

April 7, 2014

Dear Members of the Carnegie Classification Committee,

Seven years ago, the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) was among the first universities to achieve the elective classification for "Community Engagement." Since our original classification in 2006, we have deepened and expanded our institutional commitment to community engagement. It's hard to believe, and a pleasure to share, the enormous momentum that continues to expand Community Engagement as a discipline at UNO.

A headline in the Omaha World-Herald on October 10, 2012, said "'Community engagement' more than buzz to UNO."

Community Engagement is not a buzzword to us. It's a commitment. It's a way of life. It's a passion.

UNO has a rich history of community engagement, and it is a central part of our overarching strategic plan – of being student centered, academically excellent, and engaged with our community.

Since we last applied for the classification, UNO has had significant success in developing our Community Engagement curriculum, resources, and recognition. This university is at the center of a thriving metropolitan region, and we serve as a catalyst for learning, engaged research and community service. Highlights include:

- *Celebrated our centennial with the theme "Central to our City."
- *Formalized our academic priorities with an overarching goal of engagement within each area including Early Childhood Education; STEM; Sustainability; and Global Engagement.
- *Honored by the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll every year since 2006.
- *Built the first-of-its-kind Community Engagement Center with all donations coming from the community. The phases leading to building the Center included fundraising, program development, groundbreaking and construction.
- *Expanded the Service Learning Academy's university-community reach. Examples include increasing permanent staff, adding additional operational budget and developing extensive P-16 partnerships.
- *Created "The Collaborative" to give student-directed service and volunteer transformations opportunities for UNO students to become involved in action projects and programs which create positive social change in our community and beyond.

*Welcomed the "Barbara A. Holland Collection for Service Learning and Community Engagement" into the permanent collection at the Criss Library. This is the world's largest collection of research literature on how to connect teaching and scholarship to community needs.

*Selected to host the 2013 International Association for Research in Service Learning and Community Engagement (IARSLCE) and the 2015 Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities (CUMU) in Omaha on UNO's campus.


Another highlight for me personally was serving as the President of CUMU from 2010-2012. I currently serve as the President Emeritus through 2014 and will continue as an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee serving as Conference Host in 2015. As the CUMU websites states, members have a "shared mission to use the power of campuses in education, research, and service to enhance the communities in which they are located." This affiliation with CUMU has elevated UNO's community engagement work to national prominence and has given our campus an opportunity to work with national peers on issues central to our mission.

We have worked diligently to transform UNO into a premier metropolitan university. Using our strong, authentic framework of engagement, our university looks forward to another century of giving back to our community and providing our students with active engagement learning opportunities.

In a recent Freshman Entry Survey, many students stated that one of the important factors in making a decision about coming to UNO was the fact that they could participate in the community along with opportunities to be involved in applied learning. Current examples include: 16 signature "Days of Service" events such as Three Days of Service and Seven Days of Service programs; service and volunteer opportunities supported by Student Affairs; and 160 courses which include service learning activities included throughout the campus curricula.

We strive to provide our students with unlimited opportunities to be involved in service, service learning, internships, practica and community based research. By growing these opportunities, we will continue to grow and strengthen our relationship with the Omaha community as a whole while also benefiting our student's educational learning.

Sincerely,



John E. Christensen
Chancellor
University of Nebraska at Omaha