



March 18, 2014

Green Mountain College STARS Innovation Credit: "Thanks & Giving"

To Whom It May Concern:

As a sustainability professional with nearly eight years of experience in the small college environment – first at Green Mountain College, then at Unity College – I became very familiar with the STARS program. I completed a STARS v1.1 report as liaison, instructed a course on STARS, co-presented an AASHE STARS webinar, and served early on as a STARS Technical Advisor – chiefly on the development of credits related to service and civic engagement. I have reviewed supporting documents for Green Mountain College's "Thanks & Giving" program, and I believe it merits Innovation Credit in GMC's forthcoming STARS report.

"Thanks & Giving" exceeds the highest criteria of AASHE's "Public Engagement" sub-category primarily because of the depth of community engagement by all parties involved. By design and by nature, the program engenders an authentic integration of the college and local communities to build social capital, intentionally creating an atmosphere of collaboration, celebration, and unity. "Thanks & Giving" lays the foundation of trust and reciprocity that is built on through a myriad of other partnerships and programs connecting Green Mountain College and the greater Poultney Community ("Poultney 2020," for example).

Green Mountain College and its students, through "Thanks & Giving," are creating a platform for community engagement that extends beyond stronger "Town-Gown" relations. The initiative connects community members and individuals to one another regardless of their direct relationships with the College, strengthening the social health of the community for all, while recognizing students as influential community members. "Thanks & Giving" is not strictly service as EN12 defines it, and it is not a structured partnership as described by EN9. It's a focused, innovative approach to long-term community building and worthy of recognition as such.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of additional support to GMC's application.

Sincerely,

Jesse B. Pyles, Executive Director  
Smokey House Center

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Executive Director

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