



STARS Steering Committee  
Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE)  
2401 Walnut Street, Suite 201  
Philadelphia, PA

May 27, 2022

Re: Executive Letter of Support for Baldwin Wallace University's STARS Report

Members of the STARS Steering Committee:

With the submission of our second STARS report, Baldwin Wallace University is pleased to recommit to being a leader in sustainability. Concern for the triple bottom line remains part and parcel of our university's mission to prepare students to be contributing, compassionate global citizens. As detailed in our latest STARS submission, our university has made strides on many fronts since our previous report in 2019:

- We continue to heat and cool seven large university buildings with geothermal installations.
- We continue to power facilities with wind and solar energy. Likewise, we now own one of most substantial solar arrays on our Center for Innovation and Growth.
- We engage in considerable water runoff remediation efforts via bioswales and vegetated swales across campus.
- We source our paper from FSC certified suppliers.
- We compost our food waste via the Grind2Energy system from our primary dining facility.
- We have developed new app-based technology with the support of a generous US Environmental Protection Agency grant to capture additional food waste and fight food insecurity on campus also establishing multiple staffed Sustainable Food Stops with refrigerators to serve multiple constituencies on campus.
- We have diverted over one million additional plastic bottles from the waste stream via our EZH2O filling stations across the campus since our last STARS report.
- We were 2022 participants in the Campus Race to Zero Waste sponsored by the National Wildlife Federation

- Our cleaning products are sustainably sourced through Aramark's Green Thread Platform.

Moreover, considerations about sustainable development in our building projects, renovations, and landscaping are integrated into the fabric of how we envision our future and collaborate with our surrounding community. For instance, our newest facility, the Austin E. [Knowlton Center](#) for STEM completed in January of 2021, features an exposed elevator shaft wrapped in salvaged campus tree wood.

In addition to the important efforts related to our physical footprint and community outreach, we offer a robust, interdisciplinary Sustainability major, the first in Ohio, which involves seventeen departments and influences the educational experience of hundreds of students each year. Our faculty are engaged in a broad array of research projects related to sustainability, with fifteen departments having at least one faculty member conducting such research. Since our last STARS report, multiple papers by faculty have gone to press in journals such as *Environmental Development* on renewable energy, *Economic Modeling* on environmental awareness, *African Development Review* on food insecurity, *Journal of the Torrey Botanical Society* on tree community composition and structure, *Nicotine and Tobacco Research* on the effects of flavored waterpipe tobacco on consumers, and the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* on the disproportionate effects of tuberculosis on immigrant and underserved communities in the United States. We are proud that the Sierra Club ranked us 5<sup>th</sup> in Ohio for sustainability research in 2020.

Current and future directions of sustainability initiatives include our innovative activities related to ameliorating food insecurity and reducing food waste. As a signatory member of President's United to Solve Hunger (PUSH), we have partnered with a number of organizations to redress hunger issues faced by our students and the local region. As a result of a team of students in our Sustainability Capstone course last year, BW's Dining Service director has worked with Gordon Food Service's new Clear Choice Program to identify our food items that are ethically and sustainably sourced along with engaging in significant outreach to our vegetarian and vegan students via signage, messaging, and additional menu options.

Simultaneously, the Director of Community Engagement is growing our Sustainable Food Stop Recovery Program and we are working on establishing an official relationship with the Food Recovery Network which we expect to launch in the fall of this year. Finally, a joint research project between our Sustainability Program and the Computer Science department received generous grant funding from the US Environmental Protection Agency to develop a food app to redress the organizational challenges which inhere in recovering and distributing food rapidly to those in need. This aligns with our key University Learning Outcome of Civic Engagement which

emphasizes that our students engage in the life of our community and participate in matters of public concern.

Just as importantly, our institution has taken a significant leadership stance on social justice and equity. Shortly after submitting our previous STARS report, in April of 2019, BW ended our formal affiliation with the United Methodist Church (UMC) by unanimous vote of the Board of Trustees. The vote comes in response to a recent UMC special general conference decision to tighten church prohibitions on same-sex marriage and exclude LGBT persons from the clergy. Our decision to disaffiliate affirms the beliefs of BW's Methodist founders who were committed to inclusion 174 years ago. As such, we appointed professor Ana Boe as LGBTQ services coordinator. Through this office, we have continued to build support and resources for LGBT students ranging from Safe Zone training to LGBTQ scholarships. We also renewed our rating with the Campus Pride Index earning 4 of 5 stars and are committed to continuing this positive momentum. As a result of this leadership position, PFLAG Cleveland (Parents, Friends, Families & Allies United with LGBTQ People to Move Equality Forward) honored Baldwin Wallace University with the 2019 Bruce G. Kriete Community Award which is annually presented "to an individual, organization or group that has promoted understanding and acceptance of Northeast Ohio's gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender citizens, and their families and friends."

As an institution with particular strengths in community engagement and study abroad, we also provide a wide variety of opportunities for students to be involved in service-learning activities related to the environment and social justice both domestically and internationally. To express a few highlights, in the 2021-2022 academic year, through our Campus Plate program, we recovered over 1,000 meals from Dining Service operations to reduce food waste and fight food insecurity on campus. Likewise, we implemented Swipe Out Hunger allowing students to donate excess meal swipes to those in need along with establishing a Student Emergency Grant fund providing \$18,237 in mini-grants to help support students struggling to pay for groceries, rent, utilities, childcare, and transportation. We hosted our fifth annual Social Change Summit as an event for student growth in the spirit of Martin Luther King, Jr. including a Social Change Pitch competition. Finally, our faculty in coordination with the Brain Center delivered 23 service-learning courses populated with 266 students and involving 34 local community partners to put into practice our service-learning ideas.

We also recognize that particularly at this stressful moment of health challenges, our students, faculty, and staff have needed extra support. Thus, we have strengthened initiatives such as TAO Connect, a free online service for stress management and more. We also have developed an employee Mind Spa offering space and amenities for stress management and relaxation. The university has a diverse employee Wellness Advisory Council that helps to shape the direction of our well-being strategy. We assess those needs formally every 2-3 years via a campus-wide survey. As a result of the pandemic, we successfully transitioned our campus wide Wellfest, an

event that highlights campus and community health and well-being resources, to a virtual platform. We provide many other services via The University Health Center, Counseling Center, Recreation center, and Student Affairs programming to meet student health and well-being needs.

As we move forward, we are energized to build upon many other initiatives across campus. Some other ongoing initiatives include:

- A BW Green Pledge facilitated by ResLife to reduce our institution's carbon footprint
- A project evaluating campus recycling receptacles and bags to increase recycling practices along with reducing further our plastic waste.
- A partnership between the Sustainability and Engineering Programs engaging students in competitions to design and prototype sustainable, biomimetic products.
- Weekly Service Program where Serve Team participants assist those in need such as making blankets for children, raking leaves for elderly city residents, and providing gifts to children in foster care.

Compiling this report has once again provided an important moment to holistically assess and reflect upon our progress in sustainability as an institution. We are proud of the record of investment in sustainable praxis that this report demonstrates. Indeed, we signed the Talloires Declaration in 2020 as a symbol of our ongoing commitment to environmental sustainability and stewardship. We look forward to continuing to stand alongside so many other educational institutions that are dedicated to our sustainable future.

Sincerely,



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