

October 5, 2015

Dear AASHE STARS Program,

I am writing with my perspective on the Boreas Leadership Program as an innovative program within the University of Minnesota.

Boreas is based at the Institute on the Environment (IonE), a cross-university institute created to make progress on pressing social and environmental challenges. IonE works to create relationships, networks, research models, and educational innovations to discover solutions and develop the leaders to help make the transition. The focus on leadership development is based on the idea that making progress on solutions requires more people engaged in leadership and these people having the skills to perform effectively as leaders.

Boreas is innovative in its focus on developing leadership and change agents within graduate education. The program creates a space for students that cuts across identities of discipline, research, and education focus. Boreas puts leadership and acting as a change agent at the center. Acting as a leader is hard, especially when working on difficult challenges, and Boreas creates a community to value and support emerging leaders. This kind of focus is uncommon in graduate education.

The Boreas workshop curriculum is also innovative, bringing together practical skill development in communications and media, integrative leadership, public skills, and systems thinking and tools. By overlaying Boreas workshops on their graduate education, students have a more fully-developed set of tools to act at change agents in society.

Finally, Boreas is innovative in its cross-disciplinary makeup. Boreas workshops and events frequently draw students from more than half a dozen colleges, combining perspectives of business, ecology, sociology, policy design, and more. Boreas is co-curricular, meaning any student can add it to their graduate education experience. It is also very flexible, which allows busy graduate students to add Boreas to their education when it makes sense for them. This design allows students from different disciplines and graduate programs access Boreas.

As society continues to work on making progress on big challenges, we will need more and better-prepared leaders to step up and into leadership. Boreas is an innovative program preparing graduate students for this needed leadership pipeline.

Sincerely,



Laura Bloomberg
Associate Dean