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Finlandia Receives Carnegie Foundation Community Engagement Classification

HANCOCK – Finlandia University President Philip Johnson is pleased to announce that the university has been awarded a Community Engagement Classification from The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

The university's dual Community Engagement Classification is "Curricular Engagement and Outreach & Partnerships."

"Finlandia's overall institutional commitment to service to the community is a longstanding source of pride for us," says President Johnson. "It goes all the way back to our Finnish Lutheran founders who envisioned an institution that would improve both individual immigrant lives and the life of the growing western Upper Peninsula region."

"Finlandia's wish to engage and improve our local community is stated very clearly in our mission statement, 'a learning community dedicated to academic excellence, spiritual growth, and service.'" Johnson continues. "This additional Carnegie Foundation classification confirms that our actions are well-aligned with our guiding documents."

"What is most gratifying for me and the university is that Finlandia has been recognized in a well-respected, national database as inherently involved within its community," Johnson adds. "Finlandia strives to be a meaningful part of the local and regional U.P. community. We share our resources; we listen to our community and constituents; we are actively engaged in our community."

A letter from the Carnegie Foundation notifying Finlandia of its Community Engagement Classification notes that Finlandia's application documented excellent alignment among mission, culture, leadership, resources, and practices that support dynamic and noteworthy community engagement.

Kori Tossava, Finlandia director of foundation relations, explains that, unlike Carnegie’s other classifications which rely on national data, the community engagement classification is based on documentation provided by the institution.

Tossava notes that the elective classification process engaged Finlandia in a substantive process of inquiry, reflection, and self-assessment regarding the university’s community engagement. Finlandia provided to Carnegie descriptions and examples of institutionalized practices of community engagement that demonstrate alignment among mission, culture, leadership, resources and practices.

“It gave us an excellent opportunity to reconfirm the vitality of our focus on community service and our partnerships within the community,” she adds.

Factors contributing to the successful acceptance of Finlandia’s application for the Carnegie Community Engagement classification included the promotion of community engagement by the university’s executive leadership, as well as administrative, academic, and student support of community engagement, Tossava notes.

“Consistent and successful community programming at the Jutila Center and the Finnish American Heritage Center, and mechanisms for listening to input from the community through groups such as Community Partners, the International Alumni Board, and the Finnish Council in America, are also examples of our commitment to local and regional community members,” she adds.

“Local and regional institutions and businesses are critical to the success of our students,” says President Johnson. “Local health care clinical sites and the local schools provide students in the nursing, physical therapist assistant, and elementary education programs, in particular, continuous opportunities for practical, hands-on learning.”

Curricular faith- and service-related opportunities, such as Finlandia’s Servant Leadership Program, also demonstrate Finlandia’s community engagement, Johnson adds.

This year, 147 institutions applied to document community engagement. Of the total applications, 119 were successfully classified as community engaged institutions; 68 are public institutions and 51 are private. In terms of representing Carnegie’s Basic Classification, 38 are doctorate-granting universities, 52 are masters-level colleges and universities, 17 are baccalaureate colleges, nine are community colleges, and three institutions have a specialized focus—arts, medicine and technology. They represent 34 states and Puerto Rico.

Institutions were classified in one of three categories:

Curricular Engagement describes teaching, learning and scholarship which engage faculty, students and community in mutually beneficial and respectful collaboration. Their interactions address community-identified needs, deepen students' civic and academic learning, enhance community well-being and enrich the scholarship of the institution. (Three institutions)

Outreach and Partnerships describes two different but related approaches to community engagement. The first focuses on the application and provision of institutional resources for community use with benefits to both campus and community. The latter focuses on collaborative interactions with community and related scholarship for the mutually beneficial exchange, exploration and application of knowledge, information and resources (research, capacity building, economic development, etc.). (Six institutions)

Curricular Engagement and Outreach & Partnerships includes institutions with substantial commitments in both areas described above. (110 institutions)

The Carnegie Foundation classifications are derived from analysis of existing national data. Their intended purpose is to enable academic and institutional researchers to identify groups of roughly comparable institutions. The classifications are based on an institution's degree programs, geographic area, and student enrollment. All accredited, degree-granting colleges and universities in the United States represented in the National Center for Education Statistics IPEDS system are eligible for inclusion in the Carnegie Classifications.

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Finlandia University is a baccalaureate degree-granting, co-educational learning community dedicated to academic excellence, spiritual growth and service. Founded by Finnish immigrants in 1896 as Suomi College, Finlandia is the only private, not-for-profit institution of higher education in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Finlandia offers degrees in the disciplines of liberal studies, health sciences, business administration, and art and design. The approximately 550 students at Finlandia enjoy small classes, caring faculty, and personal attention.

Founded by Andrew Carnegie in 1905 and chartered in 1906 by an Act of Congress, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching is an independent policy and research center with the primary mission "to do and perform all things necessary to encourage, uphold, and dignify the profession of the teacher and the cause of higher education." The improvement of teaching and learning is central to all of the Foundation's work.