

Setting Your Campus Up for Success

Getting Started With the Carnegie Elective Classification for Sustainability

May 6, 2026



Agenda



- Welcome and Introductions
- Application Framework, Timeline and Process
- Setting the Scene: Sustainability Definition and Institutionalization
- Securing Leadership Buy-In and Institutional Support
- Building a Cross-Campus Team
- Designing an Evidence & Data Collection Approach
- Developing a Work Plan
- Q&A
- Next Steps



Housekeeping

- Attendee microphones are muted to limit disruption
- Use chat to introduce yourself
- Use Q&A to ask and upvote questions
- Participate in the polls
- Recording will be sent to everyone who registered
- Thanks for being here!

Introductions



Lily Strehlow
Sustainability Coordinator
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire



Tania Anders
Academic Senate President
Mt. San Antonio College



Daryl Pierson
Director of Sustainability
University of California, Merced



Amy Halvorson
Director for Sustainability
University of Colorado Boulder

Poll #1

Why is your institution interested in the Carnegie Elective Classification for Sustainability?



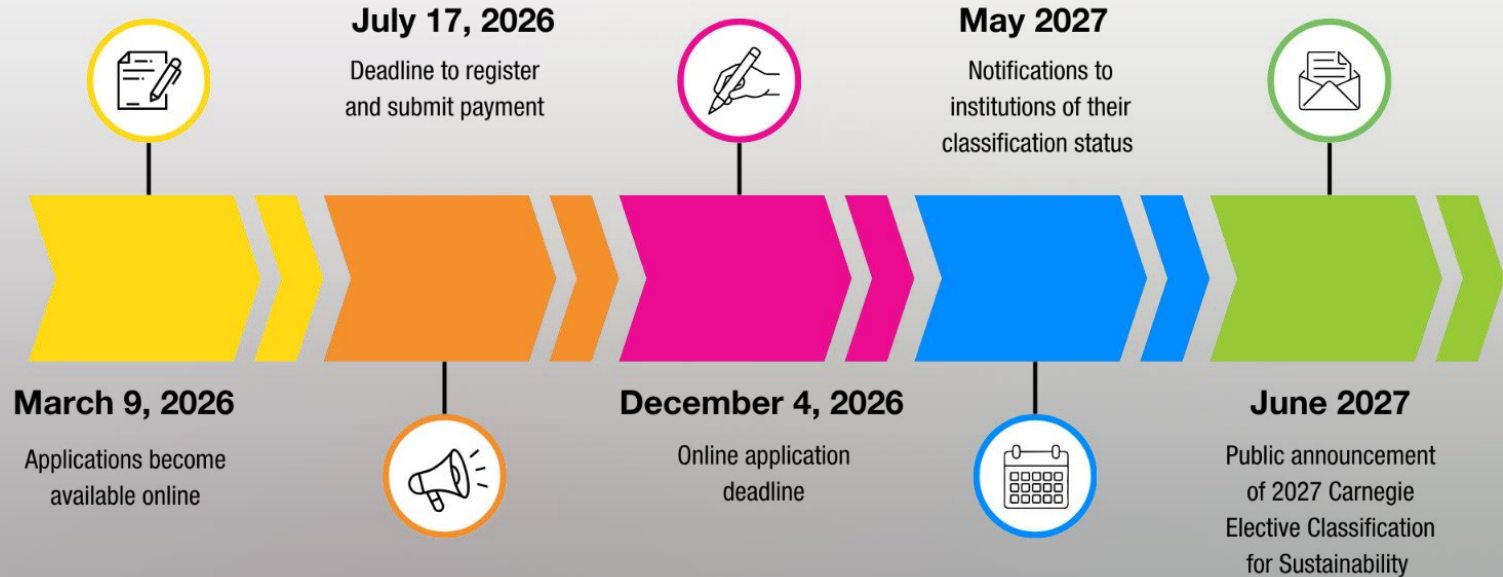
Why should my institution participate?

- Lead a rigorous self-study to establish priorities, strengthen campus community, and drive continuous improvement
- Elevate your institution's visibility to recruit students and attract donors
- Leverage a mixed methods approach to complement existing sustainability rating systems (e.g., AASHE STARS) through qualitative evidence and storytelling
- Showcase your holistic sustainability narrative to strengthen your institutional identity
- Engage and benefit from communities of practice across diverse institution types





2027 Carnegie Elective Classification for Sustainability Application Timeline



2027 Carnegie Sustainability Application Framework



Context Definition Ecosystem Model



- I. Campus Information
- II. Institutional Context and Definition
- III. Ecosystem Model for Collaborative Community Partnerships

Academics Research & Innovation Workforce Development & Career Preparation



- IV. Academic Integration of Sustainability
- V. Research & Innovation for Sustainability and Climate Solutions (Non-Community Colleges)
- VI. Workforce Development and Career Preparation
 - A. For Non-Community Colleges
 - B. For Community Colleges

Climate Action Plan Campus Infrastructure Resilience & Adaptation Reflection



- VII. Climate Action Plan
- VIII. Campus Infrastructure for Sustainability
- IX. Resilience and Adaptation
- X. Reflection and Additional Information

Data should
reflect AYs
2022-2023,
2023-2024,
2024-2025

Tiered Review Process

Tier 2 Reviewers

Tier 2 reviewers are individuals who have had extensive experience in reviewing applications in the past and review applications that Tier 1 reviewers determined needed further review. Tier 2 can make recommendations to classify, not classify, or need further review.

2



Tier 3 Reviewers

Tier 3 is made up of Carnegie Electives staff. Final review of applications from Tier 2 are made by Tier 3 reviewers.

3

Tier 1 Reviewers

Peer review teams made up of 4-5 reviewers who review 8-10 applications and make a recommendation to classify, not classify, or move on to further review. Reviewers need to come to consensus. Reviewer teams are supported by a graduate student fellow.

1

Timeline (may be adjusted):

- August 2026 – Call for reviewers and graduate student fellows
- September 2026 – Applications due
- October 2026 – Reviewers and graduate fellows notified
- January-February 2027 – Training for reviewers
- February-May 2027 – Tier 1, 2, and 3 reviews



Sustainability Definition and Institutionalization

As you get started, consider:

- Do you have an institutional definition of sustainability, or do you need to inventory many across campus?
- Where does your institution fall on the institutionalization spectrum?
 - Emergent
 - Developing
 - Established
- What time and capacity across campus are necessary to reflect the scope of your sustainability definition(s) and stage of institutionalization?



Sustainability Definition

The Carnegie Foundation defines sustainability in higher education as a holistic approach to advancing environmental stewardship, economic resilience, and long-term well-being through interconnected academic, research, and operational initiatives. This involves preparing students to address climate challenges, promoting responsible resource management, and fostering innovation for a sustainable future.

Institutions pursue sustainability by reducing environmental impact, conducting research that offers practical solutions to global challenges, and collaborating with communities. These efforts are culturally, regionally, and contextually grounded and draw on diverse knowledge systems, including Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and practices to ensure the well-being of both current and future generations.



Where does your institution fall on the institutionalization spectrum?

Emergent

- Initial conversations about developing a campus-wide definition of sustainability
- Pilot projects
- Informal data collection on energy, water, or waste without consistent tracking systems
- Drafting a first climate action plan
- Limited budget

Developing

- Formal sustainability plan
- Cross-campus committee or sustainability officer
- Sustainability featured in strategic plan
- Tracking energy use, GHG emissions, water waste, etc.
- Sustainability learning outcomes in multiple programs
- Dedicated funding streams
- Partnerships with local governments or community organizations focused on resilience

Established

- Sustainability integrated into institutional mission, governance, and long-term strategy
- Public, time-bound climate commitments with annual progress reporting
- Robust data systems
- Sustainability embedded in general education
- Incentives, recognition, and performance metrics tied to sustainability goals
- Evidence of continuous improvement informed by assessment and benchmarking



There is amazing work happening at each stage and Carnegie welcomes them all!

Poll #2

In your self-assessment, where does your campus fall on the sustainability institutionalization spectrum?





Securing Leadership Buy-In and Institutional Support: Why Leadership Matters

1. Connects to institutional priorities
2. Access to resources (funding, staffing, data)
3. Supports cross-campus coordination
4. Strengthens the credibility of the application and process, adds to a long-term commitment
5. Supports meaningful change (teaching, research, operations)
6. Connects sustainability to donors, partnerships, regional or national initiatives



Securing Leadership Buy-In and Institutional Support: Tips for Securing Support

Tips for Securing Support

- Share a high-level overview of the classification
- Share talking points based on the application questions, tips in the guidebook, and your application narrative
- Consider linking conversations to other campus initiatives, budget cycles, planning processes, and leadership calendars

Key Requests for Leaders

- Introduce the initiative to the campus
- Appoint team members to the cross-campus team and recognize their contributions upon completion
- Access to campus data
- Funds and/or release time to support a part-time application coordinator



Building a Cross-Campus Team

- Build on existing collaborative structures on your campus (e.g., Sustainability Committee)
- Think about stakeholders in academic affairs, operations, student affairs, facilities, community engagement, etc.
- Align with existing efforts where possible (e.g., accreditation, climate action plans, STARS)
- Establish clear leadership and structure for project management
- Determine who will be primary author(s) and editor(s)

Building Your Team Worksheet

Carnegie Elective Classification for Leadership for Sustainability Worksheet: Building your team

Completing your application for the Carnegie Elective Classification for Sustainability is a team effort. Assembling a working group or team will be a crucial part as you plan your application process. Your awareness of the campus relationships, infrastructures, and resources will help you navigate this process. Answer the following guiding questions to build your classification team.

Identify Campus Stakeholders

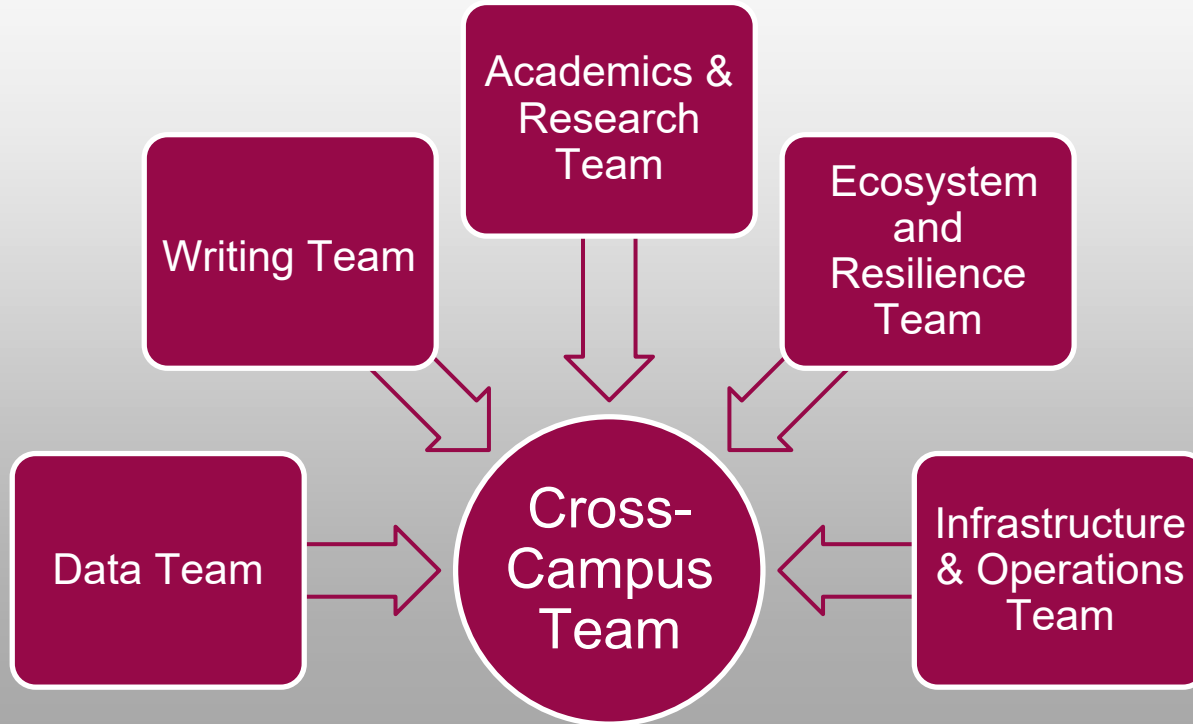
- Who should be on your team? Use a spreadsheet or mapping tool to collect the data.*
- Who on campus or in the community supports sustainability (departments, offices, student groups, partners, etc.)? Do not screen your list at this point and include anyone that might have an interest in the classification today or in the future.*
- Where do you need buy-in for the process? Who are the decision makers?*
- Who could be resistant to the classification? How does the classification fit into their values?*
- What perspectives do you need on the team?*

Mapping Stakeholder Roles

- How is my team engaged on campus?*
- Does the stakeholder have authority to provide support?*
- How much influence does the stakeholder have? Be sure to clarify "how" they are connected to sustainability and "who" they influence, e.g., other stakeholders, teams, departments, offices, etc.*
- Does the stakeholder have information, counsel, or expertise that could be helpful to the classification?*
- Who has the data you need or can collect it for you? Review the application [here](#) and note who may have access to the data.*

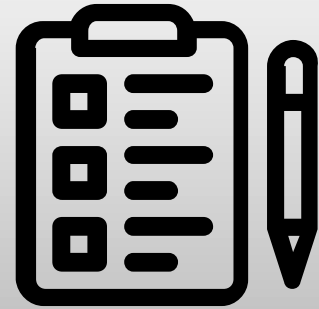
Section/ Question	Stakeholder

Core Team with Supporting Sub-Teams Approach



Gathering Evidence and Data

- Review the application, section by section, to determine where relevant data and evidence reside
- Estimate time needed for data collection, outreach, and coordination across units, work with other units to gather estimates
- Build your collection tool/mechanism (e.g., survey tool, spreadsheet, interviews, etc.)





Developing a Work Plan

- Break the process into phases
- Assign responsibilities and internal deadlines
- Build in time for campus feedback and leadership review
- Identify early “quick wins” and longer-lead components
- Start early!

Application Phases

- Initial scoping and mapping
- Data collection, documentation, and analysis
- Write and synthesize
- Review and revision
- Final submission



Application Preparation Working Timeline

March 2026 to December 2026



Launch Process

- Identify campus partners and establish a team
- Explore where evidence is located
- Secure institutional buy-in and request resources

Plan and Gather Evidence

- Kick off meetings to strategize application approach
- Assign data collection and gather evidence
- Begin identifying potential gaps and how to address

Write, Write, Write!

- Finalize evidence
- Draft application sections
- Incorporate stakeholder feedback
- Ensure clarity, cohesion and alignment

Submit Application

- Review final draft
- Submit for institutional approval
- Submit application by December 4, 2026
- Plan for next steps

Q&A



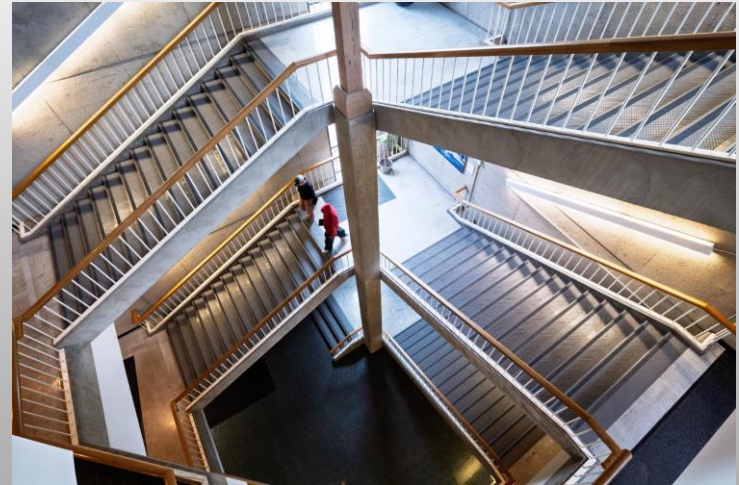
Trust the Process

- No application is expected to be perfect
- The value is in the reflection, not just the designation
- The self-study highlights your institution's unique context
- Progress and learning are important



Staying Connected and Building Capacity

- ❑ Download the application & guidebook from our site
- ❑ Sign up for our mailing list
- ❑ Register for upcoming webinars
 - ❑ **Section II: Institutional Context**
Tuesday, June 2nd 1-2 pm MT
- ❑ Attend our office hours
- ❑ Stay tuned for announcements about communities of practice that will launch next week



Poll #3

What are your next steps?





[www.colorado.edu/sustainability/
carnegie-elective-classification-
sustainability](http://www.colorado.edu/sustainability/carnegie-elective-classification-sustainability)

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