



VCU

February 27, 2018

STARS Steering Committee
Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education
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Dear Committee Members:

On behalf of Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), it is my pleasure to submit our 2018 Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS) report. This report is an accurate representation of our current sustainability practices, policies and standards. We are proud to share our accomplishments and progress to date, as reflected in our Gold-level STARS certification.

This year marks 10 years since VCU became a signatory to the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment, as well as the establishment of the VCU Office of Sustainability. In this decade of engagement, VCU has made substantial progress in our commitment to sustainability. We have developed and implemented a university-wide Sustainability Plan garnering input from campus stakeholders, as well as from the residents of our surrounding neighborhoods. Our plan is comprehensive in nature and will guide sustainability efforts for the university for years to come.

Highlights of our 2018 STARS report include:

- Combatting food insecurity through increased production in our learning gardens, infusing new and existing curricula with food production principles and offering education opportunities to our neighbors.
- Working with VCU Life Sciences to develop a VCU-specific Urban Forestry Initiative, which includes inventorying existing street trees both within and surrounding campus and working with local nonprofits to plant additional needed trees thereby increasing the tree canopy not only on our campus but in the surrounding neighborhoods as well.
- Tripling the number of courses infused with sustainability since our last STARS submissions.
- Since 2015, faculty have worked tirelessly to include sustainability in learning outcomes, with much success.

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- In 2015, through effective advocacy, VCU began utilizing a landfill that practices methane capture with a resultant decrease in our greenhouse gas emissions.

Sustainability has become a guiding principal in the administration's decision-making process. VCU has made the sustainability staff an integral partner in the development process for our new strategic plan Quest 2025, our Health System's 10-year Capital Plan, as well as our university-wide master plan, One VCU.

VCU looks forward to continuing to strive toward sustainability excellence.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Rao". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a long, sweeping tail.

Michael Rao
President
VCU and VCU Health System