 53). The presidents were seeking recognition and legitimacy for their campus community engagement efforts, while the Foundation was seeking more: a classification that would encourage innovation and improvement in the core academic functions of higher education. The Foundation wanted a classification that would serve to break from the use of classification for purposes of creating hierarchies and rankings. The community engagement classification was intentionally "designed to: 1) Respect the diversity of institutions and their approaches to community engagement; 2) Engage institutions in a process of inquiry, reflection, and self-assessment; and 3) Honor institutions' achievements while promoting the ongoing development of their programs" (Driscoll, 2008, p. 39). Seeking to "honor achievements while promoting ongoing improvement" (Driscoll, 2008, p. 40) of community engagement is central to the aim of catalyzing transformational change on campus.

The Community Engagement Classification had been piloted in 2005 under the Foundation leadership of President Lee Schulman and the direction of senior scholar Amy Driscoll. It was one of what were anticipated to be a series of "elective" classifications offered by the Foundation (only one was developed, the Community Engagement Classification). Until the creation of an elective classification, the only classification offered by the Foundation was "The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education," sometimes referred to as the "basic" classification, a classification taxonomy that had been started in the early 1970s as a way of understanding the diversity of institutions that make up the totality of higher education institutions in the United States. The basic classification was (and is) "based on secondary analysis of numerical data collected by . . . the U.S. Department of Education, The National Science Foundation, and the College Board" (McCormick & Zhao, 2005, pp. 55–56) as a way to "describe, characterize, and categorize college and universities" (McCormick & Zhao, 2005, p. 53).

The elective classifications were intended to be complementary to the basic classification, allowing campuses to elect to claim an institutional identity associated with innovation: for the community engagement classification, campuses could claim an institutional identity associated with high standards of community engagement. For example, a state public university might have a basic classification as a "Masters High Enrollment" campus, which would not reveal a commitment to community engagement; but, with the elective classification, the same Masters High Enrollment campus could also claim an institutional identity as a community-engaged campus.

A major difference between the basic classification and new elective classification was that instead of relying on self-reported data to secondary organizations, the Community Engagement Classification relied on evidence provided through an application in

which campuses are required to document their community engagement commitments, activities, resource allocations, and infrastructure. As Driscoll (2008) explained, "unlike Carnegie's other classifications, which rely on national data, its new, voluntary classifications such as community engagement are designed to work based on documentation provided by the institution" (p. 39). In this way, the new voluntary classification works on a self-study model similar to an accreditation process. The self-study of community engagement can lead to a kind of certificate of approval by the Carnegie Foundation.

However, the documentation used for the voluntary classification was secondary to its larger purpose. The Foundation's goal with the community engagement classification, as an "extension and refinement of its classification of colleges and universities" (Driscoll, 2008, p. 41), was to encourage change on campuses that would improve teaching and learning and advance mission fulfillment of the public good purpose of higher education. The basic classification, in contrast, was not designed to encourage change. At the Foundation, there was "a concern about the inadequacy of the [basic] classification for representing institutional similarities and differences and its insensitivity to the evolution of higher education" (Driscoll, 2008, p. 39). Instead of encouraging change, the basic "classification . . . [tended] to be retrospective . . . and is static, rather than dynamic" (McCormick & Zhao, 2005, p. 53). As Alexander C. McCormick, a senior scholar at the Carnegie Foundation at the time the community engagement classification was established, and Chun-Mei Zhao, a researcher at the Foundation, observed, "a special irony of the [basic] Carnegie Classification . . . is the homogenizing influence it has had, as many institutions have sought to 'move up' the classification system for inclusion among 'research-type' universities" (McCormick & Zhao, 2005, p. 52). Applied in this way, "significant problems arise," they observed, "when classification is seen as an adequate representation of an institution's identity or character" (p. 55).

As McCormick and Zhao (2005) noted, "classification and identity are easily confused" (p. 55). The basic Carnegie Classification was reifying a status quo refracted through the lens of prestige that reinforced striving toward a narrow form of excellence and a single institutional model defined by the research university. This was happening regardless of the Carnegie Classification, but the classification was exacerbating the problem. Donald Schön, part of the Foundation's brain trust in the 1980s and 1990s, claimed that

> all of us who live in research universities are bound up in technical rationality, regardless of our personal attitudes toward it, because it is built into the institutional arrangements—the formal and informal rules and norms. . . . Even liberal arts colleges, community colleges, and other institutions of higher education appear to be subject to the influence of technical rationality by a kind of echo effect or by imitation. (Schön, 1995, p. 32; see also Saltmarsh, 2011)

Ernest Lynton, also a colleague at the Foundation in this era, saw the iron grip that striving for a narrow organizational model, shaped by the prestige of basic research, had on nearly every aspect of the university, including its fundamental purpose, the role of faculty, faculty rewards, a cult of specialization, undergraduate education, teaching and learning, questions of impact, and the public relevance of the university. Lynton observed that "as long as research is viewed as the paramount measure of both collective and individual esteem and advancement, an institution will lack the flexibility of deploying its resources in an optimal fashion to meet its multi-dimensional and complex mission" (Lynton, 1983, p. 18). This narrowing of faculty work not only defined research, it "dominated all of our teaching" (Lynton, 1983, p. 22), such that "all else," wrote Lynton, "was seen as peripheral and largely irrelevant" (Lynton, 1990, p. 4). This created a narrowly focused research culture at the core of what Eugene Rice (1996) would call the "assumptive world of the academic professional" (p. 8; see also Saltmarsh, 2011, 2016).

For campuses, of any institutional profile, that wanted to clarify institutional identity and mission in ways that distinguished the institution and reshaped the academic core around engagement with the local community, the basic classification not only overlooked essential characteristics and practices, but perhaps undermined any

movement toward a different kind of excellence by reinforcing striving toward a restrictive research model. The Community Engagement Classification allowed campuses to claim an institutional identity around community engagement through a classification that was (and is) based on "the best practices that have been identified nationally" (Driscoll, 2008, p. 40). Since it was first offered in 2006, there has been a demonstrated "eagerness of institutions to have their community engagement acknowledged with a national and publicly recognized classification" (Driscoll, 2008, p. 39).

The complexity of institutional identity requires a nuanced and contextual set of measures. In their analysis of the Carnegie Community Engagement framework, Benneworth et al. (2018) noted that community engagement activities and commitments, "because of the huge diversity and diffuseness of their nature, their often informal character and their stubborn resistance to being reduced to a small number of summative variables" (p. 32), do not lend themselves to performance indicators based on statistical control measures. Community engagement "covers such a wide range of activities that it is impossible to generate simple headline metrics that would cover the definition in a satisfactory manner" (pp. 76–77). The Carnegie Community Engagement Classification design requires "a more nuanced approach in which these complex processes were compared with other similar organisations to understand whether performance was as good as might reasonably be expected, i.e. a benchmarking approach" (pp. 76–77). It does not

> provide inter-institutional comparisons and therefore remains context-specific: each institution is assessed independently. The advantage of such an approach is that it provides recognition for excellent performance (and therefore provides an incentive for achieving such a level of performance) without the negative implications of providing results in the form of a league table. (p. 123)

The documentation framework that makes up the application asks for self-reported evidence, contextualized to the individual campus and its communities, that is heavily descriptive. Not unlike an accreditation self-study, the classification is anchored in the context shaped by campus mission and seeks evidence from areas across the campus so as to constitute an institutional assessment of community engagement. A common practice is to form a cross-institutional team that gathers evidence, organizes it in a coherent way, and reflects on its meaning. Also, as with accreditation standards, standards related to best practices of community engagement are refined over time, reflecting changes in the field. Institutions evaluate various aspects of their processes in relationship to standards of best practice. It is not an approach that creates a hierarchy or levels of classification (there are no tiers of classification—campuses either have the classification or they don't), although any classification sets up potential prestige seeking.

Creating Campus Change

Creating an institutional identity around community engagement is viewed as a means toward aligning campus culture, structures, and practices across an institution. Driscoll (2008) wrote that "this kind of alignment is critical if a significant change in mission is to be sustained and should be the goal of institutions that are in the early phases of community engagement." This alignment, starting with campus mission, "can also serve as the object of self-assessments as more advanced institutions mark their progress and identify areas for improvement in their commitment to community engagement" (p. 40).

Although the Foundation made it clear that a goal of the Community Engagement Classification is campus change, it was less explicit in how it conceived institutional change or how it theorized the way change would happen in institutions of higher education. It may, however, be possible to reveal, based on widely read literature at the time and the subsequent purpose and design of the classification, an underlying theory of change.

In 1998, under the auspices of the American Council on Education, Eckel et al. published results of a multiyear study of change at a diverse group of 26 colleges and universities. Although they recognized that change was always happening to some extent, they focused their attention on what they called "transformational change." What they labeled "transformation" assumed

> that college and university administrators and faculty will alter the way in which they think about and perform their basic functions of teaching, research, and service, but they will do so in ways that allow them to remain true to the values and historic aims of the academy . . . they will change in ways that are congruent with their intellectual purposes and their missions. (p. 3)

They concluded from their study that there was evidence of campuses transforming themselves in three defined areas: one was what they called "putting learning first" (p. 7; or, drawing on Barr and Tagg's seminal 1995 article, being student-centered, or improving teaching, learning, and assessment); a second was in the area of "making higher education more cost-effective and affordable" (p. 8); and a third was "connecting institutions to their communities" (p. 7). Regarding the latter, they wrote,

> because higher education is a public good and fulfills a public function, institutions form intentional linkages with their communities. The activities of the academy address a range of public needs, including the needs of students, the tuition-paying public, the employers of future graduates, the beneficiaries of research, scholarship, and service, and society as a whole. Communities may be local, national, or international, and most institutions interact with multiple communities. (p. 7)

Further, they found that "these connections can contribute to the reshaping of institutional practices and purposes" (p. 7). Engaging with communities could be transformational.

One indication that this study shaped the conception and design of the Community Engagement Classification is that when the Carnegie Foundation first explored a series of elective classifications, the first two that were proposed were a classification around teaching, learning, and assessment, and a second around community engagement. Further, the way Eckel et al. conceived institutional change and how it happens is mirrored in the design of the classification.

The classification framework, in its original form, was organized into three sections: Institutional Culture and Commitment, Curricular Engagement, and Outreach and Partnerships. Institutional culture and commitment were labeled the *foundational indicators*, meaning that they were literally foundational to institutional engagement. Thus, the classification is focused on institutional culture. At the center of institutional culture is the academic core. In the design of the classification framework, curricular engagement is structured as the center of the application.

"Transformation," Eckel et al. (1998) explained, "changes institutional culture . . . [it] touches the core of the institution" (p. 4). Transformation, they found, "requires major shifts in an institution's culture—the common set of beliefs and values that creates a shared interpretation and understanding of events and actions. Institution-wide patterns of perceiving, thinking, and feeling; shared understandings; collective assumptions; and common interpretive frameworks" (p. 3). The key components of transformation are that it "(1) alters the culture of the institution by changing select underlying assumptions and institutional behaviors, processes, and products; (2) is deep and pervasive, affecting the whole institution; (3) is intentional; and (4) occurs over time" (p. 3).

The classification's foundational indicators closely reflect this framing. For example, in regard to the first component (culture), the foundational indicators ask for evidence of change in the faculty promotion and tenure guidelines (a key artifact of academic culture) in ways that support community engagement by faculty across research, teaching, and service. Regarding the second component (institution-wide), the classification is not aimed at a program or a unit of the campus, but the campus as a whole. For the third component (intentionality), the classification seeks evidence of, for example, community engagement being integral to the strategic plan for the campus. And for the fourth component, because culture change is not something that happens quickly or easily, the classification is structured in a way that seeks evidence for movement toward change when actual change has yet to be implemented, for example, in the evidence provided on changes in promotion and tenure policies.

The classification design also reflects the understanding that transformation is both

Table 1. Matrix of Transformational Change

Pervasiveness		Depth: Low	Depth: High
	Low	Adjustment (1)	Isolated Change (2)
	High	Far-Reaching Change (3)	Transformational Change (4)

Note. From Eckel et al., 1998, p. 5.

deep and pervasive. "These two basic elements of change—depth and pervasiveness—can be combined" (Eckel et al., 1998, p. 5) into a matrix of different kinds of change (Table 1).

Using this matrix as a guide, the classification framework allows campuses to evaluate the degree to which their community engagement efforts are both deep and pervasive. Eckel et al. (1998) explained the matrix this way:

> The first quadrant is *adjustment*—a change or a series of changes that are modifications to an area. One might call this "tinkering." . . . changes of this nature are revising or revitalizing, and they occur when current designs or procedures are improved or extended. An adjustment may improve the process or the quality of the service, or it might be something new; nevertheless, it does not drastically alter much. It doesn't have deep or far-reaching effects. The second quadrant, *isolated change*, is deep but limited to one unit or a particular area; it is not pervasive. The third quadrant is *far-reaching change*; it is pervasive, but does not affect the organization very deeply. The final quadrant is *transformational change*. Transformation occurs when a change reflects dimensions *both deep and pervasive*. (p. 5)

Based on the evaluation of hundreds of classification applications over multiple application cycles, a general observation can be made that campuses that locate their community engagement efforts in Quadrants 1 and 2 either (a) do not turn in their application for review (for example, in the 2015 classification cycle, 241 campuses requested and received the application, and 133 of those campuses submitted the application for review) or (b) are unsuccessful in classification (of the 133 campuses that submitted their applications for review in the 2015 classification cycle, 50 did not receive the classification; in 2020, of the 109 campuses that submitted an application, 65 did not receive the classification). It is primarily campuses that provide evidence of being located in Quadrant 3 with evidence of movement toward Quadrant 4 that are successful in the classification process.

To provide an example of how the dimensions of deep and pervasive can be reflected in an application, a campus may have implemented service-learning through the curriculum. Courses may be in only a few departments, taught by only a few faculty (the activity is not pervasive across the institution), and there is little evidence of sophistication in pedagogical practice (the practice is not done in a deep way). This kind of service-learning can be located in Quadrant 1. Another campus might have highly refined and long practiced service-learning (deep) established in one or two departments, but there is little evidence of it occurring in other majors or undertaken by other faculty (it is not pervasive across the institution). This kind of service-learning can be located in Quadrant 2.

A campus may also have spread the service-learning widely across majors and departments, with many faculty teaching service-learning courses (pervasive across the campus), but the evidence provided in the application indicates that the practice is vaguely defined and lacking in quality standards or appropriate faculty development to build capacity for quality service-learning (it lacks depth). This kind of service-

learning can be located in Quadrant 3. The classification is designed for campuses to provide evidence that community engagement is both deep and pervasive across the campus (Quadrant 4, or evidence of moving toward Quadrant 4, recognizing that complete transformation is an aspiration difficult to reach). Campuses that provide this documentation through their applications are the ones that are classified as community engaged.

Additionally, the understanding of transformational change in higher education reflected in the classification framework is grounded in the view that change in institutional culture comes through change in academic culture. Neither Eckel et al.—nor the classification framework—is explicit about this, but implicit in the design of the framework is the position that change comes about through change in academic culture. To be more specific and explicit, the original design of the classification framework reflects the assumption that change comes about through academics, faculty work, and academic affairs. The classification does not suggest that community engagement through student affairs is not an important component of an engaged campus, but it emphasizes academic engagement: curricular engagement (the second section of the framework after foundational indicators), faculty teaching and scholarship, faculty rewards through promotion and tenure, credit-bearing community-engaged courses, departmental engagement, and student learning outcomes. Transformation through community engagement comes about through changing the core academic culture of the institution.

Campuses that make serious, dedicated commitments to community engagement are changing the core culture of their institutions. The process is intentional and strategic, with long-term commitments and formal obligations. It shapes and clarifies the campus identity. For campuses making these kinds of commitments, the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement provides an opportunity for rigorous self-assessment and public recognition.

Seeking the Classification

The classification application balances institutional burden with proportionate reward. The reward comes in the form of an opportunity for deep assessment of community engagement activities and recognition for achieving high standards. Key campus leaders (presidents, provosts) seek the Carnegie Classification for a number of reasons, and often for multiple reasons. From the reflections offered in the last section of the application and from conversations with applicants, we have found that the most prevalent is to undergo a structured process of institutional self-assessment and self-study. Putting together an application, gathering evidence and reflecting on it, and understanding the areas of strength and weakness of institutional engagement, is a way of improving practice and advancing community engagement on campus. The application process also serves as a way to bring the disparate parts of the campus together to advance a unified agenda, serving as a catalyst for change, fostering institutional alignment for community-based teaching, learning, and scholarship. At the same time, it allows for the identification of promising practices that can be shared across the institution. Campuses also seek the classification as a way of legitimizing community engagement work that may not have received public recognition and visibility. Additionally, the classification is used as a way to demonstrate accountability, that the institution is fulfilling its mission to serve the public good.

Interest in the classification may be attributable to other factors as well, including (1) an "attitudinal shift in higher education, reflecting a move beyond an exclusive interest in the economic dimension of engagement (in the form of innovation, human capital development), to the broader social role of higher education"; (2) "dominance of an 'audit culture' in higher education . . . , resulting in a climate that tacitly accepts the development of accountability tools as a legitimate and necessary way of monitoring an institution's performance and of demonstrating the institution's value to its stakeholders"; and (3) market-based incentives, as "institutions wishing to distinguish themselves from their competitors and demonstrate their superior level of performance may be interested in applying such tools" (Benneworth et al., 2018, p. 103).

Across all of the applications, first-time classification and reclassification, the evidence reveals that there are common challenges that campuses face in implementing deep and pervasive community engage-

ment, making it part of the core culture of the campus, fully institutionalizing it. Both successfully classified campuses and those that were not successful receive feedback from the Foundation noting that even among the most effective applications, there are five areas in need of continued development.

One is in the area of assessment. 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 of institution-wide engagement data; assessment of the outcomes and impact of community engagement on students, faculty, community, and institution; identification and assessment of student learning outcomes in curricular engagement; and ongoing feedback mechanisms for partnerships. This range of assessment purposes calls for sophisticated understandings and approaches to achieve the respective assessment goals. Campuses were encouraged by the Foundation to continue to develop a culture of assessment toward these ends.

A second area is community partnerships. Partnerships require a high level of understanding and intentional practices specifically directed to reciprocity and mutuality. The values, components, and principles of partnerships between those in the university and those outside the university are grounded in the qualities of reciprocity; mutual respect; shared authority; and co-creation of knowledge, learning, goals, and outcomes. Campuses have demonstrated through their applications that they have, by and large, begun to attend to processes of initiating and nurturing collaborative, two-way partnerships and are developing strategies for systematic communication. Maintaining authentically collaborative, mutually beneficial partnerships takes ongoing commitment. Campuses were encouraged to continue their attention to this critical aspect of community engagement.

Third, the need remains for continued attention to developing infrastructure for sustaining and advancing community engagement on campuses. The work 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 much the same way that campuses have the position chief diversity officer—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. A coordinating infrastructure is particularly important for developing a culture of assessment and accountability around engagement work. It is also essential for providing opportunities for building the capacity of faculty through faculty professional development to be effective as collaborators with community partners in their teaching and research. Additionally, with lively, issue-based engagement going in academic departments and interdisciplinary centers, in curricular and cocurricular units across campuses, it may be particularly useful to have a supra coordinating council or group across entities.

A fourth area identified from the review of applications is policies that reward and incentivize faculty work. With regard to faculty rewards for community engagement, it is difficult to create a campus culture of community engagement when there are not clearly articulated incentives for faculty to prioritize this work across the roles of research, teaching, and service in promotion and tenure criteria. When there are not clear incentives, then there are disincentives. Even though these kinds of policy changes can take many years to implement, the classification is looking for evidence of clear policies for recognizing community engagement in teaching and learning, and in research and creative activity, along with criteria that validate appropriate methodologies and scholarly artifacts. The Foundation encouraged campuses that have not yet revised their promotion and tenure policies to initiate study, dialogue, and reflection to promote and reward the scholarship of engagement more fully.

The last area identified by the Foundation in need of ongoing attention is more intentional integration of community engagement with other strategic priorities of the campus. Community engagement offers

often-untapped possibilities for alignment with other campus priorities and initiatives to achieve greater impact. For example, first-year programs that include community engagement contribute to increasing student retention; learning communities into which community engagement is integrated are designed to enhance high-impact learning; diversity initiatives explicitly link active and collaborative community-based teaching and learning to impact the academic success of historically underserved students; and collaborative community-engaged knowledge generation through research is enhanced by attracting, hiring, and retention of underrepresented faculty. The more campuses are intentional about explicitly and concretely connecting community engagement to the strategic priorities of the campus, the greater the likelihood that community engagement will be institutionalized and work to transform the culture of the campus.

Even with these challenges, as of 2020, 359 campuses were successful in achieving the classification. In our view, the power of the Community Engagement Classification is as a tool for change. The documentation framework (application) provides campuses with a blueprint for the long-term institutionalization of community engagement and its alignment across campus programs, units, structures, and policies. It is a tool for improving the central purposes of higher education institutions: the generation and dissemination of knowledge through research, teaching and learning through undergraduate education, and fulfilling a public purpose. The application process is just that—a process. The central focus of the classification is not about being classified, it is about providing an opportunity, on a regular basis, for campuses to examine, assess, document, and reflect on community engagement practice across the campus in order to improve upon and enhance a central purpose of higher education.

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