

What does it mean for Slippery Rock University to receive the Carnegie Foundation's 2026 Elective Community Engagement Classification?



I. Definition and Purpose of Community Engagement

- Definition: The Carnegie Foundation defines community engagement as the “collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial creation and exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity” (Carnegie Foundation, 2026).
- Purpose: “Community engagement is the partnership of college and university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good” (Carnegie Foundation, 2026).

II. General Information about the Community Engagement Classification:

- The Community Engagement Classification is a self-initiated distinction requiring extensive effort on the part of institutions to achieve. Applications are accepted once every six-year period.
- Classification is akin to a Michelin Star. Applicants provide evidence-based documentation of institutional practice and outcomes that seek to convince reviewers of the breadth and depth of high-quality community engagement, as well as a commitment to continuous improvement.
- Carnegie's extensive selection criteria ensure each classified school has “institutionalized” community engagement university wide.
 - Classified schools demonstrate commitment in their institutional mission, overall identity, teaching, service, scholarly growth, rewards/incentives, commitments, assessment, and other practices.
- Once “classified,” an institution holds the designation for 6 years. Just as restaurants lose Michelin Stars, Universities lose Classification.
- Slippery Rock must reapply for classification in 2032, during which SRU must demonstrate how community engagement has grown deeper and more pervasive at the institution.
- Currently, only 277 institutions hold the classification nationwide. Of the institutions recognized in 2026, 48 are receiving the classification for the first time, while 189 have previously held it. The 2026 cohort includes a diverse range of institutions, with 157 public institutions, eighty private colleges and universities, and 81 Minority Serving Institutions represented among the recipients.
- Only 20 Pennsylvania institutions currently hold the classification, including Slippery Rock University and West Chester University in representation of PASSSE.

2026 Pennsylvania Classified Institutions for Community Engagement	
<i>*PASSHE Institutions identified with an asterisk</i>	
Alvernia College	Muhlenberg College
Bucknell University	Saint Joseph's University
Community College of Philadelphia	*Slippery Rock University of
Drexel University	Swarthmore College
Duquesne University	The Pennsylvania State University
Elizabethtown College	The University of Scranton
Gettysburg College	University of Pennsylvania
Juniata College	University of Pittsburgh
La Salle University	*West Chester University of PA
Mercyhurst University	Widener University

For more information, click [HERE](#)

III. What factors helped SRU earn re-classification?

- SRU demonstrated community engagement increasingly lay at the heart of the university.
- SRU showed strong and improving alignment and integration of community engagement with our institutional mission, identity, culture, commitments, resources, and practice.
- SRU demonstrated that we possess excellence and expertise in community engaged teaching, scholarship, and service, as well as community outreach and partnerships.

IV. What kinds of specific actions helped us earn reclassification? (not a full list)

- SRU established an institutional strategic plan with Pillar 3: Commitment to Community Impact & Collaboration that explicitly emphasizes reciprocal and long-term partnerships that are mutually- beneficial with communities.
- SRU created the Center for Community Engagement as a campus resource in 2025 as a result of an institutional restructure for community engagement.
- We achieved a 271% increase in student participation in academic HIP designated service-learning courses between 2020-2024.
- In 2025, we developed and implemented the Academic Community Engagement (ACE) framework that clearly outlined rigorous course attributes and standards of high-quality practice that contribute to meaningful community outcomes and enhanced student learning.
- We advanced institutional recognition of excellence for engaged faculty through the establishment of a new President's Award for Community Engaged Teaching & Learning for spring 2026.
- We created and established the Civic Action Scorecard as an online civic empowerment tool to promote civic learning and engagement among diverse SRU students.
- We developed a glossary to support learning and familiarization with meanings and terms associated with community engagement at SRU.
- We bolstered opportunities for civic innovation and leadership through the support of the Haverlack Good Citizen Scholarship and Civic Scholars program for students with financial need.
- SRU established a campus working group dedicated to advancing Pillar 3: Commitment to Community Impact and Collaboration of the institutional strategic plan.
- We developed and implemented assessment mechanisms that are systematic to assess the effects of community engagement more accurately on students, faculty/staff, community partners, and the institution.
- **Note: In 2032, Carnegie will judge us on our ability to deliver on our promises/initiatives in these areas.**

