A Carnegie Classification New Initiative and Its Implications for Building WCU

Chun-Mei Zhao

Research Scholar

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, USA

WCU-1, Shanghai Jiao Tong University

Shanghai, China, June 16-18, 2005
Overview

• Carnegie Foundation

• Carnegie Classification
  – Origin and Purpose
  – Issues and Concerns
  – Unintended Impacts

• A New Initiative & Implications for WCU
A Brief Introduction of Carnegie Foundation

• Founded in 1905 by Andrew Carnegie
• An independent policy and research center
• "to do and perform all things necessary to encourage, uphold, and dignify the profession of the teacher and the cause of higher education."
• Programs
  – undergraduate education
  – professional and graduate education
  – K-12 and teacher education
  – knowledge sharing functions
Origin and Purpose of the Carnegie Classification

• Developed by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education in 1970 to inform its own research needs
• Published in 1973 for use by others “conducting research on higher education”
• Disentangle the complexity of the system by rendering it into more manageable groups
• Recognize the diversity of US higher education
Nature of the Carnegie Classification

• Not intended to represent the full identity or fundamental character of an institution
• Not intended to represent quality differences
• A snapshot
• Updated to reflect the changing contours of US higher education; the most recent version-2000
• Criteria—degree level, degree size, and undergraduate liberal arts focus (federal financial support was dropped since 2000)
Issues and Concerns

- Expansion of usage
- Confusion of classification with ranking
Unintended Impacts

- Homogenizing effect
- Mission creep
- Research at the expense of teaching
- Escalating administrative cost associated with expansive research activities
Rethinking the Classification

• The Classification’s single perspective on institutional similarity and difference masks a far more complex reality

• Different analytic purposes may call for different conceptions of similarity or difference

• A new initiative--several independent, free-standing classification schemes
Multiple Lenses

**Comprehensive (all-inclusive) schemes**
- Traditional, with changes
- Instructional Program (2)
- Student Profile (2)
- Size & Setting

**Elective (voluntary) schemes**
- Community Engagement
- Undergraduate Education Inquiry & Support
Comprehensive Schemes: Traditional, revised

- Multi-measure index of research activity
- Better distinctions among Master’s level institutions
- Unpack two-year colleges
Comprehensive Schemes: Instructional Program (2)

**Undergraduate program**
- Degree level
- Professional / Arts & Science emphasis
- Coexistence of graduate offerings

**Graduate program**
- Degree levels
- Comprehensiveness / Focus (fields of study)
- Professional schools
Comprehensive Schemes: Student Profile (2)

**Enrollment profile**
- Mix of undergraduate, graduate, professional, and non-degree

**Undergraduate profile**
- Proportion full time
- Achievement characteristics of first-year students
- First-year progression vs. in-transfer
Comprehensive Schemes: Size and Setting

- Total enrollment
- Residential nature
Elective (voluntary) Schemes

**Community engagement**
- Mix of service, outreach, and engagement activities
- Pilot project with 14 campuses

**Undergraduate education inquiry & support**
- Efforts to assess undergraduate education
- Support for assessing & improving teaching & learning
Implications for WCU

- Examine points of intersection of the multiple classification schemes
- Tailored peer institution identification
- Know thyself—institution self-study
- Know thy “buddies”—sensible comparison with “similar” institutions
- Contextual understanding, realistic positioning, & strategic planning
For More Information

www.carnegiefoundation.org/classification

Zhao@carnegiefoundation.org

Acknowledgement: Several slides of this talk were adapted from a previous presentation by Carnegie Foundation Senior Scholar Alex McCormick.