



# Middlebury

Middlebury College  
Middlebury, Vermont 05753

January 10, 2010

Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS)

To whom it may concern,

We are writing this letter in support of Middlebury College's STARS application. We have the privilege of being part of a new, groundbreaking, and unique project effort here at Middlebury that we believe qualifies for a STARS Innovation Credit.

In November of 2009, Middlebury College submitted a proposal to compete in the U.S. Department of Energy Solar Decathlon 2011. After being shortlisted and submitting a conceptual design to the judges, we were selected as one of twenty international teams for the competition. Since then we have been planning for, fundraising for, designing, and preparing for the construction of a 100% solar-powered house to be on exhibit on the National Mall in September of this year.

This is the fifth competition since 2002. However, Team Middlebury College is the first Liberal Arts College to compete in the competition without partnering with another institution with professional, graduate programs in Architecture and Engineering. At the competition, Judges evaluate each home in ten different qualitative and quantitative categories from energy efficiency, to architecture, to communications. The houses will be open to the public and are likely to see more than 300,000 visitors each. We believe our liberal arts, humanities approach to the project is unique and will be well-received among the high-tech, expensive, living machines of competitions past.

While we act as faculty advisors to this project, the effort is primarily student-driven. With enthusiastic support from the college administration, these students have procured the professional, educational, and material resources necessary to actually design and build this house. The student team, at last count, boasts over 65 students from more than 18 majors. These students bring a deep knowledge of sustainability to the project from their various disciplines. Their collective wisdom, we believe, is much more powerful than that of an exclusive group of architecture and engineering students. In fact, the committees formed to execute the work, include: copyediting, education and outreach, materials chemistry, and vegetable garden and landscape in addition to the more conventional teams for design and construction.

All decisions made about the project are rooted in the conviction that for the environmental movement to succeed, it must be accessible to everyone. Intentionally, our house is not super-modern, complicated, or expensive. Instead our home, called Self-Reliance, provides a framework for its inhabitants and passers-by to learn about and easily incorporate alternative energy solutions and other sustainable living strategies into their lives.

The most remarkable thing about this project is not the house itself, rather the initiative, energy, and commitment that Solar Decathlon students have for sustainable living. They are participating in this effort to affect change and make the world a better place. This may be something they learned from their parents, but it is also something one cannot help but inherit upon becoming part of the Middlebury College community. Reciprocally, these students enhance the overall sustainability literacy on campus.

Finally, instead of just reading and writing about sustainability, in true Middlebury fashion; this project allows students to practice it. As a result of the 'doing,' the learning is greatly enhanced.

Please do consider this effort for an innovation credit. As noted above, it is innovative for multiple reasons from the reality of building an actual house to our liberal arts approach to the project as a whole. Please feel free to contact either of us should you wish to discuss this effort further.

Sincerely,

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CC/cc