

On April 1, 2019, Western Michigan University took steps toward maintaining its reputation as a community-engaged school of choice by submitting its application for “Community Engagement” re-designation with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

### Classification Context

Western Michigan University is currently one of 361 campuses across the nation that possesses the elective “Community Engagement” classification from the Carnegie Foundation.

**Community engagement** is defined by the Carnegie Foundation as “collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.”

Western Michigan University received this classification in 2010 in recognition of the University’s commitment to mutually beneficial, active and robust engagement with the communities it serves. This first application process provided the University with the opportunity to gather, aggregate and reflect upon the breadth, depth and quality of our engagement.

Since the “Community Engagement” designation expires after 10 years, Western Michigan University has just completed a second application for re-designation in 2020. This application process allowed the University to reflect upon the change in the University’s community engaged work over the past decade.

President Montgomery fully embraces the University’s community engagement status, beginning with his inaugural address in fall 2017, in which he noted that being a good partner is central to the University’s efforts to positively impact the world around us.

### Community Engagement Indicators

To demonstrate how Western Michigan University’s culture of community engagement is deepening and becoming more pervasive, the University’s 95-page 2020 application puts forth evidence across areas of context, culture, leadership, funding, infrastructure, assessment, and professional development. The application requested data about Western Michigan University’s curricular community engagement, co-curricular community-engagement, and partnerships, as well as the impact of community engagement upon students, faculty, staff, and community partners. The application documents that:

The University prioritizes community engagement through statements from its leadership, as well as in its mission, vision, and strategic plans (*The Gold Standard 2020, Invest in Gold, Shared Gold*). This priority is further evident across initiatives connected to diversity and inclusion, student retention, research, voting and voter registration, democratic deliberation, and social entrepreneurship.

The number of offices that Western Michigan University uses to coordinate community engagement has increased over the past decade from seven to no fewer than 11. The Shared Gold Implementation Team has begun work to institute a more collaborative approach to coordination.

Allocations—internal, external, fundraising, and community investments—connected to University public service projects have increased by more than 65% since the 2010 application (from \$8.2 million to \$13.6 million).

Western Michigan University students, faculty, and staff invested 1,341,947 hours in community engagement initiatives during the 2017-18 fiscal year. Using the volunteer equivalency rate for the state of Michigan this investment in the community increases WMU's economic impact by \$32 million, with \$22 million coming from 926,856 hours of curricular community engagement.

A total of 2,848 community engagement initiatives were undertaken at Western Michigan University in the 2017-18 fiscal year. Across the state, WMU undertook community engagement activities in 258 of Michigan's 1169 zip codes—that is, 22% of Michigan's zip codes.

WMU maintains centers and clinics—Unified Clinics, Centers for Counseling and Psychological Services, Center for Disability Services, McGinnis Reading Center and Clinic, Music Therapy Clinic, and the Kalamazoo Autism Center—that provide extraordinary services to community members.

Service-learning and community-based projects are reported by undergraduate students to be the hallmark high-impact practice at Western Michigan University, as 6 of 10 students in their first year and in their senior year indicated on the 2017 National Survey of Student Engagement that they completed a community-based service-learning project. These responses are significantly higher than the responses provided by students at other doctoral granting, high research institutions.

Western Michigan University offers community engagement opportunities across 27 of the Carnegie Foundation's 28 indicators—providing 14 of 14 types of curricular community engagement opportunities and 13 of 14 co-curricular types of community engagement opportunities.

The percentage of departmental units offering a community-engaged course increased by 33% since the 2010 application, bringing the total percentage of departmental units that offer at least one community-engaged course to 75% (N=44). Additionally, some 60% (N=32) of departmental units recognize community engagement in their policy statements.

A total of 10% of faculty (N=147) offered a community-engaged course in fiscal year 2017-18. The largest group of individuals teaching community-engaged courses was tenured or tenure-track faculty (N=100), while the second largest group was fulltime, non-tenure track faculty (N=29).

Community engagement yields scholarship and recognition for faculty, staff, students, and community partners in ways that are synergistic and meaningful. The University can increase this recognition by expanding the range of its professional development offerings.

### **Conclusion**

Western Michigan University's community engagement is far-reaching, and the evolution of its community engagement efforts since 2010 has been overwhelmingly positive. The University's application to the Carnegie Foundation for re-designation is, in other words, strong. The Carnegie Foundation will announce designation decisions in December 2019.