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ISU Special Announcement

Wednesday, January 7, 2015

Carnegie Foundation again recognizes Indiana State for community engagement

The prestigious Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has reaffirmed Indiana State University's status as a national leader in service learning. The foundation included Indiana State among a select group of colleges and universities to once again receive its community engagement classification for 2015.

Announcement of the designation, which is valid for 10 years, caps a year-long process in which faculty and staff prepared an extensive application documenting the university's progress in strengthening and expanding its commitment to incorporating community collaboration, outreach and partnerships in academic programs since first being awarded the classification nearly a decade ago.

Indiana State demonstrates "excellent alignment among campus mission, culture, leadership, resources and practices that support dynamic and noteworthy community engagement," Carnegie Foundation President Anthony Bryk said in a letter to university officials! .

Only 62 institutions received the designation when it was created in 2006. Following today's release of the 2015 classifications, more than 360 colleges and universities are included in the community engagement category.

"It is heartening to see this level of commitment and activity," Bryk said. "Clearly, higher education is making significant strides in finding ways to engage with and contribute to important community agendas."

Unlike the foundation's regular classifications, which rely on national data, the community engagement category is elective, meaning colleges and universities chose to put themselves under added scrutiny.

Indiana State has strengthened its commitment to community engagement in a variety of ways since the original classification, university President Dan Bradley noted. In 2008, the board of trustees approved a new mission statement that incorporated public service, and the university's strategic plan adopted in 2009 and revised in 2013 includes explicit commitments to experiential learning and enhanced community engagement.

Experiential learning is now a core component in all academic programs and merit scholarships are more strongly linked to community engagement. The university has also brought community and business engagement, the Career Center, extended learning, conference and event services and Hulman Center under a community engagement and experiential learning unit launched in 2009. In 2011, eight inter-disciplinary centers and institutes were selected for inclusion in an Unbounded Possibilities initiative designed to strengthen areas where the university is especially well-suited to have a positive impact on the community.

"Indiana State has been involved in community engagement since the university was created 150 years ago," Bradley said. "These actions and others, along with the hard work of dedicated faculty, staff and students who share the university's commitment, have been recognized in many ways, including Washington Monthly magazine's No. 1 ranking for student community service each of the past two years and the 2013 designation by The Nonprofit Leadership Alliance as the Sprint Campus of the Year."

The university's application to the Carnegie Foundation was focused on assessing how the campus had grown and enriched community engagement efforts since its initial application, said Cat Paterson, faculty fellow with the Center for Community Engagement.

"Indiana State University purposed to embrace partnerships and collaborate with the community," Paterson said. "A plethora of evidence exists from across campus that we have made great strides in accomplishing this purpose. Examples mentioned in the application include the strategic plan, curricula of every college and program of study, faculty tenure and promotion policies, grant procurement, the Community Service Leave policy, the Ryves Neighborhood Partnership, various campus organizations and the dedicated work of students, faculty and staff. When writing our application and assembling the documentation, I never struggled to find examples of how the university is engaging the community."

During the 2012-13 academic year, the period used for the application, more than 7,000 Indiana State students participated in 1,245 service learning courses taught by 279 faculty members from 28 academic departments. The university has also significantly increased its commitment to community service in its federal work study program. During 2012-13, nearly 33 percent of work study wages were spent on student jobs with community service components, compared with just 12.6 percent in 2008-09.

Faculty and staff are already working to further strengthen Indiana State's community service commitment in anticipation of the next Carnegie classifications in 2025, Bradley said.

"We have accomplished so many strategic plan objectives in the areas of community engagement and experiential learning that we are adding new objectives," he said. "We are developing students with an eye toward the community and a passion for service. We are fostering a culture that helps to develop and enrich our communities."

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