



July 25, 2011

Re: STARS innovation credit affirmation

Dear Sir / Madam,

Please accept this letter as affirmation that the University of Alberta's Green & Gold community garden meets the necessary criteria for the AASHE STARS assessment.

This is the Green & Gold community garden's third season of operation. Dr. Sarah Bowen, a Professor in the School of Public Health at the University of Alberta, started the garden project in 2009. Dr. Bowen saw the potential of a small plot of land on the University's south campus and proposed the project as a joint initiative of the Faculty of Agriculture, Life and Environmental Sciences and the School of Public Health. In the first year, volunteers from the university and from the community cultivated about one and a half acres of land. The seeds, plants and gardening tools were also donated.

The Green & Gold community garden offers multiple benefits:

- It raises funds for the Tubahumurize Association – a Rwandan agency that provides trauma counseling, vocational training, health education and micro-credit loans for economically and socially marginalized women – many of whom are survivors or orphans of the Rwandan civil war, or victims of domestic violence. Produce from the Green & Gold garden is made available on market days for a "donation". The donations are collected and administered through the university and sent to Tubahumurize every six months, following receipt of their biannual report. The garden's byline: "A local garden with global impact" reflects this international connection. To date, donations for the garden produce have raised over \$20,000 each year for Tubahumurize. (As an added benefit, part of the donations to Tubahumurize were used to start a vegetable garden that supplements their school lunch program in Kigali, Rwanda.)
- It provides locally grown produce to the community using sustainable (pesticide and artificial fertilizer-free) agricultural practices. Visitors to the Green & Gold garden see a flourishing example of urban agriculture and the abundant variety of food crops that can be produced on a relatively small area of land in the midst of the city. Novice garden volunteers learn about growing food from expert volunteers from the faculty of agriculture and from other, more experienced garden volunteers.



- It fosters the University's engagement with neighbouring communities (the garden has become a real community hub during market hours). And, its support to Tubahumurize has furthered the University's involvement with international community development.
- Ultimately, the Green & Gold community garden is an example of the University of Alberta's collaborative support for sustainable, ecologically sound educational initiatives.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information on this innovative garden project.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lory Laing
Interim Dean, School of Public Health
University of Alberta
e-mail: Lory.Laing@ualberta.ca / phone: (780) 492-6211