

January 08, 2020

The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education  
2401 Walnut Street, Suite 102  
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Subject: Bennington College STARS Submission Dear Steering

Dear Steering Committee Members:

It is my distinct pleasure to present Bennington College's first submission to AASHE's Sustainability Tracking Assessment & Rating System (STARS). The information compiled in this report has been checked for accurate characterization of the Bennington College campus and initiatives related to sustainability.

Bennington College was founded in 1932 to serve as a laboratory for innovation in higher education. We continue to honor this legacy by aiming to educate students towards self-fulfillment and constructive social purposes in an increasingly complex global society. As sustainability has become an imperative issue of global dimensions, the College has undertaken a number of institutional measures and initiatives to advance the long-term health, well-being and harmonious co-existence of human and non-human actors at the college and beyond.

This STARS report is the fruit of years of data collection, assessment and conceptualization of our sustainability efforts. It was carried through cross-departmental collaboration and the eager participation of students, staff, and faculty. Through this process we had a valuable opportunity to comprehensively assess the multiple dimensions across which the College works to advance its commitment to sustainability.

- At the institutional level, Bennington College has been working closely with Efficiency Vermont for 12 years. We have partnered to work together to reduce electrical use, install efficient equipment, and reduce our carbon footprint. Particularly, we continue to work with the Continuous Energy Improvement (CEI) process to improve our energy efficiency usage and reduce carbon emission. The College remains determined and committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2030.
- As a global actor and regional partner, Bennington College has launched initiatives and collaborative efforts that advance sustainability along local, regional and global dimensions. Among these numerous efforts, we want to highlight [Empty Bowls](#) and [Beyond Plastics](#).
  - Bennington Empty Bowls soup supper supports the Kitchen Cupboard of Greater Bennington Interfaith Community Services (GBICS) which provides food for one quarter of Bennington's population.

- Beyond Plastics is an initiative housed in the College's Center for Advancement of Public Action that works with college students and community leaders around the country to reduce plastic pollution. This project features interdisciplinary curricular offerings intertwined with practical initiatives that aim to enact meaningful political change through policy.
- At the core of these efforts lies our unrelenting and dedicated curricular approach that treats the passions and interests of our students as fundamental to a meaningful education. The rigorous self-directed learning practiced by Bennington College students has translated into organic curricular offerings related to substantiality. It is far from hyperbolic to assert that at Bennington students shape the curriculum as much as the curriculum shapes them. In recent years we have observed an ever-increasing level of interest and commitment from our students to tackle a number of issues in curricular and cocurricular settings, ranging from food insecurity and sustainable food production to the dangers of global plastics production and the pollution of our water sources by toxic chemicals.

Bennington College is committed to continue this critically important work across all levels and dimensions mentioned above, both at the College and beyond.

This report was assembled with the collaboration of staff, faculty members and students committed to meaningfully advance sustainability and the well-being of our environments. I thank them for their dedicated work, commend them for their commitment and pledge my support to amplify and continue these efforts.

Sincerely,  
Laura Walker  
President of Bennington College