Appalachian State University's R2 Carnegie Classification: Understanding the Transition and Its Impact

Introduction

The Carnegie Classification is a framework that describes the nature and activities of U.S. colleges and universities based on specific metrics. It is important to understand that this classification system is purely descriptive - *institutions do not apply for classification.* Rather, the classification reflects the actual activities, outcomes, and characteristics of an institution as measured through standardized metrics. As Appalachian State University's research activities and doctoral programs have organically grown through the work of our faculty, staff, and students, our institutional profile has naturally evolved. This frequently asked questions document addresses common questions about what this means for our university community.

FAQ

Understanding Carnegie Classifications

What changes and what doesn't change with a different classification?

The university's core mission remains unchanged by this designation. The classification change simply *describes* the organic growth in research and graduate education that has already occurred through faculty activities. This is a recognition of the success our faculty have created in research and mentoring students rather than a mandate for a change in priorities.

Appalachian State University's peer group, both within the UNC system and in general, changes as we transition from a southeastern regional University to a National University designation.

How are Carnegie Classifications determined?

[Carnegie basic classifications](#) *are not something that institutions apply for* - they are descriptive designations based on existing institutional activities and outcomes. The classification determination is made by the [American Council on Education](#) (ACE) using survey data from two federal agencies, the [National Science Foundation](#) (NSF), and the [National Center for Education Statistics](#) (NCES).

The relevant data are:

- Total research expenditures as reported to the NSF [Higher Education Research and Development](#) survey (HERD).
- Number of doctoral degrees conferred as reported to the NCES [Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System](#) (IPEDS).

What was App State's designation prior to the recent reclassification?

Previously, App State was classified as an M1 (Master's Colleges and Universities – Larger programs) University, which means it conferred at least 200 masters and/or doctoral degrees, but fewer than 20 research doctoral degrees in the last evaluation period.

In the previous review period (2016-2019) App State awarded 40 total doctoral degrees, (16 in the evaluation year), and 2080 masters degrees (648 in the evaluation year).

What is an R2 university classification?

Carnegie classification is managed by the American Council on Education and is defined as an institution that:

- Generates at least 20 research Doctoral degrees during the final year of the review cycle, or an average of 20/year over the entire period. These data are reported to NCES and available via IPEDS (see above).

- Has total research expenditures of at least $5M in the final year of the review period, or an average of $5m/year over the entire review period. Expenditure data is reported to the publicly available HERD survey (see above).

The current reporting period concluded with FY 2023 and academic year 2022-2023. Beginning with the 2023-2026 review period, doctoral degrees and expenditures will be evaluated based on the average over the entire period, rather than final year totals.

What is the difference between a Carnegie Universal Classification and a Carnegie Elective Classification?

Carnegie Universal Classifications are descriptive designations based on institutional data and are given to all degree-granting institutions. Carnegie Elective Classifications are classifications that an institution may apply for to highlight extraordinary contributions to a theme. For example, Appalachian State University has applied for and received the Carnegie Community Engagement elective classification.

App State's Current Status (R2)

How does Appalachian State data align with Carnegie classification criteria?
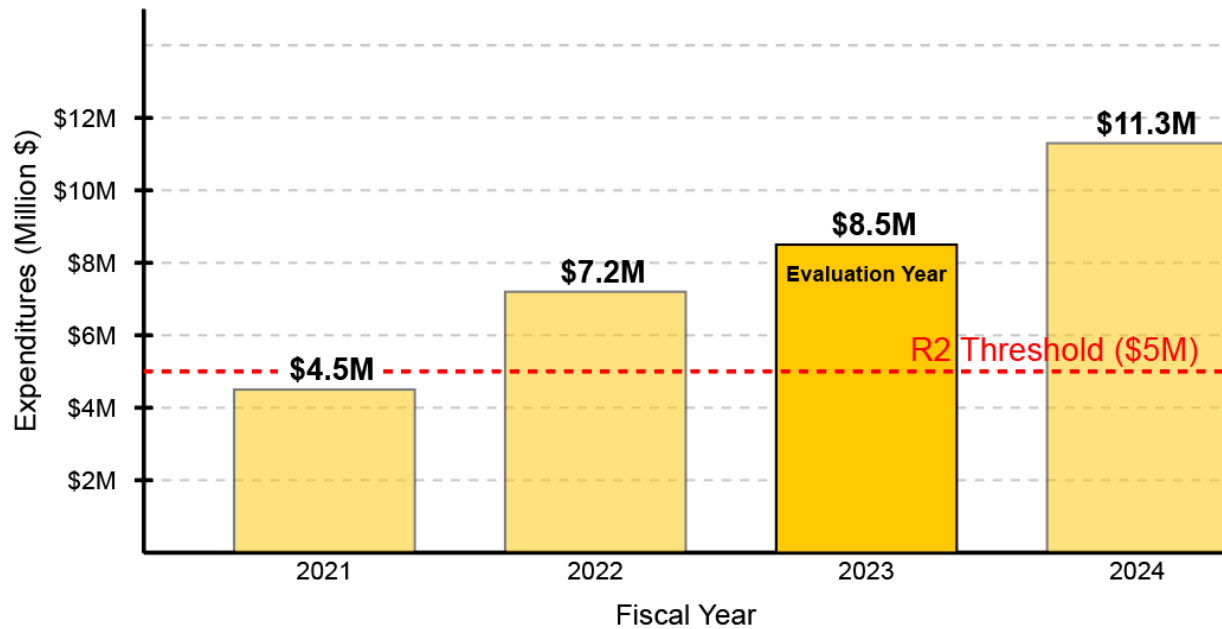
App State's relevant data is collected and reported annually, with summary information available on the [IRAP website](#).

Research expenditures:
Research expenditures are dollars that were spent and accounted for by the university that were related to research. These monies can come from a variety of sources, including state funds, federal grants to PIs, or donations, so long as their use meets the research expenditure criteria set forth by the National Science Foundation. Expenditures are not necessarily linked to awards

because some research expenditures are not covered by research grant support (i.e. faculty startup), yet reflect the financial commitment of the institution to the research enterprise.

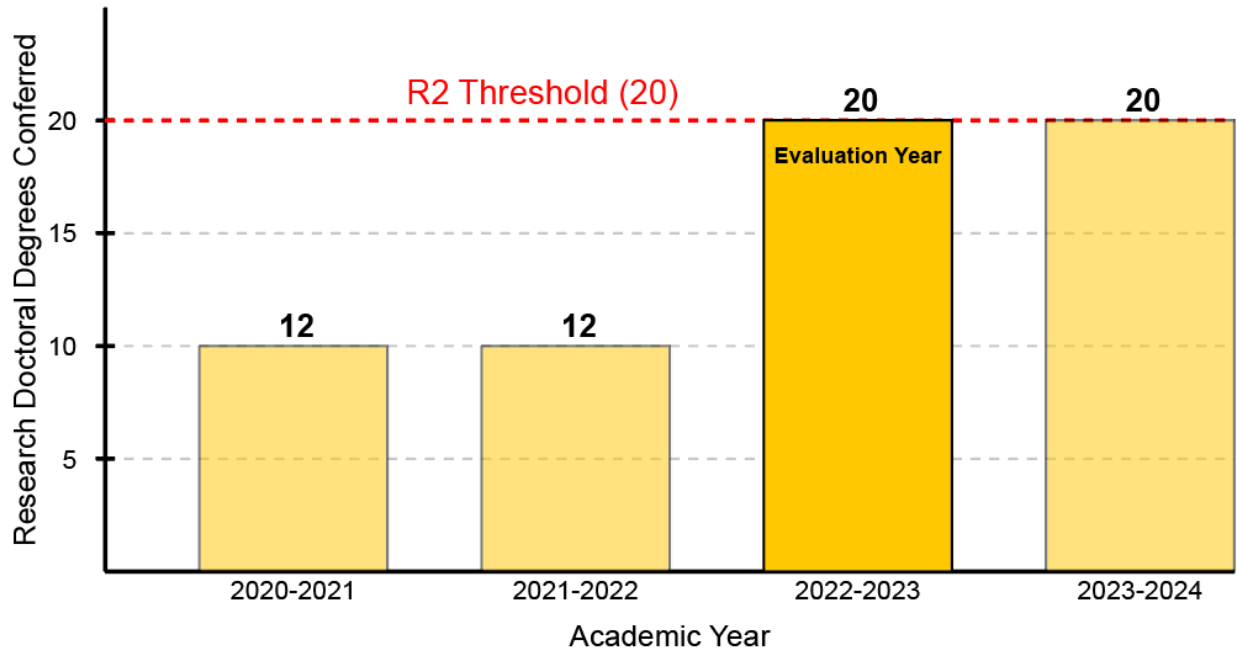## Research Expenditures at Appalachian State University

- For the reporting period utilized in the most recent Carnegie classification (FY 2023), Appalachian State University reported $8.5M in HERD expenditures. The criteria for R2 classification is expenditures exceeding $5m.
- Research expenditures have increased since the evaluation cycle to $11.3m in FY 2024.

Doctoral degrees:

ACE considers doctoral degrees that are reported as research doctorate towards the Carnegie classification scheme. The type of doctoral degree (research, professional practice, or other doctorate) is determined by the Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) code of the degree attributed at the institution of system level.

Currently all of the research doctoral degrees conferred come from the Educational Leadership (EdD) program. *Appalachian State doctoral degrees* conferred and projected are viewable in [this dashboard](#).

Doctoral Degrees Conferred at Appalachian State University

- For the reporting period utilized in the most recent Carnegie classification (academic year 2022-2023) 20 research doctoral degrees were conferred. The criteria for R2 classification for doctoral degrees conferred is at least 20.
- This rate has remained the same for academic year 2023-2024.

UNC System Context

What is the broader picture of Carnegie classification across the UNC System?

App State joins the of cohort of four R2: High Research Spending and Doctoral Programs within the UNC system (App State, NC A&T, UNCG, UNCW)

North Carolina Universities Carnegie Classifications 2025

Research 1: Very High Research Spending and Doctoral Programs	Research 2: High Research Spending and Doctoral Programs	Research Colleges and Universities
ECU	App State	FSU
NC State	NC A&T	NCCU
UNC-CH	UNCG	UNCA
UNCC	UNCW	WCU
		WSSU

Visit our institutional [analytics dashboard](#) to explore changes within the UNC System and other institutions' Carnegie classifications over the past four cycles.

Impact on Faculty and Programs

How will R2 classification affect App State faculty workloads?

A change in Carnegie classification will not fundamentally change who App State is or what App State does; the classification recognizes what faculty have already accomplished. Individual faculty workloads will continue to align with current system-level faculty workload policy. *Research effort expectations remain within Departmental Appointment, Promotion and Tenure policies.* Faculty involved in doctoral advising may see workload shifts, developed strategically with Department Chairs, College leadership, and Academic Affairs.

Funding and Resources

How will R2 classification affect our funding model?

UNC System institutions receive funding based on enrollment growth and performance metrics. Funding rates are based on institutional Carnegie classification and CIP codes. See the UNC System Performance-Weighted Enrollment Change Funding Model [manual](#).

Research Grants

Does reclassification disqualify faculty from receiving certain types of external grants?

It is unlikely that any external funding eligibility will be adversely affected by R2 status in the near future. Eligibility for funding is determined by individual sponsors (public and private); while some grant programs have similar criteria to that used by ACE, these generally do not adhere to, nor directly align, with Carnegie classification schemes.

As an example, NSF RUI grants may only be awarded to institutions with "an average of no more than 10 Ph.D. or D.Sc. degrees per year in all *NSF-supportable disciplines*", regardless of Carnegie classification. Currently, Appalachian State University qualifies for RUI grants because our Doctoral degrees conferred do not fit the sponsor criteria of "NSF-supportable disciplines". Each of these funding opportunities are currently (and will continue to be) evaluated individually according to the terms and conditions established by the sponsor.

Looking Forward

How is App State adjusting to support increased research reflected by the R2 designation?

Appalachian State University has been systematically preparing to increase support infrastructures in order to keep up with the excellence in RSCA and to provide sustainable research infrastructure.

- The 2023 [Strategic Plan for RSCA](#) and the 2024 [Strategic Plan for Academic Affairs](#) both highlight the need for increased process improvement, removal of barriers, creation of engagement and communication pathways, and streamlining of resources toward the goals of increased campus support in Research and Creative Activities.
- ORI and the Controller's office are working diligently to strengthen infrastructure, staffing and process support for research administration and research development, with intentions to develop guidance on processes, contacts, and where to connect with resources.
- ORI, research institutes, centers, and colleges are continuing to invest in seeding and supporting faculty and research teams in their external funding and innovative partnership growth.
- AA, led by Graduate School, Colleges, and ORI, is working together to consider and help build proposals for potential doctoral programs.
- The Graduate School, ORI, Office of Student Research, and Institutes are strengthening student research support across the many units throughout campus that provide undergraduate and graduate student research opportunities and resources.

To grow our doctoral program portfolio at App State, are there plans to improve graduate student funding for PhD and EdD students?

Graduate student funding is important in attracting students to our campus. The Graduate School is currently exploring opportunities to improve the compensation package for our graduate students. Some of the opportunities include increasing stipend levels and identifying ways the institution can provide tuition support to those students serving as graduate research and graduate teaching assistants. As we increase the number of doctoral students, tuition assistance will become a priority. As updates to compensation packages change, the Graduate School will communicate this information to the necessary campus stakeholders.

IRAP, in collaboration with units campus-wide, are building robust analytics infrastructure to continue to monitor and communicate key institutional metrics

See, for example, the [Degrees Awarded Analytics site](#), which tracks degrees and certificates awarded over time.

How would R2 affect our US News and World Reports standing?

Anticipating the impact of R2 classification on our US News and World Report is hampered by several conditions:

- R2 classification changes our peer group from regional to national universities, consequently our rankings within this much broader peer group will look different.
- US News and World Report utilizes proprietary metrics that are not publicly available; anticipating *how* our ranking will be impacted is difficult despite our ability to track common metrics because we do not have a historical context in our new peer group.
- ACE has made several substantial changes to the Carnegie classification system. US News and World Reports will very likely modify their methods to adjust to these changes, further inhibiting our ability to anticipate how our outcomes are expressed in their ranking systems.