

**Attention: Information No Longer Current
(Alert archived November 2011)**

Alert #25 – Update 1

Title: Revision of the Carnegie Classifications

Prepared: February, 2006

Type: Informational

Summary

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching recently announced its new classification system. In addition to a variation on its traditional classification (which will be publicly available mid February 2006, Carnegie officially released five new classification schemes: Undergraduate Instructional Program, Graduate Instructional Program, Enrollment Profile, Undergraduate Profile, and Size & Setting (see <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/classifications/>). Two additional elective classifications are being developed.

Current Status

The Carnegie classification of colleges and universities has been widely used since 1973 as a framework for describing institutional diversity in U.S. higher education. The original classification and subsequent updates in 1976, 1987, 1994, and 2000 all relied on a single classification scheme. During the last several years, Carnegie developed a new approach using multiple parallel classification schemes. Five new classification schemes were officially released in November 2005 and a sixth (a major revision of "Carnegie classic") will be released mid February 2006. Carnegie is also in the process of developing two elective schemes-relating to community engagement and undergraduate education-that rely on voluntary participation by institutions.

With these new classifications, Carnegie is providing "a set of different lenses through which to view U.S. colleges and universities" that will provide researchers with greater flexibility in meeting their analytic needs. The six new classification schemes are

- Basic Classification, which is based on 1) highest degree granted, 2) number and percent of degrees awarded, 3) concentration of majors in arts and sciences (baccalaureate colleges only), 4) a measure of research activity (doctorate-granting institutions only), 5) specialization, and 6) designation as a tribal college. Associate's colleges are further

**Attention: Information No Longer Current
(Alert archived November 2011)**

differentiated with respect to 1) control, 2) size, 3) rural, suburban, or urban service area, 4) single versus multi-campus organization, and 5) special use.

- Undergraduate Instructional Program, which is based on 1) the highest level of undergraduate degrees awarded (associate's or bachelor's), 2) the proportion of bachelor's degree majors in the arts and sciences and in professional fields, and 3) the extent to which an institution awards graduate degrees in the same fields in which it awards undergraduate degrees.
- Graduate Instructional Program, which is based on 1) the highest level of graduate degrees awarded (master's/professional or doctoral), 2) the number of fields represented by the degrees awarded, and 3) the mix or concentration of degrees by broad disciplinary domain.
- Enrollment Profile, which is based on 1) whether the institution has students enrolled at the graduate/professional levels, 2) two-year versus four-year degrees (for exclusively undergraduate institutions only), and 3) the distribution of full-time equivalent students across the undergraduate versus graduate levels (only for institutions with both undergraduate and graduate/professional students).
- Undergraduate Profile, which is based on 1) the proportion of students who attend part- or full-time, 2) admissions test scores of first-year students, and 3) the proportion of entering students who transfer in from another institution.
- Size & Setting, which is based on 1) size and 2) residential character (as determined by the proportion of undergraduates living in institutionally-owned, -operated, or -affiliated housing and the proportion of degree-seeking undergraduates who attend full-time).

**Attention: Information No Longer Current
(Alert archived November 2011)**

Carnegie classifies all accredited, degree-granting colleges and universities in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). All six classification schemes use IPEDS data. The Basic Classification also uses data from two National Science Foundation surveys (the Survey of Graduate Students and Postdoctorates and the Survey of Research and Development Expenditures). The Undergraduate Profile and Size & Setting classifications also use data for four-year institutions from the College Board Annual Survey of Colleges. More specific information is available from the Technical Details menu at <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/classifications/>.

The current Carnegie classifications use data from 2003 and 2004. Carnegie acknowledges that, as always, some institutions fall near the cut-offs between categories and might be classified differently using a different timeframe. Carnegie's online institution view (which displays an institution's classifications) includes footnotes indicating instances when an institution is close to a category border.

The Carnegie Classification Web site (<http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/classifications/>) has interactive tools (available from the Lookup & Listings menu) that allow users to do the following:

- Look up a single institution to view its classification categories by selecting the "Institution Lookup" menu option.
- After looking up an institution, find other institutions that have similar characteristics by selecting any combination of the displayed Carnegie classification categories (and/or level and control) and then selecting the "Find Similar" button at the bottom right of the Lookup page. Note that using "Find Similar" for all classification categories at once may reveal no other identically classified institutions; it may be more helpful to choose only two or three classifications at a time.
- List all institutions in a single classification category by selecting the "Simple Listings" menu option.

**Attention: Information No Longer Current
(Alert archived November 2011)**

- List institutions in a combination of categories (from multiple classifications) by selecting the "Custom Listings" menu option.

Implications for Institutions

Each institution should check its own classifications and understand how they were assigned (by using Carnegie's Institution Lookup option). Institutions should also determine which other institutions are similarly classified by using the "Find Similar" button on their institution's page. These peer data categories should be of interest to senior administrators, especially if the institution is classified in an unexpected category.

This new interactive tool will be very helpful for identifying peers and for understanding how an institution compares with others on key characteristics. The new system represents a major increase in classification complexity, accompanied by greater flexibility. Users will need to take responsibility for matching classification(s) to analytic purposes and should remember that the Carnegie classification is not intended to be a ranking system.

Although it has not yet announced whether it will continue to use the Carnegie classification, *U.S. News* indicated that it is "hopeful that we will be able to once again use the 'revised basic' Classification to determine *U.S. News* ranking categories."

Timeline

2001 - 2005 -- Planning for the new classifications

January-October 2005 -- Pilot project for elective classification for community engagement

November 2005 -- Five new classification schemes officially released

February 2006 -- New Basic classification officially released

March 2006 -- Implementation of elective community engagement classification begins

Additional Resources

Carnegie Classification home page: <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/classification>

[AIR Alert #25](#), 2005 Revision of the Carnegie Classification

**Attention: Information No Longer Current
(Alert archived November 2011)**

Authors:

Mary Sapp; Alexander C. McCormick, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

Coordinated by the Higher Education Data Policy Committee. All opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Association for Institutional Research.

Information No Longer Current