

**Saltmarsh, J., & Johnson, M. B. (Eds.). (2018). *The Elective Carnegie Community Engagement Classification: Constructing a successful application for first-time and re-classification applicants*. Campus Compact. 154 pp.**

Review by Birgit L. Green



**W**hen my university was among the first group of U.S. institutions that received the Carnegie Foundation's newly created Elective Classification for Community Engagement in 2006, my colleague Valerie Paton and I were thrilled. It had taken many phone calls, numerous meetings with different individuals, and extensive searching for data to document the Foundational Indicators, Curricular Engagement, and Outreach and Partnerships that would demonstrate our institutional commitment to community engagement and earn this recognition. I was equally excited when I led our re-classification process in 2015, and we were able to demonstrate that Texas Tech University had made progress in institutionalizing community engagement across campus. Both times, the value of our work lay in the process, as it gave us the opportunity to closely examine our strengths related to community engagement as well as areas where improvements were needed. This process has laid the groundwork for the development of institutional goals and strategies that will continue to advance and strengthen Texas Tech's engagement with external communities.

*The Elective Carnegie Community Engagement Classification*, edited by John Saltmarsh and Mathew B. Johnson, features a series of case studies from professionals in higher education who, in experiences paralleling my own, led their institutions through the application process for the first-time Carnegie Community Engagement Classification and/or the re-classification. Throughout the book, these higher education professionals openly reflect on the process, sharing their challenges as well as the opportunities that they seized upon to navigate their institutional environments and garner the needed academic and administrative support. What will stand out to the reader are the signifi-

cant impacts of both the application process and the actual classification or re-classification on the authors' institutions in terms of creating structural, operational, and policy changes that foster the institutionalization of community engagement across academic and administrative units. In fact, in their introductory comments, Saltmarsh and Johnson compare it to organizational change processes that are transformational in nature, leading to shifts in institutional culture (Kezar, 2013; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Tierney, 1991). They note, "For many, if not all campuses, committing to community engagement means undertaking a new set of practices, creating new structures, and revising policies—it is coincident with organizational change" (pp. 8–9).

The book includes a foreword by Andrew J. Seligsohn, a recent president of Campus Compact (2014–2021), who reflects on his own experience with the Carnegie Classification and its outcomes for Rutgers University–Camden, where he led the process in 2010. He notes that the process itself provided him and his institutional team with a clear sense of "what we needed to do to deepen our impact for students and communities and to make the university's public mission an integral part of its practice" (p. x). Seligsohn notes that the designation allows universities to challenge themselves "to do better and achieve more" (p. x). He highlights that on his campus, the classification led to the creation of a Faculty Fellows program, an Engaged Civic Learning Course, and a student leadership program, as well as the development of a comprehensive assessment strategy, among other outcomes. Throughout the book, other authors confirm equally impressive outcomes, clearly indicating that the classification process enabled them and their institutions to achieve a higher level of engagement.

Beyond learning about the value of the clas-

sification, readers will find that the volume serves as an extremely valuable guidebook for those seeking the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, as well as those who are seeking the re-classification, no matter the institutional setting in which they may find themselves, as chapters share the insights and experiences of practitioners from a vast array of institutions (public, private, religious, land-grant, small to large). Once finished reading the book, they will find that they have obtained a comprehensive road map for planning, developing, and submitting a successful application, having gained valuable lessons from those who have been there.

In the book's introductory chapter, Saltmarsh and Johnson briefly provide the background and the purpose of the elective Carnegie Community Engagement Classification. They focus next on its benefits, reiterating that the classification process can serve as a catalyst for change, fostering, for instance, institutional alignment for community-based teaching, learning, and scholarship. The authors note, "The application process is a way to bring the disparate parts of the campus together to advance a unified agenda" (p. 8). They liken the process to creating an institutional culture of community engagement. The authors then provide a detailed discussion of the common challenges to institutionalizing community engagement, based on the feedback that classification reviewers have provided to first-time applicants, which includes assessment, reciprocal partnerships, faculty rewards, integration, and alignment with other institutional initiatives. These elements become reoccurring themes throughout the book as authors lay out strategies to effectively address them and, ultimately, succeed in their classification or re-classification efforts. Several authors, for instance, reference their intentional efforts to align the classification process to other institutional endeavors such as regional accrediting bodies' mandates for public service/civic engagement, strategic plans that consider outreach and engagement an institutional priority, and institutional histories and missions that were built upon public service. Repeatedly, authors emphasize how institutional alignment has helped them create campuswide buy-in and support, making it evident to the reader that neither the first-time classification nor the re-classification process can be successful if conducted in isolation.

The biggest takeaway for the reader will be that the most valuable part of obtaining the classification lies in the process itself because it provides an opportunity for institutional self-study. Additionally, according to Saltmarsh and Johnson, institutions can use the documentation framework "as a blueprint for constructing an institutional architecture of engagement" on their campuses (p. 14). These outcomes are echoed throughout the book's chapters by those who led the application process at their institutions.

The book is divided into three parts. Part 1 shares the insights from institutional leaders of first-time Carnegie Community Engagement Classifications, Part 2 focuses on the perspectives and experiences of those who led re-classification processes, and Part 3 concludes with recommendations for gathering and using evidence. Each of these segments concludes with a valuable "Review of Key Lessons and Guiding Questions" by Georgina Manok, from Brown University's Swearer Center, which managed the Elective Classification for the Carnegie Foundation from 2017 through 2020. Throughout the book, authors provide their reflections on the process, its challenges, and its rewards. What emerges from these firsthand accounts is a valuable road map to success for higher education practitioners who are charged with leading the classification process at their institutions.

Chapters 2 to 5 in Part 1 focus on the experiences of practitioners from five diverse public and private institutions who underwent the first-time Carnegie Classification process. In Chapter 2, "Foundational Indicators," Lina D. Dostilio from Duquesne, a Spiritan Catholic institution, confirms that "it was perhaps the single most significant step Duquesne had taken in broadly institutionalizing community engagement" (p. 19). The author highlights that the classification provided a tool to educate the university and facilitate reflection on the importance of community-engaged scholarship. The chapter provides a model for campuses that are highly decentralized as the author recounts the ripple effects that the process created in terms of administrative recognition and support for a more comprehensive set of community-engaged activities.

In Chapter 3, "Curricular Engagement," John Reiff from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst describes how the process taught him to see the classification

as not a recognition of accomplishments, but a recognition of process. Noteworthy is his observation that “the process of applying for that classification is not really requesting a stamp of approval; it’s a tool for doing some of that significant work and moving the institution closer to that ideal” (p. 38). Reiff discusses obstacles that he encountered along the way with which many readers may empathize, such as changes in administration and priorities, and gaps in information. He generously shares the lessons he learned encountering these issues.

In Chapter 4, “Outreach and Partnerships,” Richard Kiely, Amanda Kittelberger, and Amanda Wittman from Cornell University outline the steps they took to gain institutional support for earning the classification—such as forming not one but two institutional teams to be involved in the application process, engaging informal information channels for data gathering, ensuring broad representation, and using a central data management system. In addition, the reader learns about the positive outcomes from the process, including the development of a consistent and systematic approach to monitoring, assessing, and evaluating the quality of community-engaged curricula, research, and partnerships, as well as the creation of a comprehensive public engagement structure. The process also prompted the institution “to take a more proactive, aligned, strategic and systematic approach to better monitor, understand, and improve community-engaged teaching, learning, and research” (p. 44). An important takeaway from this chapter is that, for the authors, the process also reaffirmed a core belief of Cornell’s leaders that any kind of program planning process should be relational, “be driven by values of inclusion and collaboration, informed by actively reaching out to, engaging with, and listening to a broad and diverse range of stakeholders” (p. 44).

In her Chapter 5 summary of “Key Lessons and Guiding Questions” for institutions seeking the first-time Carnegie Classification, Manok reiterates the strategic importance of mapping campus stakeholders and their powers and interests because awareness of the relationships, power structures, interests, and resources involved will help organizers navigate and communicate the Carnegie Classification process as well as ensure stakeholder buy-in. She also reminds the reader to ensure

that community partners are included in the mapping. Second, Manok stresses the need for a deliberate and careful approach to the framing and positing of the classification at one’s institution: whether to consider it a self-study, accreditation, or award will be important in how others in the institution perceive and engage with the application process. Third, the author highlights how important it is to collect community engagement definitions on one’s respective campus. Such efforts bring departments, colleges, offices, and research centers that may have different definitions into the process and create an opportunity to work toward a collective understanding and mutually shared goals. Lastly, the reader learns about the importance of forming and training a strong core group that is well versed in community engagement and has a long-term vision that will exist after the classification process is completed.

Part 2 of the book (Chapters 6–9) provides valuable advice to those who received the first-time Carnegie Community Engagement Classification and want to position their institutions for a successful re-classification. Authors share strategies for capitalizing on the initial classification to promote further institutionalization of community engagement. In Chapter 6, “Foundational Indicators,” Melissa Quan from Fairfield University, a small Jesuit Institution, discusses her experience as a leader of both the original Carnegie Classification and the re-classification process. The reader learns about her use of reviewers’ recommendations from the original classification as a tool for developing strategies for advancing community engagement at her institution. The reader will also appreciate Quan’s account of using several “facilitating factors” to her advantage to achieve institutional change. She organized a series of workshops and events focused on community engagement as scholarship that helped spark campuswide conversations on the topic. This process ultimately led to Fairfield’s Academic Council passing a motion to revise the Guidelines and Timetable for Applications for Tenure and Promotion to include explicit language about community engagement. Additionally, a 5th Year Interim Report for Institutional Accreditation served to create a university-wide assessment committee as two key issues highlighted in the report overlapped with areas of weakness identified in the 2008 Carnegie Classification Report. Like

many of the other authors in the book, Quan sought to gain large campus representation in the process, in her case asking the vice president for academic affairs to appoint cochairs for the re-classification as well as officially “launch” the committee. The intentionally large size of the committee served to raise awareness regarding the institution’s commitment to community engagement and enlist involvement of new people.

Like the other authors, Quan confirms that “the reward is in the process” (p. 62), as it raised awareness about community engagement across campus, drew more people into the work, and established community engagement as an important element of the institution’s strategic plan. The author also shares her regrets, such as not having involved community partners in the process and not having a “more robust celebration” once the institution received the re-classification.

Marshall Welch from Saint Mary’s College in California describes the re-classification process in Chapter 7, “Curricular Engagement,” as a “perfect storm” (p. 64). He recounts that the process was undertaken in the eye of a whirlwind of activity, in which his institution flourished as four factors converged. The Catholic liberal arts college had a mission of social justice, and the author was charged with integrating social justice into the undergraduate experience through service-learning. This mandate helped advance community engagement as it became “a vehicle for promoting social justice” (p. 65). At the same time, an external accreditation review, which found weaknesses in the college’s disjointed social justice efforts, resulted in a formal recommendation to establish a centralized coordinating committee or body for monitoring these types of cocurricular and curricular activities.

In Chapter 8, “Outreach and Partnerships,” Emily M. Janke from the University of North Carolina, Greensboro highlights the strategic importance of the re-classification process related to promoting wider understanding of community engagement, buy-in, and connections across campus. Her chapter highlights how equally important is the public recognition that an institution gains from the Community Engagement Classification, which, in the University of North Carolina’s case, also served as evidence of institutional effectiveness around

community/public service for regional accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

Manok’s “Key Lessons and Guiding Questions” in Chapter 9 point to the need for long-term planning for the 10-year re-classification. She recommends that organizers “start early, revise and evaluate your first-time classification process, collect lessons learned, and strategize what the next steps ought to be” (p. 83). Other key lessons include expanding the membership of the core group from the original classification to include other key players on campus that may have emerged and contributed to the original application process as well as community members. In fact, she advises institutions to maintain this group as a regular standing committee and to keep expanding its capacities and training around community engagement. Ongoing relationship management becomes an integral part of preparing for the re-classification. Manok concludes that it will further be important to reevaluate the campus, including the institution’s community engagement definition, as it may have evolved over time.

Part 3 of the book (chapters 10–14) contains authors’ reflections on the long-term value that the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification process holds for universities as well as their communities. The gaining of buy-in from others across campus also continues to be a theme. Authors chronicle how they capitalized on the classification process by engaging key stakeholders inside and outside their institutions. Authors discuss how, in order to create lasting change at their institutions related to community engagement, they made sure that they involved administrators, faculty, and staff at all levels who could contribute information. In Chapter 10, Julie Hatcher and Stephen Hundley from Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) describe how the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification provided an external lever that helped align a range of institutional activities, including reaccreditation, strategic planning, and assessment. They note: “For it is only when alignment occurs across all aspects of institutional work that community engagement leads to transformational change” (p. 88). They add that lasting change “is built upon gathering data, inspiring others to envision new ideas, and leveraging information to support institutional change” (p. 90). They compare the approach that they took in their work to



jazz, noting that like jazz it was planned, yet also highly improvisational.

In Chapter 11, “Putting Together a Team,” Marisol Morales from the University of La Verne also reiterates how her approach of forming “a strong team of people from across campus who could pull together the story of engagement” at her institution (p. 97) resulted in long-term benefits to the university, such as structural changes, as well as the integration of community engagement into the institution’s new strategic plan. She chronicles how community engagement became “an investment in the future” (p. 102) as individuals worked toward common goals. She notes: “It was an ‘us’ task from the beginning” (p. 103).

In Chapter 12, “A Never-Ending Journey,” Brenda Marsteller Kowalewski of Weber State University picks up on the theme of aligning the Carnegie Classification with other institutional activities. She highlights that the classification process facilitated what Sandmann and Plater (2009) have called the “alignment of commitment, mission, public declaration, resources, policies and procedures, planning, measurable goals, and accountability” (p. 108). The reader will come to understand that none of the authors considered the classification as an end goal; rather, they viewed it as a stepping stone to instigate gradual change processes and, ultimately, institutional transformations. For Kowalewski, the documentation framework became a road map. “You’ll earn the opportunity to engage in an ongoing improvement process that will help you build the community-engaged institution you so desire” (p. 115).

Chapter 13 presents the only case in the book where an institution had failed to receive the classification despite significant efforts. Nevertheless, it highlights the positive impacts that the failed application has had on the institution. Monica Kowal, who led the process at the University of New Mexico, notes that even though it was disappointing not to receive the classification, the

application process allowed the institution and campus stakeholders to deepen their commitment to the institution’s engagement work through policies and practices. It also afforded the opportunity to identify gaps in their institutional identity and prepare themselves for the next opportunity to apply.

Key lessons highlighted by Manok in the final chapter impress upon the reader the importance of robust data collection and selection systems, the upgrading of assessment tools, and synergies with other institutional self-studies, urging the reader to “avoid treating the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification as a stand-alone project” (p. 132).

## Conclusion

As many scholars and practitioners have observed, change is not easy at higher education institutions due to their decentralized nature, deeply embedded cultural beliefs, and often competing stakeholder interests (Bergquist, 1992; Birnbaum, 1988; Tierney, 1991). Consequently, it is quite impressive to see that the leaders of the Carnegie Community Engagement Classifications and re-classifications featured in Saltmarsh and Johnson’s book were able to use the classification process in such powerful ways as a vehicle for institutional change and, in many cases, cultural transformation.

For institutions that are unsure about whether to apply for the classification or seek re-classification, Saltmarsh and Johnson’s book clearly helps to answer the question “Why?” as well as “How?” Through the accounts of over a dozen higher education leaders, the book demonstrates the significant value of the Elective Carnegie Community Engagement Classification. In addition, the book provides a compass to leaders of the classification process for navigating their complex institutional environments. Those committed to community engagement should follow in their paths!



## About the Reviewer

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