

# Opinion | What the new Carnegie classifications mean for Alabama universities

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The new Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education is out. Once operated by the Carnegie Foundation, the so-called “Carnegie classifications” are now run by the School of Education at Indiana University.

The classifications are by university type or category: doctoral universities, master’s colleges and universities, baccalaureate colleges, baccalaureate / associate colleges, associate’s colleges, special focus institutions, and tribal universities. When you hear people refer to the coveted R-1 status, they’re referring to a sub-classification within the “doctoral universities” category, which until this year trifurcated into “highest research activity” (R-1), “higher research activity” (R-2), and “moderate research activity” (R-3).

Under this taxonomy, Auburn, Alabama, UAB, and UAH were classified as “Doctoral Universities,” whereas Troy, Samford, Faulkner, Montevallo, and Alabama State were classified as “Master’s Colleges & Universities.” Huntingdon, Stillman, Tuskegee, and Talladega were designated “Baccalaureate Colleges.”

The many universities in Alabama fall into different classifications. I have mentioned only a few universities not to suggest favor or quality, but to illustrate the spectrum of classification possibilities.

Not long ago, I wrote that “Carnegie should drop the phrases ‘highest research activity,’ higher research activity,’ and ‘moderate research activity’ that accompany the R-1, R-2, and R-3 label because they are misleading: the Carnegie rankings do not measure research *activity* but research *expenditure*.” Carnegie has corrected this flaw to some extent, relabeling its R-1 and R-2 categories as “Very high research activity” and “High research activity,” respectively—

thereby eliminating the “er” and “est” suffixes (in “higher” and “highest”) that indicated the comparative and superlative degree (i.e., that made certain universities sound better than others).

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*So where do Alabama universities fall in the new 2018 classifications?*

Auburn, Alabama, and UAB are the only Alabama universities in the R-1 category. UAH is an R-2. Troy, Faulkner, Montevallo, and Alabama State remain “Master’s Colleges & Universities.” Tuskegee entered that category. Samford is now classified under the heading “Doctoral / Professional Universities” that did not exist in earlier classifications. This category accounts for professional-practice degrees like juris doctorates or medical degrees.

Huntington, Stillman, and Talladega remain “Baccalaureate Colleges.”

If you’re curious about the classification of your alma mater or favorite Alabama university, you can search the listings [here](#).

It would be a mistake to treat these classifications as a hierarchal ranking of quality. They are, rather, descriptive differentiations that inform the public about the size and spending of universities. The only category in which universities receive something like a vertical ranking is “Doctoral Universities,” which tier universities according to their alleged “research activity.”

Eric Kelderman [points out](#) that “critics wonder whether going for more research money and a higher Carnegie classification really has more to do with elevating institutional image, and comes at the expense of academic quality—particularly for undergraduates.” This is a profound concern.

The Carnegie classifications could incentivize malinvestment in doctoral degrees and number of faculty members. The job market for humanities faculty [is shrinking while the number of humanities doctorates is rising](#), but to achieve their desired Carnegie classifications, universities continue to churn out humanities Ph.Ds. who have diminishing chances of landing tenure-track positions.

The Carnegie classifications don’t measure research quality, either. One university could spend millions on research with negligible outcomes while another could spend little on research yet yield high-quality, groundbreaking scholarship.

The Carnegie classifications are not perfect, but they command attention among administrators in higher education and can involve public funds. For that reason alone, anyone who has a stake or interest in a university in Alabama should pay attention too.

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Gov. Kay Ivey has awarded grants totaling \$3.1 million for programs that help low-income residents take steps to secure gainful employment and improve their quality of life.

The Community Services Block Grants will enable 20 community action agencies throughout the state to help low-income residents achieve self-sufficiency and address barriers to success through a variety of programs and services. The specific needs of the communities served determine which programs are available, which can include: job search assistance, short-term employment, skills classes, parenting classes, transitional housing, summer youth programs, financial literacy programs, and emergency food and shelter.

“Community Action Agencies offer services that support low-income families as they work to create a more stable foundation for a successful life,” Governor Ivey said. “I commend these agencies for their work toward reducing poverty and helping families in need.”

Residents seeking assistance should contact their local community action agency. For full contact information for each go to:

[www.caaalabama.org/agency-list.php](http://www.caaalabama.org/agency-list.php).

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The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs is administering the grants from funds made available by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

“Governor Ivey and I are committed to helping those agencies that offer support some of our state’s most vulnerable residents,” ADECA Director Kenneth Boswell said. “ADECA’s partnership with these agencies has helped many residents and families achieve a better quality of life and created more opportunities for success.”

Governor Ivey awarded grants to the following agencies:

- Community Action Partnership of Huntsville/Madison and Limestone Counties Inc. received \$189,303.
- Community Service Programs of West Alabama Inc. (Bibb, Choctaw, Dallas, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Perry, Tuscaloosa, Sumter) was given \$297,099.
- Walker County Community Action Agency Inc. received \$49,098.
- Pickens County Community Action Committee and Community Development Corporation Inc. was awarded \$21,041.
- Organized Community Action Program Inc. (Bullock, Butler, Covington, Crenshaw, Dale, Lowndes, Pike) was granted \$144,570.
- Community Action Agency of Northwest Alabama Inc. (Colbert, Franklin, Lauderdale) received \$119,822.
- Community Action Agency of Northeast Alabama Inc. (Blount, Cherokee, DeKalb, Jackson, Marshall, St. Clair) got \$242,780.
- Community Action Partnership of North Alabama Inc. (Cullman, Lawrence, Morgan) received \$139,089.
- Montgomery Community Action Committee Inc. received \$163,530.

- Mobile Community Action Inc. (Mobile, Washington) was granted \$318,001.
- Marion-Winston Counties Community Action Committee Inc. was awarded \$40,626.
- Macon-Russell Community Action Agency Inc. received \$67,261.
- Jefferson County Committee for Economic Opportunity received \$393,941.
- Southeast Alabama Community Action Partnership Inc. (Barbour, Coffee, Geneva, Henry, Houston) was granted \$148,476.
- Community Action of Etowah County Inc. got \$68,073.
- Community Action Partnership of Middle Alabama Inc. (Chilton, Shelby, Autauga, Elmore) was awarded \$142,374.
- Community Action Committee Inc. of Chambers-Tallapoosa-Coosa (Chambers, Tallapoosa, Coosa) received \$62,991.
- Community Action Agency of South Alabama (Baldwin, Clarke, Conecuh, Escambia, Marengo, Monroe, Wilcox) got \$222,661.
- Alabama Council on Human Relations Inc. (Lee) was given \$98,797.
- Community Action Agency of Talladega, Clay, Randolph, Calhoun, and Cleburne Counties (Calhoun, Clay, Cleburne, Randolph, Talladega) received \$183,020.

Wednesday, the Alabama Career Center System, in cooperation with the Alabama Community College System, AIDT, the Southwest Alabama Partnership for Training and Employment (SWAPTE), and the Rapid Response Team (part of the Dislocated Worker Unit at the Alabama Department of Commerce) announced that there will be emergency information sessions for students and employees who have been impacted by the sudden closings of four Virginia College campuses across the state. The closures affected approximately 1,100 Alabama students.

Last week the Education Corporation of America (ECA) announced that it would be abruptly closing its campuses in Alabama and across the country. ECA represents Brightwood Career Institute, Brightwood College, Ecotech Institute, Golf Academy of America, and Virginia College throughout the country. ECA is based in Birmingham and operates for-profit Virginia College campuses in Birmingham, Huntsville, Mobile, and Montgomery. Many of those students were using their G.I. benefits and/or student loans to fund their educations.

The Alabama Career Center announced that degree and training programs are available to students through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), including full and partial funding for two and four-year degree programs, vocational and industrial training, and more. Qualified applicants can participate in these programs at no charge. Employees can also take advantage of benefits such as mortgage assistance and unemployment insurance, among others.

“We realize that many students were left without options with this closing,” said Labor Secretary Fitzgerald Washington. “There are many programs available and we want to be sure that students know about them. In some cases, they may be able to finish their education at no cost. Affected employees should also attend to find out what services may be available to them.”

The meetings will be held in Mobile, Birmingham, Montgomery, and Huntsville.

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Meeting info is as follows:

In Mobile, Thursday, December 27 at the Mobile Career Center, 515 Springhill Plaza Court, Mobile 3606 at 2:00 p.m. 251-461-4146,

In Montgomery, Wednesday, December 19 at Montgomery Career Center; 1060 East South Blvd. Montgomery 36116 at 1:00 p.m. 334-286-1746

In Birmingham, Monday, December 17 at the Birmingham Career Center; 3216 4th Avenue South; Birmingham 35222 at 10:00 a.m. 205-582-5200

In Huntsville, Wednesday, December 19 at the Huntsville Career Center; 2535 Sparkman Dr. NW; Huntsville, AL 35810 at 2:00 p.m. 256-851-0537

Space is limited, so students should call ahead to reserve a spot.

Information about these programs can also be found at:

[www.joblink.alabama.gov](http://www.joblink.alabama.gov).

The Alabama Department of Labor / The Alabama Career Center System is a partner in Alabama Works, Alabama's unified workforce system.

Jasper attorney Charles Edward "Ed" Sanders, Jr. has been elected chair of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE). Sanders was appointed to the Commission in 2012, by then Lieutenant Governor Kay Ivey (R).

Alabama is beginning a new quadrennial with many new lawmakers and changes on education committees in the House and Senate.

"I am looking forward to working with all sectors of Alabama's higher education community to prepare students for entry into a competitive and global workplace," said Sanders. "In addition to the statutory responsibilities of the Commission, we want to continue to be advocates for higher education and the students we serve."

"The educational knowledge and legal expertise combined in Chairman Sanders' leadership skills will serve Alabama well in his role as chairman of the Commission," said ACHE Executive Director Jim Purcell.

Sanders has a bachelor's degree in Economics from Rhodes College and a law degree from the University of Alabama. He is a general partner with the law firm of Maddox, Thornley and Sanders.

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Sanders is the past president of the Walker County Bar Association and serves as a deacon at the First Baptist Church in Jasper.

He and his wife Mary have two children in college.

The Alabama Commission on Higher Education was founded in 1969. The ACHE is the state coordinating board for all public institutions of higher Education. The board is comprised of 12 members from throughout Alabama.