
2025 Carnegie Classifications

INTRODUCTION

The Carnegie Classification is a widely recognized framework used to describe and understand the diversity of institutions within U.S. higher education. Developed by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, the classification system was originally designed to support research and policy analysis. Institutional classifications were first published in 1973 and have since been updated regularly.

Over the past five decades, the U.S. higher education landscape has evolved. In response to these changes, the American Council on Education and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching have modernized the framework for the 2025 Carnegie Classifications. This update introduces a new Institutional Classification that replaces the historical Basic Classification, which had been a core reference point in previous editions.

As part of this new framework, institutions are assigned to one of 31 distinct Institutional Classifications, offering a more nuanced lens through which to understand institutional characteristics and compare peer institutions. Research activity, previously a major factor in the institutional classification methodology, is now considered separately and reported under a Research Activity Designation. This brief summarizes the methodology of the 2025 Carnegie Classifications, presents the classifications for The University of Texas (UT) System institutions, and explores how this framework departs from the previously published 2021 Basic Classifications.

SUMMARY

There were numerous changes to the Carnegie Classification methodology for 2025. Key changes include:

- The 2025 Institutional Classification replaced the 2021 Basic Carnegie Classification.
- The 2025 Institutional Classification is based off three metrics – award level focus, academic program mix, and enrollment size. Institutions are assigned to one of 31 Institutional Classifications based on their unique combination of these three dimensions.
- UT System institutions were represented in six 2025 Institutional Classifications:
 - Professions-focused Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Large;
 - Mixed Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Large;
 - Mixed Undergraduate/Graduate-Master's Large/Medium;
 - Professions-focused Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Medium;
 - Special Focus: Medical Schools and Centers; and
 - Special Focus: Other Health Professions.
- Research activity, previously a major factor in the 2021 Basic Classification methodology, is reported separately in 2025 under one of three Research Activity Designations – Research 1, Research 2, and Research Colleges and Universities. The simplified 2025 methodology for research activity is based on only two factors – research spending and doctoral production.
- Eight UT System institutions were designated Research 1 universities, three were designated Research 2 universities, and three were designated Research Colleges and Universities.

DETAILED CHANGES FOR THE 2025 CARNEGIE CLASSIFICATIONS

INSTITUTIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS

The 2025 Carnegie Classifications adopt a multidimensional data-driven approach to institutional categorization. Institutions are classified based on three primary factors: award level focus, academic program mix, and enrollment size. Each institution is assigned to one category within each of the three dimensions.

1. AWARD LEVEL FOCUS

This dimension captures the focus of awards conferred by an institution through six categories.

- Graduate-focused: Institutions where either
 - a) 90% or more of all degrees are at the master's or doctoral level; or
 - b) more than half of the degrees are master's or doctorates if the institution grants fewer than 50 undergraduate degrees.
- Undergraduate/Graduate – Doctorate: Institutions awarding both undergraduate and graduate degrees that either
 - a) grant at least 20 doctorates and where graduate degrees make up at least 25% of the total; or
 - b) confer 100 or more doctorates in total.
- Undergraduate/Graduate – Master's: Institutions awarding both undergraduate and graduate degrees that either
 - a) grant at least 50 combined master's and doctoral degrees with graduate programs making up at least 25% of all degrees; or
 - b) confer 200 or more master's and doctoral degrees.
- Associate/Baccalaureate: Institutions where between 50% and 90% of the awards are associate degrees and between 1% and 50% are bachelor's or higher.
- Baccalaureate: Of the remaining institutions that don't fall into the above classifications, at least half of all degrees are at the bachelor's level.
- Associate: Of the remaining institutions that don't fall into the above classifications, associate degrees make up at least half of all awards.

2. ACADEMIC PROGRAM MIX

This dimension identifies the fields in which institutions award most of their degrees through three categories. For Graduate-focused institutions (about 10% of institutions), only graduate degree data was used. For all other Award Level Focus categories (about 90% of institutions), only undergraduate degrees were considered. A Classification of Instructional Programs ([CIP code map](#)) is available for reference of which academic programs are associated with Carnegie's special focus and professions-focused categories (listed in **Table 1**).

- Special Focus: 50% or more degrees are awarded in a *single* academic field or a closely related set of fields
- Professions-focused: 50% or more of the degrees awarded are in pre-professional or career-aligned fields (*note, the degrees can be across multiple fields*)
- Mixed: Under 50% of degrees awarded in any one focus area

3. INSTITUTION SIZE

This dimension reflects the total 12-month headcount of enrolled students, counting full- and part-time students equally, and inclusive of both undergraduate and graduate students. Institutions are grouped into one of the following three categories:

- Small: Less than 4,000 students
- Medium: Between 4,000 and 20,000 students
- Large: At least 20,000 students

Institutions were assigned to one of 31 Institutional Classifications based on their unique combination of award level focus, academic program mix, and institution size. To enhance the usefulness of the classifications, categories were combined if they had fewer than 30 institutions. For example, Mixed Master's Large and Medium institutions are combined into a single classification (Mixed Master's Large/Medium). **Table 1** lists the 2025 Institutional Classifications.

Table 1. 2025 Institutional Classifications

Focus	2025 Institutional Classifications
Associate Colleges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed Associate Large • Mixed Associate Medium • Mixed Associate Small • Professions-focused Associate Large/Medium • Professions-focused Associate Small
Associate/Baccalaureate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed Associate/Baccalaureate • Professions-focused Associate/Baccalaureate
Baccalaureate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed Baccalaureate • Professions-focused Baccalaureate Medium • Professions-focused Baccalaureate Small
Undergraduate /Graduate – Master’s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed Master’s Large/Medium • Mixed Master’s Small • Professions-focused Master’s Large/Medium • Professions-focused Master’s Small
Undergraduate /Graduate – Doctorate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed Doctorate Large • Mixed Doctorate Medium • Mixed Doctorate Small • Professions-focused Doctorate Large • Professions-focused Doctorate Medium • Professions-focused Doctorate Small
Special & Graduate Focus Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied and Career Studies • Arts and Sciences • Arts, Music, and Design • Business • Graduate Studies • Law • Medical Schools and Centers • Nursing • Other Health Professions • Technology, Engineering, and Sciences • Theological Studies

The 2025 Institutional Classifications were based on a three-year average of institutional data reported to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) in 2021, 2022, and 2023 to better capture sustained patterns. Institutions that merged, opened, closed, or had other changes in organizational structure within the three-year time period were only classified based on relevant years of data.

In the 2021 Basic Carnegie Classifications, only one year of data was utilized, compared to the new methodology that uses a three-year average. The 2021 Basic Carnegie Classifications were based off highest degree level awarded, compared to the new 2025 methodology which looks at the level at which *most* degrees are awarded. Additionally, the 2025 classifications use 12-month headcount, replacing the previously used fall full-time equivalent (FTE) measure.

RESEARCH ACTIVITY DESIGNATIONS

The 2025 Carnegie Classifications report research activity separately from the Institutional Classification. Institutions are placed into one of three research activity designations based on just two factors – thresholds for research spending and doctoral production. This methodology is greatly simplified compared to the 2021 methodology for categorizing research activity, given that it assesses just two dimensions and is now a standalone designation. The data sources are total research expenditures from the Higher Education Research and Development (HERD) Survey in fiscal years 2021,

2022, and 2023, and doctorate degree—research/scholarship completions from IPEDS in 2021, 2022, and 2023. The 2025 designations use the higher of either the three-year average or the 2023 single-year data. In future releases, the designations will use only a three-year average. The 2025 Research Activity Designations include the following three categories:

- Research 1: Very High Spending and Doctorate Production.
≥ \$50 million in expenditures and ≥ 70 research doctorates awarded annually
 - 187 institutions classified Research 1 in 2025
- Research 2: High Spending and Doctorate Production.
≥ \$5 million in expenditures and ≥ 20 doctorates awarded annually
 - 139 institutions classified as Research 2 in 2025
- Research Colleges and Universities.
≥ \$2.5 million in expenditures and < 20 doctorates awarded annually
 - 216 institutions classified as Research Colleges and Universities in 2025

2025 CARNEGIE CLASSIFICATIONS FOR UT SYSTEM INSTITUTIONS

UT System institutions were represented in six 2025 Institutional Classifications. In addition, eight UT System institutions were designated Research 1 universities, three were designated Research 2 universities, and three were designated Research Colleges and Universities. **Table 2** presents the 2025 Carnegie Classifications for UT System institutions, detailing their Institutional Classifications and Research Activity Designations.

Table 2. 2025 Carnegie Classifications for UT System Institutions

Institution	Institutional Classification	Research Activity Designation
UT Arlington	Professions-focused Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Large	Research 1: Very High Spending and Doctorate Production
UT Austin	Mixed Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Large	Research 1: Very High Spending and Doctorate Production
UT Dallas	Mixed Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Large	Research 1: Very High Spending and Doctorate Production
UT El Paso	Mixed Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Large	Research 1: Very High Spending and Doctorate Production
UT Permian Basin	Mixed Undergraduate/Graduate-Master's Large/Medium	Research Colleges and Universities
UT Rio Grande Valley	Mixed Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Large	Research 2: High Spending and Doctorate Production
UT San Antonio	Mixed Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Large	Research 1: Very High Spending and Doctorate Production
Stephen F. Austin	Mixed Undergraduate/Graduate-Master's Large/Medium	Research Colleges and Universities
UT Tyler	Professions-focused Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Medium	Research 2: High Spending and Doctorate Production
UT Southwestern Medical Center	Special Focus: Medical Schools and Centers	Research 1: Very High Spending and Doctorate Production
UT Medical Branch - Galveston	Special Focus: Medical Schools and Centers	Research 2: High Spending and Doctorate Production
UT Health Science Center - Houston	Special Focus: Medical Schools and Centers	Research 1: Very High Spending and Doctorate Production
UT Health Science Center - San Antonio	Special Focus: Medical Schools and Centers	Research 1: Very High Spending and Doctorate Production

Institution	Institutional Classification	Research Activity Designation
UT MD Anderson Cancer Center	Special Focus: Other Health Professions	Research Colleges and Universities

UT System was fairly stable in research designations. All of the UT System academic institutions that received a Research 1 or Research 2 designation in the 2021 Basic Classifications maintained that distinction in the 2025 Research Activity Designations. With the updated Research Activity Designation methodology in 2025 that simplified the doctoral degree requirements and created a standalone designation, institutions that confer few to no doctoral degrees or are special-focus institutions can now receive a Research Activity Designation in 2025, as seen with UT Tyler, Stephen F. Austin, and the health-related institutions. Note that although UT MD Anderson Cancer Center far exceeds the research expenditure threshold for the Research 1 designation, they do not confer doctoral degrees, thus they have been assigned to the Research Colleges and Universities designation despite very high research activity.

CONCLUSION

The 2025 Carnegie Classifications offer a more structured lens through which to view the classifications of U.S. higher education institutions, allowing for more nuanced benchmarking and peer comparison. For UT System, these classifications reaffirm its standing as a national leader in higher education and research. With representation across the highest tiers of research activity and a wide range of institutional classifications, UT System demonstrates both depth and breadth in its academic and research missions. The separation of institutional and research designations in the new framework underscores the unique contributions of each campus—whether through advanced degree offerings, program focus, or intensive research output. As UT System continues to grow in scale and impact, the 2025 Carnegie Classifications provide a valuable, data-informed structure for understanding its evolving role in Texas, the nation, and the global higher education landscape.

Source: The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (n.d.). About Carnegie Classification. Retrieved from <http://carnegieclassifications.acenet.edu/>.