



University of California, Merced
5200 N. Lake Road
Merced, CA 95343

February 19, 2016

Dear AASHE Committee:

I am writing in affirmation of the efforts of University of California, Merced (UC Merced) to conduct successful research, outreach and education in the area of sustainability, specifically water sustainability innovation. The University of California Water Security and Sustainability Research Initiative, also known as UC Water, strives to integrate research and praxis for the long-term sustainability of water resources in California and beyond. After a devastating drought, UC Water was funded by the University of California Office of the President for the period of 2015-2018. The UC Water leadership, especially director and UC Merced Founding Professor Roger Bales, co-director Associate Professor Joshua Viers, and UC Merced campus lead Professor Martha Conklin, set out to establish the water research program at UC Merced in part because of its heritage of community engagement, experience in innovative engineering solutions for environmental problems, and emphasis on sustainability.

In the interest of representing the campuses efforts in sustainability research, I am writing as the program coordinator for UC Water to the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). We seek innovation credit because we are conducting groundbreaking, interdisciplinary research with clear practical and policy implications. For example, our research links surface water and groundwater monitoring and modeling so they can be managed as an integrated resource. We also ensure that our research meets the needs of stakeholders and decision-makers. We meet all of the criteria for innovation credit in line with the [document sections noted here](#):

- B.1 Our unique research that is not affiliated with any other STARS credit.
- B.3 Our research directly impacts the area surrounding UC Merced in California's Sacramento and San Joaquin Valley's groundwater resources and the headwater areas that feed the campus. In fact, some of the water resources we study travel through the campus.
- B.4 We were funded in 2015.

- B.5 We have already developed sustainable technologies for measuring and monitoring water resources throughout the state. Our work will continue in terms of modeling and institutionalizing this information.
- B.8 Our research is cutting-edge and has not been developed for other projects and will bring new technology to the water management system.
- B.9 Our research brings together a variety of technologies to accomplish overall water sustainability.

More information about our innovative work is available at the UC Water website (<http://ucwater.org>). Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

As an advocate and scholar of sustainability I am proud to work for UC Merced on water sustainability for our state and to help us weather this drought and the next.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Leigh A. Bernacchi". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Leigh A. Bernacchi, PhD
UC Water program coordinator