

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, MERCED

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SANTA BARBARA • SANTA CRUZ

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, MERCED
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May 28, 2012

Dear AASHE Stars Committee:

When UC Merced was founded, a key principle of the campus was to build a regional model of sustainability so that others could learn from the University as to how to accommodate anticipated growth without compromising environmental resources.

To achieve that goal, UC Merced adopted the 2009 Long Range Development Plan, which provides a model for sustainable development in a region that has significant resource challenges. Clean energy, clean air and clean water are issue of national significance, but they are particularly relevant in the Central Valley, a region that often ranks as the most challenged air shed in the country. The 2009 UC Merced LRDP takes up these environmental challenges by establishing “**triple zero policies**” to provide 100% renewable energy, zero waste and achieve carbon neutrality by 2020, when the campus is expected to reach 10,000 students. These goals are accomplished through design standards, monitoring and technological innovations that are deployed in addition to the campus standard that requires all buildings to meet LEED Gold. This triple zero goal has already resulted in substantial results:

- Of the existing eleven buildings, ten are certified or pending LEED Gold and one is silver. The next four buildings are targeting LEED Platinum.
- Campus buildings are designed to use 50% less energy and 40% less water than comparable projects.
- An on-site solar array routinely produces half of campus electricity when the sun is shining and 1/6th of annual electricity needs.

In addition, the campus’ “**triple zero**” master plan approach to sustainability has been recognized with awards by state, local and national experts on sustainability, such as:

- *American Institute of Architects, Top Ten Green Award (2012)*
- *Governor’s Economic/Environmental Leadership Award, Land Use Planning Award (2009);*
- *American Institute Of Architects, California Council, Award Of Merit, Urban Design (2010);*
- *Association Of Environmental Professionals, Outstanding Planning Document Award (2009);*
- *Society Of College And University Planning, Honor Award, Plan For An Existing Campus (2011);*

These results and information sharing are only possible because the triple zero commitment has been deeply embedded into the building design, operation and fabric of the campus plan. As one reviewer has remarked:

“This is a profound example of taking the long view of the built environment, setting out an early plan, identifying benchmarks, designing and building a campus, seeing if you are meeting your benchmarks, and continuous improvement until hopefully you reach the goals of zero energy and zero waste for 10,000 students in 2010. It’s an astonishing ambition and they are on track.”

-Jury Comment, American Institute of Architects, <http://www.aiatopten.org/node/88>

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Cummings".

Richard Cummings
Principal Planner