

Dear AASHE STARS Program Staff,

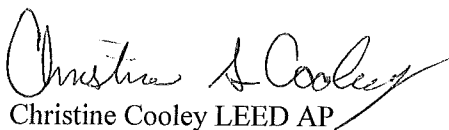
Pacific Lutheran University would like to submit our students' strong involvement in sustainability planning as an innovation point for your review. PLU has pursued an exceptional level of sustainability through student-led initiatives, employment and community. PLU's Sustainability Office employs between twenty-five to thirty paid students each semester, creating one of the largest sustainability organization of its type in the nation for a university of PLU's size. Each student employee is charged with choosing a special topic in which s/he creates a project. Thus, at least twenty-five projects addressing unique aspects of sustainability are conducted each semester, many carrying on between semesters and academic years. The true innovation of PLU's Sustainability Office lies not only in its size but in the effectiveness of the students' efforts.

The nature of the Sustainability Office lends to the sharing of ideas and suggestions in a large group of students, fostering collaboration and knowledge between the Office employees and other students on campus. PLU demonstrates a new way of approaching sustainability through its employment of students. The intentionality behind peer education has enabled greater success than full time staff could ever have accomplished independently. The Office is an atmosphere that breeds strong peer educators, and PLU believes that peer education is one of the strongest psychological drivers for behavior changes such as recycling and energy reduction.

Each student is responsible for helping collect and sort recycling on campus, while also having the freedom to pursue programming, projects, and events that they feel are pertinent and integral to the overall sustainability at PLU. Because student employees are so directly involved in behind-the-scenes sustainability operations, they are able to form more complete solutions to problems they identify. With so many students promoting different projects, sustainability develops many unique faces on PLU's campus and promotes widespread implementation and influence. Past students have brought about the creation of the bike coop, going paperless in our conduct system, unPLUG energy challenge, and much more.

In this way, student voice is heard and acted upon in a very real way, and students are compensated for their efforts. This program is innovative because it allows for so many students to be able to feasibly put into action their own ideas of what sustainability should look like based on complete information and with professional guidance from the Sustainability Manager.

Sincerely,



Christine Cooley LEED AP
Sustainability Manager
Pacific Lutheran University
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