



The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education™

About The Carnegie Classifications

In 1970, the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education developed a classification of colleges and universities to support its program of research and policy analysis. Derived from empirical data on colleges and universities, the Carnegie Classification was published for use by other researchers in 1973, and subsequently updated in 1976, 1987, 1994, 2000, and 2005. For over three decades, the Carnegie Classification has been the leading framework for describing institutional diversity in U.S. higher education. It has been widely used in the study of higher education, both as a way to represent and control for institutional differences, and also in the design of research studies to ensure adequate representation of sampled institutions, students, or faculty.

With the 2005 revision, the single classification system was replaced by a set of multiple, parallel classifications. The new classifications provide different lenses through which to view U.S. colleges and universities, offering researchers greater flexibility in meeting their analytic needs. They are organized around three fundamental questions: what is taught (Undergraduate and Graduate Instructional Program classifications), who are the students (Enrollment Profile and Undergraduate Profile), and what is the setting (Size & Setting). The original Carnegie Classification framework—now called the Basic classification—has also been substantially revised.

Another change is the introduction of “elective” classification. Unlike classifications based on secondary analysis of existing national data, elective classifications rely on voluntary participation by institutions, permitting analysis of attributes that are not available in the national data. The first elective classification, released in December 2006, focuses on community engagement.

Related Articles

"Hidden In Plain View," *Inside Higher Ed*, May 10, 2007
(subject: comparison groups in U.S. News college rankings).
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"Rethinking and Reframing the Carnegie Classification," *Change*, September-October 2005