

FSLI Project: Pathway to R2 for Central State University.

Dr. Shafiqur Rahman, Associate Research Director, Central State University

Introduction and Background (The Problem)

Central State University (CSU) is primarily an undergraduate institution and the newest 1890 institution. Since receiving Land-Grant status in 2014, our research expenditures have increased significantly, exceeding \$ 10 million. As a result, CSU is classified as a Research College and University under the Carnegie Classification system in 2025. However, due to the undergraduate teaching institution, research was not a high priority until we received the L-G status in 2014. We have hired excellent research faculty members, and our research expenditure exceeds \$10 million, which justifies our long-term goal to be recognized as an R2 institution in the Carnegie Classification. Thus, the long-term objective of this project is to develop graduate programs to achieve R2 status within 10 years by awarding at least 20 research doctorates at Central State University.

The Plan (The Project)

Develop a step-by-step plan for Central State to advance from Research College and University to R2 status under the Carnegie Classification. Some of the steps are listed below:

I. Strengthen Research Capacity & Infrastructure (Years 1–5)

For continual success, the following steps are needed:

- Invest in Research Facilities & Equipment
- Expand Research Funding & Productivity
- Strengthen the Office of Research & Sponsored Programs (ORSP)

II. Expand Graduate Education & Establish Doctoral Pathways (Years 1–5)

To achieve R2 status at Central State in 10 years, we need positive collaborations from Academic Affairs, Graduate Studies, Academic Colleges and Departments, and faculty researchers from ARDP to develop graduate Programs **Leading to PhD Programs** in Agriculture, data science, Environmental Science, and STEM fields.

III. Increase Faculty Research & Scholarly Output (Years 1–7)

Currently, Central State has 27 full professors, 39 associate professors, and 47 assistant professors. Of them, 10 faculty members have 100% research appointments in the Agricultural Research and Development Program (ARDP), and two faculty members have 50% research appointments. Thus, there are opportunities to leverage in-house expertise to develop new graduate courses and hire new faculty members in emerging areas to enhance the research portfolio and output. If each research faculty member supervises 1-2 PhD students with resources, achieving the threshold target required by the Carnegie classification in 10 years is doable.

Progress (Implementation)

Achieving R2 status is part of our 2030 strategic plan and beyond. A couple of graduate programs have been approved already by the Board of Trustees (BoT). However, they need further approval from the state and the Ohio Higher Ed Chancellor's Council on Graduate Studies (CCGS) to the Chancellor's Office and the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). The university administration is highly invested in this effort, and it is achievable.

Potential Obstacles at Central State University:

There are several potential obstacles to achieving an R2 classification by the Carnegie Classification, as listed below:

1. Resource limitations and research infrastructure constraints - Limited research labs, outdated technology, and inadequate research facilities.
2. Faculty Recruitment & Retention – Challenges in hiring and retaining talented research faculty due to competitive salary structure and location
3. Graduate Program Development and Pipeline to PhD Programs – Currently, there are no graduate programs except for the MBA. CSU needs to develop at least five research-intensive master's and doctoral programs. Attract talented graduate students by offering financial support in this competitive recruitment
4. Research funding limitation – Research funding is highly competitive. Need for increased proposal submission and success rate in securing federal and industry grants through interdisciplinary collaborative projects
5. Administrative and State-Level Support – Leadership priority changes may not have a stronger institutional commitment, and insufficient state funding commitment might hinder progress.

FSLI Program Impact

The FSLI program strengthened my understanding of active listening, power dynamics, identifying key players in decision-making, and the value of building teams. I also understand the value of leaving the workplace in a better place than when I arrived, reflecting success.