

2027 Carnegie Elective Classification for Sustainability

Narrative as Data

September 22, 2026



Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Why Narrative as Data?
- Tips for Developing Responses
- 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 and slides will be sent to everyone who registered
- Thanks for being here!



Introductions



Madeline Yeatts
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Elizabeth Rowe
Founder & Principal
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Amy Halvorson
Director for Sustainability
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Cathy Avila-Linn
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Hallie Nelson Garcia
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Poll #1

Which part of your institution's sustainability story has been most challenging to demonstrate in the application?



Why Narrative as Data?

- To demonstrate institutionalization, across campus
- Illustrates the scope and impact by sharing beyond the data
- From a list of examples to deep assessment
- Share things that the numbers don't tell us
- Share what makes this evidence effective or unique
- Assessment of culture, capacity, strengths, and opportunities for growth
- Space to provide an explanation if data is not available



Beyond Reporting

Relevant
history

Challenges &
Celebrations

Descriptions of
how the work is
embedded

The how –
approaches to
monitoring,
managing,
assessing

Contributions
from a
variety of
stakeholders

The meaning –
links between
intent, practice,
and impact



The First Step: Draft the Institutional Context Section

The foundation of the entire application

- Stage of institutionalization (emergent, developing, advanced)
- Sustainability landscape
- Leadership priorities and long-term goals
- Environmental and climate challenges
- Relevant institutional characteristics
- Explain how these factors shape sustainability priorities and create unique opportunities for innovation and practice

1. Draft the institutional context
2. Gather feedback
3. Outline the other sections
4. How will each section exemplify, relate to, build upon the context? What is the key connection, issue, idea you want to convey?
5. How will each section relate to the one before it and the one coming next?



Poll #2

How is Section II on Institutional Context coming along?

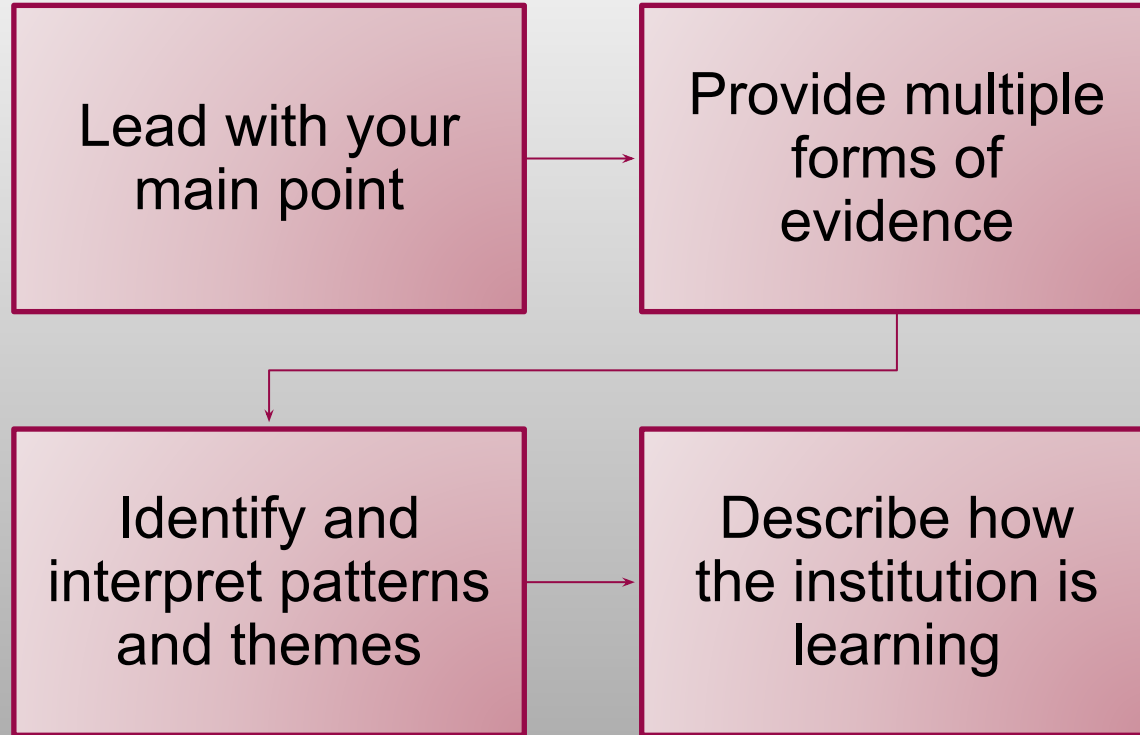


For Discussion

What is the one thing reviewers need to understand about an institution to make sense of the sustainability story?



Developing A Response



The Sample Question:

*Describe how **community engagement** is integrated into traditional curricular structures. (750-word limit)*

Similar to Section IV. Academic Integration of Sustainability, Question 1a



Lead with Your Main Point

What are you saying?

<i>Example</i>	Tips
At Midland College, civic learning and engagement are integrated into the student experience through the curriculum, student leadership, community service, and partnerships with local schools and community organizations. These opportunities reflect the College's broader commitment to preparing students not only for employment and further education, but also for meaningful participation in their communities. Civic learning is demonstrated through opportunities for students to connect academic learning with community needs, develop leadership skills, and contribute to the well-being of the region.	• Offer a high-level or big-picture introduction to the concept, claim, context, or issue • Preview the evidence • What is taking place? • What makes the work different or stand out?

Provide Multiple Forms of Evidence

What demonstrates what you are saying?

The College's **core curriculum** provides an important foundation for civic learning. Through courses in areas such as government, history, social and behavioral sciences, communication, and the humanities, students develop knowledge and skills that help them understand social issues, consider diverse perspectives, communicate across differences, and participate as informed members of their communities. For example, **Community, Culture & Civic Life**, a popular general education course engages students in examining social issues, considering diverse perspectives, and exploring their roles as community members.

Civic learning is further supported through **student leadership** opportunities. The **Student Government Association** provides students with an opportunity to participate in shared governance, represent student perspectives, develop leadership skills, and engage with issues affecting the campus community. Participation in student government requires students to listen to and represent the interests of their peers, communicate with College leaders, and work collaboratively to address concerns.

Community service provides another avenue through which civic engagement is incorporated into the student experience. The **Legacy Scholars Program**, for example, includes a community-service expectation for participating students during their first year. Students identify volunteer opportunities, complete service with community organizations, and document their participation.

- Support each point, claim, or argument with an example
- Weave together several types of data (e.g., curriculum, student leadership, community service)

More About Evidence

**Evidence should
reflect AYs**

2022-2023

2023-2024

2024-2025

- Academic programs and teaching
- Co-curricular program examples
- Institutional plans or strategic plans
- Policies
- Campus operations practices and infrastructure
- Program evaluations
- Assessment findings and data
- Community partner feedback
- Faculty, staff, and student perspectives
- Research
- Community partnerships
- Case studies
- Meeting minutes



For Discussion

How do you determine what information is useful and rigorous as evidence?



Identify and Interpret Patterns and Themes

What does it mean?

Example

Taken together, these examples demonstrate that civic learning and engagement at Midland College are not limited to a single program, course, or department. Instead, **students** encounter opportunities to engage with community issues and develop civic skills through multiple dimensions of the college experience. **The combination** of curricular learning, student governance, structured service, leadership development, and community partnerships creates multiple pathways for students to connect their education with the needs of their communities.

The examples also **demonstrate different forms of civic learning**. In the classroom... Through student government... Through community service ...

Tips

- Share and interpret the themes, trends, or changes based on the evidence
- Be explicit, Tell the reader what these mean to your institution
- Synthesize—don't summarize
- Show patterns, not isolated examples
- Acknowledge complexity, gaps, and challenges

Explain How the Institution is Learning

What did you learn?

Through these efforts, Midland College **has learned that** civic learning and engagement are strongest when students encounter opportunities to practice civic skills in multiple settings rather than experiencing engagement as a single, stand-alone activity. Connecting classroom learning with leadership, service, and community partnerships **provides students with repeated** opportunities to apply what they are learning in authentic contexts.

The College's experience also **illustrates the value of** creating structures that make engagement part of established programs. **For example**, incorporating community service into the Legacy Scholars experience and establishing formal roles for student ambassadors creates intentional opportunities for students to engage with their communities.

- What does the evidence tell us about who we are as an institution?
- State the learning, meaning, outcomes, and changes, share how change occurred
- Explain how the institution is developing or improving

More About Institutional Learning

- Share analysis at the greatest level possible
 - institution
 - division
 - college
 - department
 - program
- What impacts did you find
 - on different stakeholders
 - on academics and/or research
 - on community partnerships
 - on student leadership
 - on career development
- Share one sentence about what's next

For Discussion

The application asks you to look across different parts of the institution. How do you go about identifying connections or patterns across areas that might otherwise seem separate?



Embrace the Writing Process

1. Collect information and data from across campus – continue to talk to people, collect reports, review websites, talk to more people
2. Reflect and analyze - derive the themes, strengths, and areas for growth, identify great examples
3. Transition to writing responses for the application
4. Balance the word count
5. Include an external reviewer from your campus
6. Make the implicit explicit – tell reviewers exactly why something matters. Don't assume that they will understand how things go together
7. After every paragraph ask: "How does this answer the question?" If it doesn't, revise



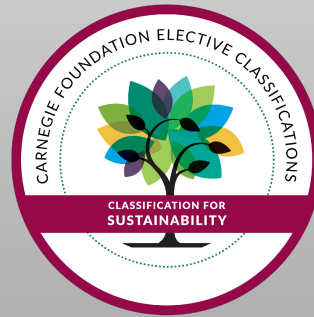
For Discussion

Looking back at the process, what is one thing you wish you had known when you started developing your narratives?



Share in the Chat

What is one idea about your institutional context that you want to carry throughout your narrative?



Q&A



Next Steps & Closing



Call for Application Reviewers and Graduate Student Fellows

Carnegie Elective Classification for Sustainability

- Recognize higher education institutions demonstrating a commitment to sustainability and climate action as integral to their academic missions.
- Tiered peer review process January-April 2027
- Training November-December 2026
- Reviewers: higher education sustainability professionals
 - Compensation: \$150 for attending trainings; \$200 per application reviewed; \$300 to team leaders
- Graduate fellows: graduate students passionate about sustainability
 - Compensation: \$1000
- Deadline to apply is October 2nd



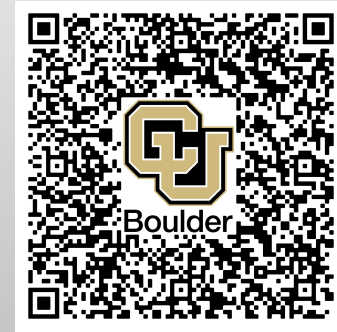
Learn more and apply:



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

Staying Connected and Building Capacity

- Apply and/or share the Reviewer and Graduate Student Fellow opportunities
- Sign up for our mailing list
- Check out our Resources page
- Join office hours. GivePulse is available: 9/24, 11/3, 11/19, 12/3



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