April 18, 2011

To Whom It May Concern,

The College of St. Benedict highly values sustainability of our institution, community and planet. Throughout the course of the Year of Sustainability, we have continued to make improvements within our college to be more sustainable in the future.

As part of this initiative, we have passed a resolution to ban the sale of plain bottled water on campus starting the fall of 2011. This was the result of student support as well as support from various administrative venues. Our hope is to spread awareness about the social, economic and environmental costs in the production and distribution of bottled water. From the AASHE website, we see that we are the tenth higher education institution in the country to take this step.

As the new Director of Sustainability, I was asked by the President of the College, to look into the issue of plain drinking water in plastic bottles. In order to do this, I convened the Bottled Water Initiative Task Force.  Comprised of representatives from the student body, facilities, culinary services, auxiliary services and the administration, this group began with a visioning process centered on the following question: Envision a campus that has sustainably addressed the challenge of bottled water.  What do you see?  The consensus was that CSB should move forward with a ban.  From here, the group identified 3 main areas that needed to be addressed in order to be successful; a policy must be drafted and vetted, water availability and alternative options to plain, bottled water must be identified, and an education, awareness and communication plan should be developed and implemented.   Challenge areas for implementing a policy to ban bottled water were identified and solutions developed.

The CSB Bottled Water Policy was endorsed by the CSB Cabinet on February 1, the Sustainability Council on February 4, and the Student Senate, on February 9.  The policy goes into effect in August 2011 at the start of the new academic year.

 The College of St. Benedict hopes to be a leader in other sustainable practices in the future. This policy will help promote personal sustainable practices on campus and beyond. Our hope is to educate students, staff and the community about the importance of sustainable practices. I believe this bottled water policy is an innovative way to do just that.

Sincerely,

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