

The Carnegie Classification of U.S. Institutions of Higher Education

University Classification and Ranking Systems in the United States

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Plan for the Presentation

- Assumptions
- Definitions
- Carnegie Classification origin & evolution
- Unintended consequences
- Cautionary notes



Assumptions—Why Are We Here?

- Increasing mobility of students and staff in the European context
- With mobility come questions of comparison and comparability
- Examining such questions in the U.S. context may yield useful lessons



What is the Carnegie Foundation?

- An independent educational research and policy center established in 1905 “to encourage, uphold, and dignify the profession of the teacher and the cause of higher education.”
- An operating foundation (not a grant-making foundation)
- Created or helped create TIAA-CREF, the “Carnegie unit,” the Graduate Record Examination, the Educational Testing Service...



What is the Carnegie Classification?

- A taxonomy of U.S. institutions of higher education (colleges and universities)
- Differentiates institutions with respect to *function*
- Classification based on empirical data on *what institutions do*
- *NOT* a ranking system (!!!)



National Context

- No centralized national organization of higher education
- Highly diverse *non-system* of higher education
 - Approximately 4,000 institutions
 - Public & Private (with degrees of religious affiliation)
 - 2-year, 4-year undergraduate, 4-year + graduate/professional, graduate only
- Explicit quality assessment avoided & resisted



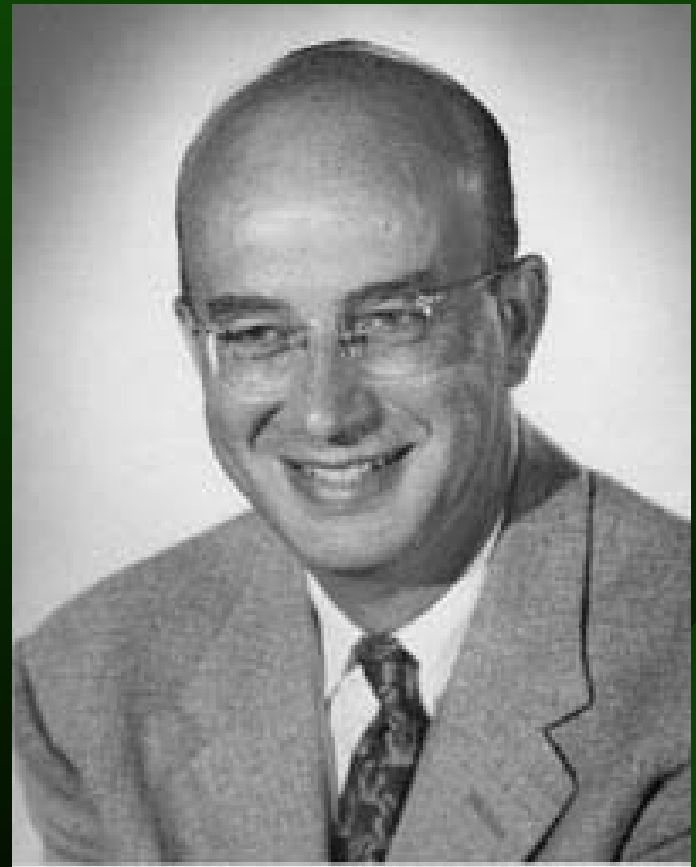
Historical Context

- 1960 California Master Plan for Higher Education
 - Mission differentiation within California public higher education
- 1967 Carnegie Commission on Higher Education
 - Analysing issues that U.S. higher education faced approaching the 21st century



Historical Context

- 1960 California Master Plan for Higher Education
- 1967 Carnegie Commission on Higher Education



Clark Kerr



Origin of the Carnegie Classification

Carnegie Commission on Higher Education (1967)

- Analyse issues that U.S. higher education faced approaching the 21st century
- 1970: classification created to simplify the complexity of U.S. higher education *for research purposes*
 - Used for survey sampling and policy analysis
 - Differentiation by...
 - Functions of the institution
 - Characteristics of students and faculty
- 1973: disseminated for use by other researchers (institutions listed by category)



Carnegie Classification Criteria, 1971

- Degree production
 - Level (Ph.D., Master's, Bachelor's)
 - Volume
 - Field coverage
- Additional criteria
 - Research funding
 - Undergraduate selectivity
 - Undergraduate origins of Ph.D. recipients
 - Specialization
- Based on secondary analysis of existing data



First Published Use of the Classification

New Students and New Places (1971)

Recommendations included:

- “preserving and even increasing the diversity of institutions of higher education by type and by program; resisting homogenization”
- “We find no need whatsoever in the foreseeable future for any more research-type universities granting the Ph.D.”



Carnegie Classification, 1973

1. Doctoral-Granting Institutions
 - 1.1 Research Universities I
 - 1.2 Research Universities II
 - 1.3 Doctoral-Granting Universities I
 - 1.4 Doctoral-Granting Universities II
2. Comprehensive Universities and Colleges
 - 2.1 Comprehensive Universities and Colleges I
 - 2.2 Comprehensive Universities and Colleges II
3. Liberal Arts Colleges
 - 3.1 Liberal Arts Colleges I
 - 3.2 Liberal Arts Colleges II
4. Two-Year Colleges and Institutes
- 5.1–9 Professional Schools and Other Specialized Institutions



The Carnegie Classification Over Time

Rapidly adopted by researchers and others

- Independent, respected source
- Face validity: the groupings made sense
- Appeal of common language
- Because it's there



The Carnegie Classification Over Time

Periodically updated by the Foundation

- Changes in the population of institutions
- Changes within institutions
- Same structure, with changes to criteria & labels
- Secondary analysis of existing data



The Carnegie Classification Over Time

- Adopted for a variety of unintended uses
 - Membership & dues
 - Grant eligibility
 - Informal “quality” indicator
 - Comparison groups in *U.S. News* rankings
- Result: classification can have significant consequences for an institution



Evolution of the Carnegie Classification's Meaning & Impact

- As used by the Carnegie Commission, the unit of analysis was the institutional class
- In wider use, classification was more commonly considered at the institutional level
 - An institution's classification came to be interpreted as reflecting its fundamental nature or identity
 - Shift in assumptions about precision



Evolution of the Carnegie Classification's Meaning & Impact

Conflation of classification & ranking

- Halo effect: Highest-status institutions clustered in two categories
 - Research Universities I
 - Liberal Arts Colleges I
- Updates induced ambitions to “move up” the classification



Strategic Responses

- “The university will meet the criteria for Carnegie Research I status.” *University Priorities and Goals*
- “We have adopted attaining the classification of Research II as an institutional goal.” *Provost’s report to Faculty Senate*
- “[University] will enhance its regional, national, and international reputation by achieving Carnegie Research II classification before 2006” *University Vision Statement*
- “[I]n 1991, [University] reached another milestone by capturing the Doctoral II status, ranking it in solitary second among the state’s universities and colleges and recognizing its national competitiveness” *University website*



Liabilities of Success

- Dominance
- Convenience
- Assumed authority
- Assumed precision
- Separation from analytic purpose



Rethinking Classification

- Highly institutionalized, many uses
- Often confused with identity & ranking
- A single perspective on similarity and difference masks a more complex reality
- Different purposes may call for different approaches



A New Approach

- Multiple independent, parallel classification schemes
- Different lenses through which to view higher education
- More nuanced and flexible
- New responsibility for users of classification: from *reflexive* use to *reflective* use



Multiple Lenses

Comprehensive (all-inclusive) schemes

- Traditional, with changes
- Instructional Program (2)
- Student Profile (2)
- Size & Setting

Elective (voluntary) schemes

- Undergraduate Education Inquiry & Support
- Service & Community Engagement



Comprehensive Schemes: Traditional, revised

- Research activity: *multiple measures*
- Master's level institutions: *differentiate*
- Undergraduate colleges: *better language*
- Two-year colleges: *unpack*
- Specialized institutions: *identification*



Comprehensive Schemes: Instructional Program (2)

Undergraduate program

- Degree level
- Mix of baccalaureate major fields
- Coexistence of graduate programs

Graduate program

- Degree types
- Professional programs
- Mix of fields



Comprehensive Schemes: Student Profile (2)

Enrollment profile

- Undergraduate
- Graduate
- Professional
- Nondegree

Undergraduate profile

- Proportion full time
- Test scores of entering first-year students
- First-year progression vs. high in-transfer



Comprehensive Schemes: Size and Setting

- Total enrollment
- Commuter/Residential nature



Elective (voluntary) Schemes

Undergraduate education inquiry & support

- Efforts to assess undergraduate education
- Support for assessing & improving teaching & learning

Service & community engagement

- Mix of service, outreach, and engagement activities



Combining the Schemes

- Examining the intersections
 - Web-based tool
 - Institution focus
 - Categories focus
- Flexibility & adaptability



What Lessons to Draw from All This?

- Inherent challenges in classification:
 - Whose job is it?
 - Who benefits?
 - Technical challenges
 - Simplicity vs. precision
 - Validation
 - Anticipating the consequences of naming and labeling
 - Meaning and use
 - Rankings inferences
 - Strategic responses by institutions
- How applicable is it?

