March 19, 2014

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
51 Vista Lane
Stanford, CA 94305

To the Members of the 2015 Carnegie Community Engagement Classification Evaluation Team:

Partnerships are powerful ingredients for success, and they have been a mainstay of UCF’s culture since its beginnings 50 years ago. Indeed, one of the five goals I articulated when I became president was for UCF “to be America’s leading partnership university.” For, it is through engagement with the community that we best leverage our resources to tackle problems, create opportunities, and make our greatest contributions to society.

At UCF, we have always partnered with the community—we have aligned our programs of study and research with the needs of the regional community and the regional economy to our mutual benefit. And in doing so, the university has had global impact.

There are many, many examples of partnerships, volunteerism, and engagement with our community: UCF hosts the world’s largest partnership between a university and Junior Achievement. More than 20,000 of our students participate annually in experiential learning through co-op, internships, and service-learning courses. With these examples and additional projects sponsored by our Greek organizations, Volunteer UCF, and Knights Give Back, UCF students contributed 270,732 hours in service to our community in 2012.

One of our most successful partnerships is the UCF medical school that was established in large part through community support. http://med.ucf.edu/giving/. It and the medical city that has grown up around it are predicted to generate 30,000 jobs, $2.8 billion in annual wages, $460 million in annual tax revenue, and a $7.6 billion impact on the regional economy by 2017. And last May, every member of the medical school’s charter class graduated debt-free because of a full four-year scholarship given by a community member, business, or organization. med.ucf.edu/giving/scholarship-program/charter-class-scholarship-donors/

Our colleges and support units have so embraced our community engagement mission that many have dedicated offices to support these endeavors—for example, the Burnett Honors College’s Office of Research and Civic Engagement, the College of Health and Public Affairs’ Center for Community Partnerships, and Student Development and Enrollment Services’ Office of Student Involvement.

This ongoing commitment to community service and engagement was recognized in 2012 by our selection to the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll. Robert Velasco, acting CEO of the Corporation for National Community Service, remarked that the institutions named to the honor roll “are creating the next generation of leaders by challenging students to
tackle tough issues and create positive impacts in the community.”

Similarly, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators selected UCF to be a lead institution for 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 in a national initiative that seeks to make civic involvement part of every student's college education by building civic learning and democratic engagement activities into the strategic goals and learning outcomes of their student affairs divisions. http://www.naspa.org/focus-areas/civic-learning-and-democratic engagement;  http://www.naspa.org/rpi/lead-initiative

I am proud of our engagement with our community. As I’ve said many times, the great UCF success story has many contributors—students, faculty and staff members, alumni, elected officials, government leaders, businesses, non-profit organizations, donors, and many others. Working together, we have become America's leading partnership university.™

Cordially yours,

John C. Hitt
President