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# Green Mountain College

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July 22, 2014

Ms. Stephanie A. Herrera  
Executive Director  
Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education  
1536 Wynkoop St. Suite 100  
Denver, CO 80202

Dear Ms. Herrera,

Since the late 1990s, Green Mountain College has been a national leader in sustainability. We set the stage by the creation of our Environmental Liberal Arts Core Curriculum, which was the first such curriculum in the country, thereby allowing sustainability to permeate all of our educational programs. We have “walked the talk” by creating an active sustainable farming operation on campus and, in 2011, just four years after our signing of the President’s Climate Commitment, reaching climate neutrality through a 30% reduction in actual emissions.

Over the last five years, we have reduced our highly polluting number six fuel oil usage from 230,000 gallons a year to 34,000 by building a biomass plant to heat central campus, installing 160 kW of solar panels, banning the sale of bottled water, and divesting from fossil fuels. We also expanded our academic offerings to include a full-fledged Renewable Energy and Ecological Design major, a Sustainable Food Systems major, a Master’s program in Sustainable Food Systems, and a Master’s program in Resilient and Sustainable Communities.

Most importantly, we made sustainability the focal point of our new college-wide strategic plan, Sustainability 2020. In the plan, we aim to achieve authentic sustainability by the year 2020. Authentic sustainability requires expanding beyond the standard environmental focus to put equal weight into financial, social, and human capital, both on campus, and in our region. We will accomplish this by not only minimizing our negative impact on the world but also by having a net positive impact through restoration projects, community building, and alumni impact.

To measure progress toward the plan, we formed a task force in 2012, which created a set of 27 metrics that were vetted with the campus community through a community conversation in the spring of 2013. By fall of 2013, data collection began through close collaboration between key staff members and classes. For example, in the spring of 2014, we completed an inventory of social and human capital on campus, which included assessing the trust and associations between people, levels of diversity and inclusion, personal well-being, grit, intellectual development, and the impact our alumni have on the world after they graduate (both socially and environmentally). This inventory is the most comprehensive one we are aware of in higher education. Having this baseline data will allow us to assess the efficacy of various strategies we implement to improve these areas, such as Poultney 2020, a town-wide effort between students, staff, faculty, and community members to build local vibrancy through creation of a public park, a stronger trails system, a local food network, and an arts center.

Our STARS report highlights these efforts in greater detail. The information presented in the report is current and accurate to the best of our knowledge. Data collection was led by the Sustainability Office with oversight from the Provost’s Office and collaboration with over two dozen key faculty and staff members.

As institutions of higher education filled with brilliant minds and impassioned activists, we are in the driver’s seat for creating the sustainable world we want. Therefore, we must serve as models for that world. Change begins with higher education.



Paul J. Fonteyn  
President, Green Mountain College