2-2014

Gathering Data and Documenting Impact: 2010 Carnegie Community Engagement Classification Application Approaches and Outcomes

Jana Noel
California State University, Sacramento

David P. Earwicker
California State University, Sacramento

Gathering Data and Documenting Impact:
2010 Carnegie Community Engagement Classification Application Approaches and Outcomes

Jana Noel
California State University, Sacramento

David P. Earwicker
California State University, Sacramento

February 2014

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Introduction

> *Campuses that pursue the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification will in some form take full inventory of their engagement efforts in order to address the range of questions posed by the Carnegie Foundation. (Thornton & Zuiches, 2009, p. 75).*

The Community Engagement Classification is an elective classification offered by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. In order to be classified, campuses provide evidence documenting engagement through an application process. Campuses were classified in 2006, 2008, and 2010, and will be classified on five-year cycles from 2015 onward. (Information about the classification can be found on the Carnegie Foundation website.)

This mixed-methods, two-part study sought to discover how institutions that received the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification in 2010 approached their application process and to examine the longer term outcomes of that process. How did they undertake a "full inventory" of their community engagement efforts, and what were the outcomes of undertaking such an inventory, beyond receiving the Classification?

The study had two purposes: (a) To document the strategies and methods used by successful applicants for the 2010 Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, and (b) to document the cultural shifts experienced by institutions as they developed their successful applications for this Classification.

Methods and Data Sources

The study took place during 2012-2013 in two phases:

Phase I. Using a list of the 121 institutions that received the Classification in 2010, the first author selected nine applicants representing a range of student-body size, Carnegie institution type, and geographic area. She conducted 30-minute, semi-structured, 11-question interviews with these nine applicants[1] and used those responses to refine a survey for the full set of 2010 classified institutions.

Phase II. The authors then prepared a more robust 21-question survey with both structured and semi-structured elements in order to more effectively map institutional characteristics against the processes, participants, and motivations discovered through the interviews. The authors conducted the survey using SurveyMonkey and contacted the entire set of 121 successful applicants. Fifty-two applicants agreed to participate, a 43% response rate. *The 52 institutions completing the survey represented a cross-section of institutional type and size.*

---

[1] We have used the term "applicants" to describe the interviewees and respondents. While the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification application asks for contact names and information, sometimes those contacts are not the authors of the applications but rather administrators to whom general questions might be directed. For this study, each interviewee or respondent confirmed that he or she was indeed the author, described as "applicant" in this paper.
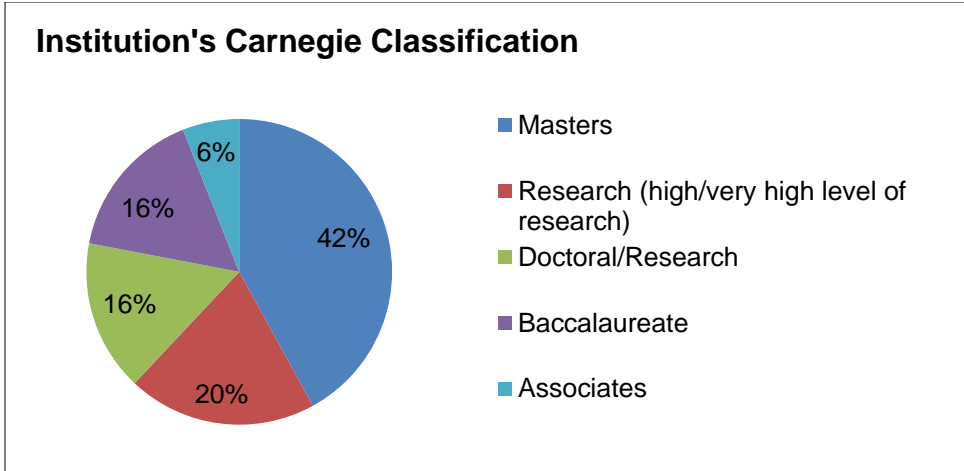
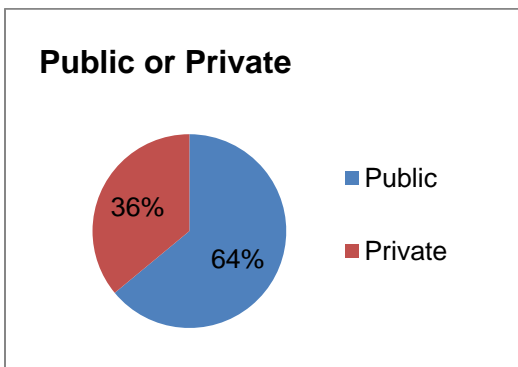Figure 1. *Institutional Demographics: Carnegie Classification*

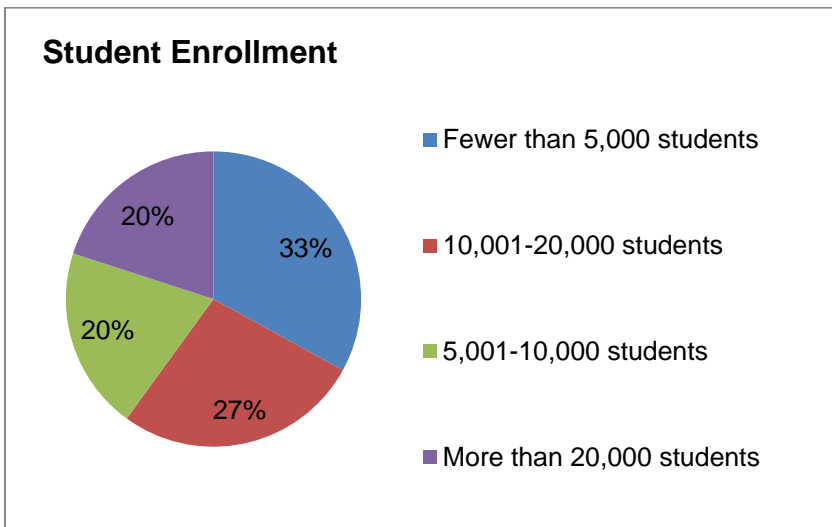Figure 2. *Institutional Demographics: Public or Private*

Figure 3. *Institutional Demographics: Student Enrollment*

Limitations of the Study

The study design allowed a self-selected sampling. While all 121 institutions that received the Classification in 2010 were invited to participate, all institutions had the option of declining to complete the survey. The result of this design was an oversampling of certain types of institutions—that is, the percentage of applicants from each category (masters, research, associates, etc.) does not equal the actual percentage of institutions from that category that received the 2010 Classification.

This study focused entirely on the application process and perceptions of institutional change that occurred as a result of applying for the 2010 Classification. Since the study was conducted through interviews and surveys, all data are self-reported. No attempts were made to verify or confirm the applicants' responses, and the results do not demonstrate the quality of community engagement at these institutions. Further, while the study gives a snapshot of the 2010 classified institutions, it does not chart the institutions' longitudinal community engagement.

Study Results

Leadership in Community Engagement: Application Lead Authors

This study found a wide variability in the titles and positions of the Carnegie Classification application lead authors. *Of the 52 institutions included in the study, applicants held 28 different positions/titles.* There were 21 Directors/Coordinators at the institutional level (i.e., Director of Outreach and Engagement), 16 Directors/Coordinators of centers, with the remainder of authors being faculty, project directors, etc. Additionally, the titles of the applicants included multiple terms to designate how their respective institution describes its work with the community. Terms repeated across positions/titles included: Civic Engagement, Community Partnerships, Institutional Effectiveness, Research, Community Engagement, Community-Based Learning, Outreach and Engagement, and Service Learning.

Institutional Unit of Application Lead Authors

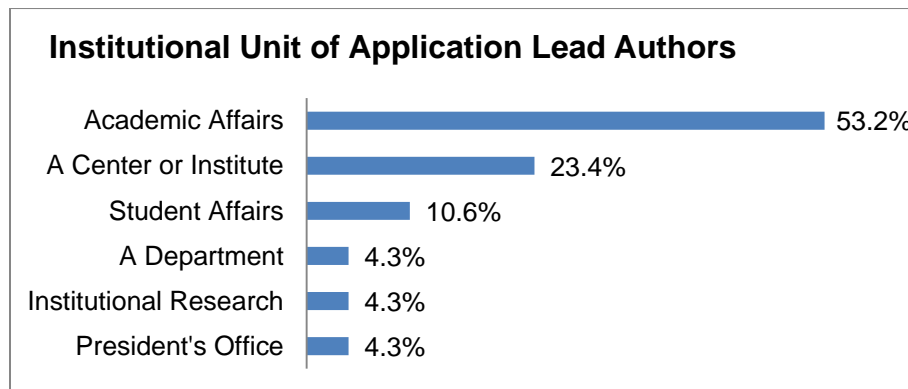| Unit	Percentage
Academic Affairs	53.2%
A Center or Institute	23.4%
Student Affairs	10.6%
A Department	4.3%
Institutional Research	4.3%
President's Office	4.3%

Figure 4. *Institutional Unit of Application Lead Authors*

Application Teams

Another key strategy undertaken by applicants was to work with a team. As Driscoll (2009) explains, "The documentation process is intensive and requires the collaboration of many institutional and community participants" (p. 7).

This study found application teams comprised an average of 6.1 members. Responses were generally evenly distributed around three methods that the institutions used to select the members of the application and data-gathering team: *(a) A recognized campus leader in community engagement initiated a team, (b) a president or other cabinet member identified team members, and (c) a community engagement team already existed and continued their work.*

Selection of Application Team

- 36% — A recognized campus leader in community engagement initiated team
- 33% — President or other Cabinet member identified team members
- 31% — A community engagement team was already in place and continued their work
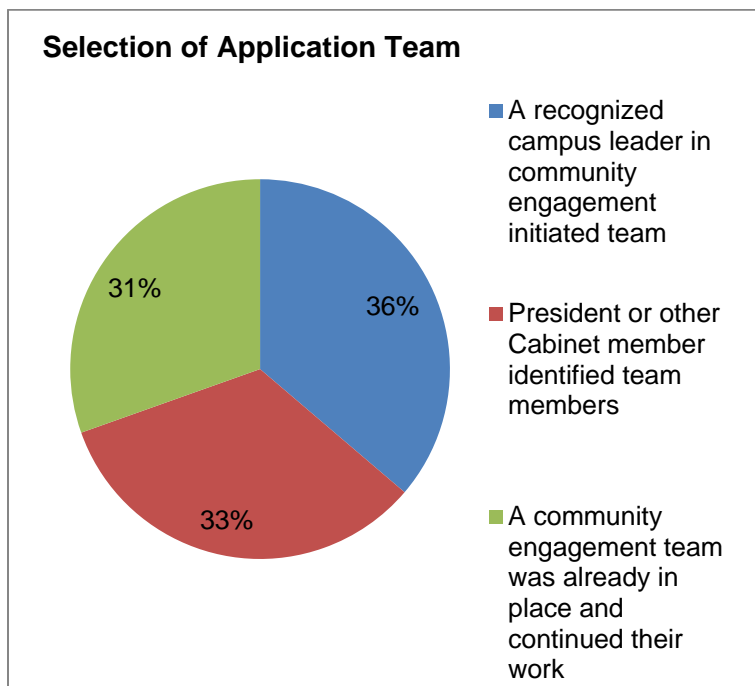
Figure 5. *Selection of Application Team*

Application Roles of Institutional and Community Members

While the application lead author and application team play key roles in preparing the application, many groups representing a variety of institutional and community perspectives must be consulted when working to document such a cross-institutional practice as community engagement.

- *The main role for faculty, students, community partners, office or center directors, deans, and department chairs was to contribute information in the form of completing surveys, serving as interviewees, or serving as members of focus groups.*
- *Staff were the most frequently identified members of data-gathering and application preparation teams.*
- *Upper-level administrators most commonly provided feedback on drafts of the application.*

Data Sources

The application for the Classification requires a wide range of data regarding community engagement across multiple units and constituencies. In some cases, the data needed to complete the Carnegie application already exist, having been gathered previously for other purposes. In some cases, however, new data need to be gathered to complete all of the questions on the application. *Applicants indicated that, on average, 62% of the data needed to complete the application were found to already have existed on their campuses. The remaining 38% of the data were newly gathered specifically for the application process.*

Table 1. *Data Sources: Existing and Newly Collected*

Data Type	Percentage of Data Used in Application	Number of Data Sources
Existing Data	62%	22
Newly Gathered Data	38%	17

Existing Data Sources Utilized	Newly Collected Data Sources
Reported by Multiple Applicants	*Reported by Multiple Applicants*
• Self-studies • Colleges (including their web sites) • Center or Office for Community or Civic Engagement • Faculty publications • NSSE/FSSE reports	• Interviews and one-on-one conversations • Surveys • E-mail requests • University web sites • Community members • Created new database (i.e. Banner) • Existing data re-collected • Focus groups
Reported by Single Applicants	*Reported by Single Applicants*
• Advisory groups and councils • Annual reports • Campus Compact surveys • Cooperative Extension • Departments • Extended university data • Fact Books • Grant-funded programs • Historical documents • Institutional Research • Library database • Main student service and volunteerism unit • Previous applications for awards and grants • Previous application for President's Honor Rolls • Registrar data • Student services administrative offices • "Researched and gathered information on existing commitments, policies, procedures, and documented philosophy."	• Annual reports • Data base (new data gathered) • Departments and units – personal contact • Financial records • Focus groups • Handbooks and policy manuals • Institutional Research • Press releases • University publications

Application Preparation Time

Overall, **the average amount of time spent on the application was 6.6 months**.
Applicants reported spending an average of 29% of their work time during those months
preparing the application.

Table 2. *Length of Time to Prepare Application*

Months Spent on Application: Average	% of Time Spent on Application: Average
6.6	29%

Months Spent on Application	# of Students
5.8	Fewer than 5,000
7	5,001-10,000
7.5	10,000-20,000
9.1	More than 20,000

As seen in Table 2, there appears to be a direct correlation between institutional size,
measured in number of students, and months spent on the application. Two interviewees
from Phase I of the study posited that the smaller the institution, the less time is needed
to complete the application. One interviewee stated that it is easier at a small institution
because "We know who does what, who is motivated." The other indicated that at the
smaller institution, "I know everyone who does this work," and the institution is "compact
enough to keep track of." Alternative explanations for the length of time needed at
different-sized institutions may be availability of resources for the task or robustness of
an institution's designated Community Engagement Center. Further research is needed
to advance our understanding of this particular issue.

Additional Support Received for Work

*The majority of applicants tapped into existing units, documents, or workshops in
completing their applications. In particular, respondents indicated the benefits of
reviewing the applications of previously successful Carnegie classified institutions as
well as attending webinars or workshops provided by the Carnegie Foundation.* A very
small percentage received support in the form of additional funding, additional staff,
students, payment, or release time, while a few applicants expressed a concern over a
lack of support for the work.

Additional Support Received for Work on Application
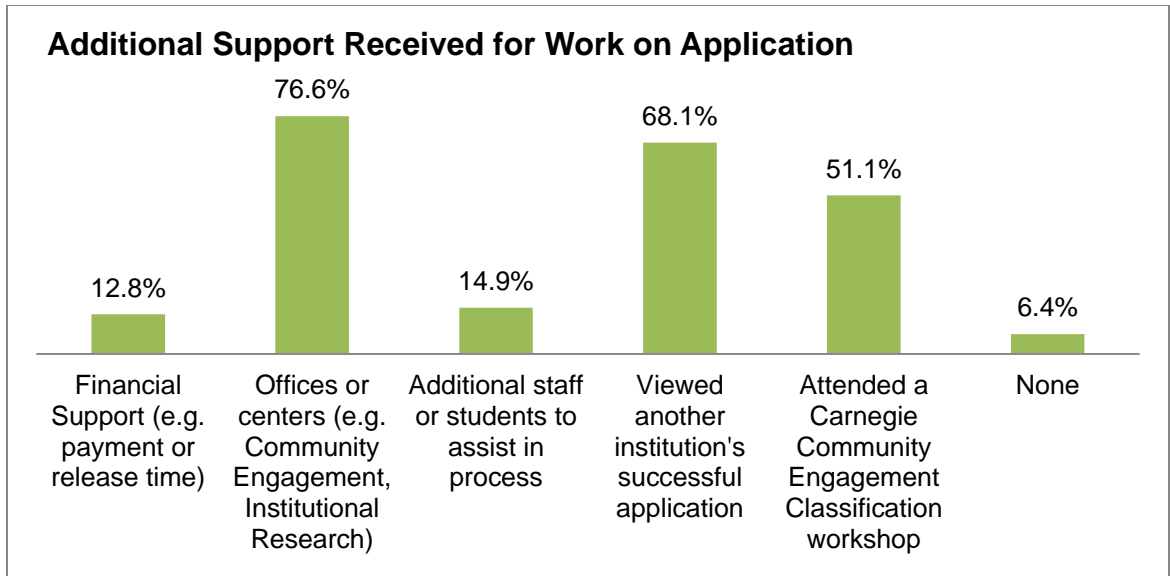
Figure 6. *Additional Support Received for Work on Application*

Upper Level Administrator Involvement

A large majority of applicants indicated that their upper-level administration was involved in communicating about the Classification, either about the importance of participating in the process or about receiving the Classification. However, less than 15% responded that upper-level administrators authored the application, provided monetary or release-time support for the application lead author, or created a new or filled a vacant position for the purpose of the application.
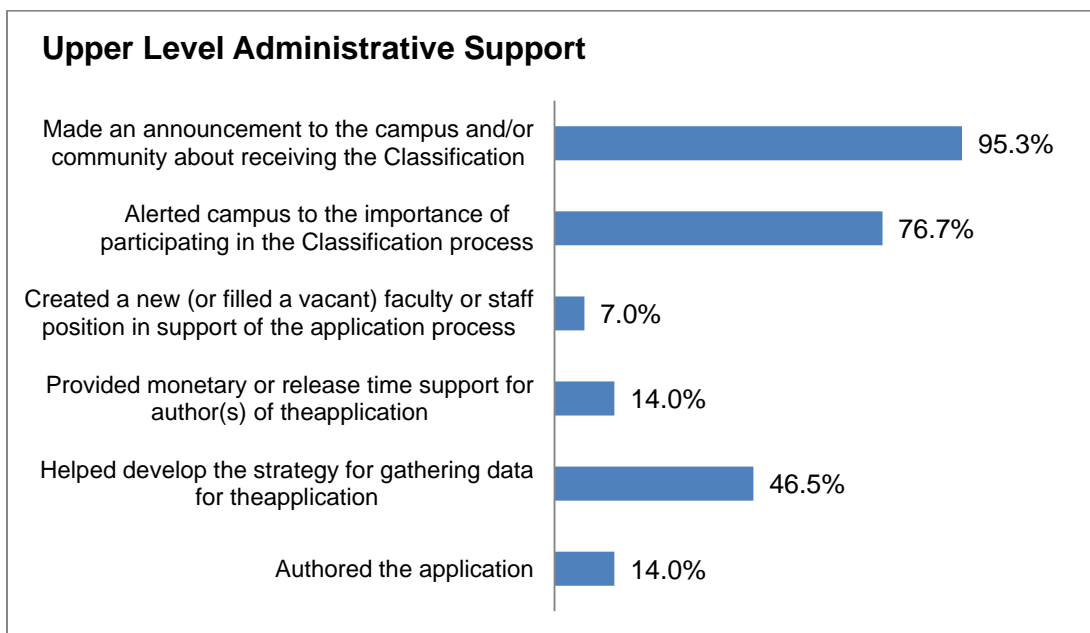
Figure 7. *Upper Level Administrative Support*

Challenges or Obstacles Faced in Completing the Application

Applicants encountered a number of challenges during the application preparation, with the five main issues including:

- *No structure for data collection in place prior to beginning the application process.*
  - o As five respondents elaborated, it was not so much that they had no structure, but rather minimal structure. As one interviewee described, data collection was not "comprehensive" prior to the application process, and another described it as "spotty."
- *Difficulty ensuring institution-wide involvement.*
 - o Examples of this difficulty included reports that key administrators "grumbled" or showed "indifference" to the Classification itself. However, as one respondent described, "Once we figured out who to talk to, people were very helpful."
- *Definition of "community engagement" varied or was unclear at the institution.*
  - o Responses ranged from an interviewee who indicated that colleagues did not see how community engagement was part of the institution's mission, to a survey respondent who explained that many units wanted to have their work counted as community engagement, even if it did not fit the accepted Carnegie definition.
- *Insufficient resources/time.*
  - o One-third of the respondents indicated they needed more time, resources, and support to complete their applications.
- *Difficulty matching responses to the wording on the application.*
  - o Difficulties included problems fitting responses into the word or character limit required by the application and in aligning the data with the questions on the application.

Challenges or Obstacles

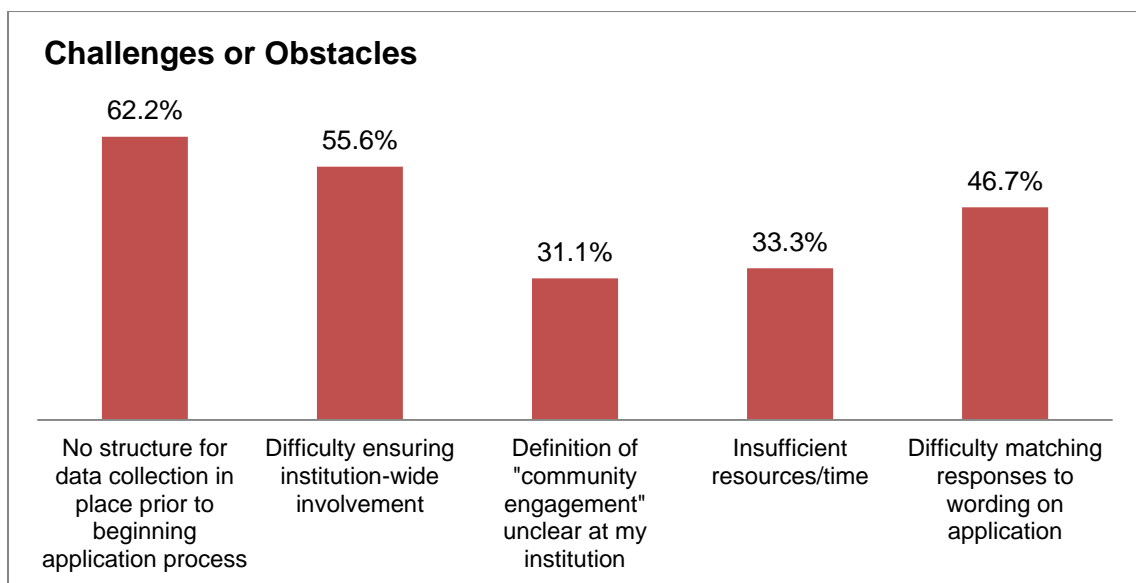| Category	Percentage
No structure for data collection in place prior to beginning application process	62.2%
Difficulty ensuring institution-wide involvement	55.6%
Definition of "community engagement" unclear at my institution	31.1%
Insufficient resources/time	33.3%
Difficulty matching responses to wording on application	46.7%

Figure 8. *Challenges or Obstacles*

Post-Classification, or Now What?

Changes in Institutional Culture as a Result of Applying for or Receiving the Classification

In the study survey, many applicants indicated progress on institutionalizing community engagement during the application process. This progress ranged from improved collaborations and greater involvement of on-campus groups, to improved data structures, to increased support for community engagement. Applicants also reported attempts to align community engagement with the mission of the university, and the converse, "trying to transform into the Engaged University." These findings are consistent with Sandmann, Thornton, and Jaeger (2009), who note that "The Carnegie community engagement process and its data can also serve as a vehicle for institutionalizing engagement" (p. 4). Importantly, some changes were noted as a result of applying for, as well as of receiving, the Classification.

Table 4. *Changes in Institutional Culture upon Receiving Classification*

Changes in Institutional Culture	% of Respondents
New, increased, or improved cross-campus collaborations	71%
Greater involvement by administration/faculty/staff/students/ community in institutionalizing community engagement	69%
Better alignment of institution's mission with goals of community engagement	48%
New or improved data reporting structures for community engagement	56%
New, increased, or improved partnership with community	52%
Structural changes in university to support community engagement (i.e. new positions or assignments of faculty/staff/administration in order to support campus-wide community engagement)	36%

Plan for Announcing the Classification

Forty-four percent of applicants indicated that they had prepared a plan for how to announce and celebrate the receipt of the Classification, describing their work in partnership with the marketing unit within their institution, such as communications, public relations, or marketing. A number of platforms were utilized for announcing receipt of the Classification.

- Announcements in local media
- Announcements to external colleagues and institutions ("We printed announcements and sent them out to colleagues, peer institutions, and sister institutions.")
- Announcements to various stakeholder groups
- Award-related events
- Banner on website
- Banners placed on campus and at campus entrances
- Campus celebration ("We held a reception in which community partners, faculty, students, and the college community was invited to celebrate with us. There was media attention as well.")

- Facebook
- Internal publications (e.g., university magazine, etc.)
- Mailers to *US News and World Report* ranking input providers
- Newspaper articles
- President's newsletter
- Press releases
- Web sites

Applicant Recommendations to Future Classification Applicants

Most interviewees offered three to five recommendations for future Community Engagement Classification applicants. These recommendations can be grouped into 12 categories, presented below in order of number of recommendations offered:

- Form a Team (25)
- Utilize or Develop a Data-Gathering Structure (12)
- Gain Administrator Involvement and/or Support (11)
- Institutionalize or Centralize Service-Learning, Community Engagement, or Research (9)
- Generate Awareness of the Classification (8)
- Use Multiple Sources of Data and Resources (8)
- Start Early (7)
- Adopt a Campus-wide Definition of Community Engagement and Service Learning (5)
- Identify a Single Lead Author (4)
- Tie Data Gathering Directly to Application (4)
- Use Previously Gathered Data or Tie to Other Initiatives (4)
- Attend Workshops or Work with Successfully Classified Institutions (3)
- Tie Mission to Service (3)

Conclusion and Recommended Future Research

Community engagement has become a valued practice in higher education, though it remains diffuse, with evidence of the practice and its impacts spread throughout an institution. The Carnegie Community Engagement Classification provides the opportunity for institutions to gather data and present evidence of their institutional commitment to community engagement. In this study of 52 U.S. institutions that successfully received the 2010 Classification, applicants held in common a number of key observations and strategies related to the application process:

1. Successful applicants utilized a team approach to gathering the data and completing the application.
2. Evidence of community engagement often already exists within an institution (62% of the Classification application utilized existing data), but some new data will likely need to be gathered (38% of data utilized was newly gathered).

3. There were several obstacles or challenges experienced by successful applicants related to data collection structures and resources, institution-wide understanding and involvement, and matching data to the application itself.
4. Institutional and cultural shifts were identified by over half of the applicants, not only upon receipt of the classification, but also simply by engaging in the application process. Cultural shifts included new or improved collaborations, greater institutionalization of community engagement, new or improved data reporting structures, and better alignment of the institution's mission with the goals of community engagement.

The Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, and community engagement in general, remains a fruitful field for study. Future research might include the following:

1. A longitudinal study of any long-lasting effects of applying for or receiving the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification.
2. A study of the quality of community engagement at Carnegie classified institutions, using such measurement tools as self-reports on scales or rubrics.
3. A comparison of successful and unsuccessful Classification applications, studied for the purpose of determining if there are any clear strategies that enable successful applications or notable gaps that frequently lead to an unsuccessful submission.

References

Boyer, E. L. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered*. Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Boyer, E. L. (1996). The scholarship of engagement. *Journal of Public Service and Outreach*, *1*(1), 9-20.

Burkardt, M. J., Holland, B., Percy, S. L., & Zimpher, N. (2004). *Calling the question: Is higher education ready to commit to community engagement? A Wingspread statement*. Milwaukee, WI: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Driscoll, A. (2009). Carnegie's new community engagement classification: Affirming higher education's role in community. *New Directions for Higher Education*, *147*, 5-12.

Furco, A., & Miller, W. (2009). Issues in benchmarking and assessing institutional engagement. *New Directions for Higher Education*, *147*, 47-54.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.

Holland, B. (1999). Factors and strategies that influence faculty involvement in public service. *Journal of Public Service and Outreach*, *4*(1), 37-44.

Kerr, C., & Munitz, B. (1998). Clark Kerr's perspective on leadership challenges. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, *30*(1), 10-11.

Noel, J., & Earwicker, D. P. (2013). *Documenting a high impact institutional practice: The case of community engagement at 52 U.S. institutions*. Paper presented at the 38th Annual Conference of the California Association for Institutional Research, Napa, CA.

Sandmann, L. R., & Plater, W. M. (2009). Leading the engaged institution. *New Directions for Higher Education*, *147*, 13-24.

Sandmann, L. R., Thornton, C. H., & Jaeger, A. J. (2009). Editors' Notes. *New Directions for Higher Education*, *147*, 1-4.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Thornton, C. H., & Zuiches, J. J. (2009). After the engagement classification: Using organizational theory to maximize institutional understandings. *New Directions for Higher Education*, *147*, 75-83.

Weerts, D. J., & Hudson, E. L. (2009, April 14). *Community engagement and higher education: Does one size fit all?* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego.