



8 November 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: STARS Innovation Credit Affirmation

Please accept this letter as affirmation that the inclusion of a three-credit “Environmental Sustainability” category within the required Augustana Core in the new curriculum developed by the Augustana Faculty of the University of Alberta meets the necessary criteria for an Innovation Credit for the AASHE STARS Assessment.

This new curriculum, developed over a period of four years and implemented in September 2010, affects approximately 95% of students enrolled in degree programs at Augustana since that date, those in Augustana’s Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, and Bachelor of Management in Business Economics and also the new Bachelor of Science/Bachelor of Education (Secondary) Combined Degrees Program (Augustana) that our faculty and the University of Alberta’s Faculty of Education implemented in September 2011 (Note: the other 5% include those enrolled in Augustana’s Bachelor of Music program, a professional degree not governed by the new curriculum, as well as Special and Visiting Students not enrolled in degree programs).

In some ways Augustana’s new curriculum is similar to those found in most universities across Canada that offer degrees in the liberal arts and sciences. However, one thing that certainly defines its uniqueness is its core. The Augustana Core comprises five categories. Three of them reflect pedagogical priorities: Experiential Learning, Integrating Knowledge, and Creative and Imaginative Process. The other two – Environmental Sustainability and Diversity & Global Studies – expose students to some of the most compelling issues of our times. Students must complete 15 credits in at least three of these five categories. To date we have found that the vast majority of our students are taking at least 3 credits in the Environmental Sustainability category, and many are taking 6 credits.

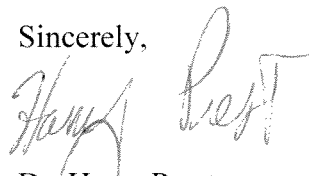
The purpose of the Environmental Sustainability category is to foster in students a greater understanding and critical assessment of the relationship among environment, resources, and society. Sustainability, as Augustana understands the term, stems from the term sustainable development, which is defined as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs” (United Nations 1987). In these times of emerging social, economic and environmental stressors, society requires increased awareness, knowledge and skills to face a rapidly changing ecological and cultural reality. The interdisciplinary nature of this category allows the students to integrate knowledge to develop

complex solutions to multifaceted problems. These solutions extend beyond theory into personal processes, comprehension and practical action.

To qualify for this category, a course must focus on interrelationships among the environment, social needs, and economic considerations. Courses in this category must devote a majority of their time to the exploration or consideration of the interdependence of human activities and the natural environment. Students should gain an understanding of and critically reflect on (a) the interplay between the natural world and anthropogenic impacts, (b) the interrelationships between technology, ethics and the natural environment, (c) the role of environmental factors in human societies, and (d) the interaction of sustainable lifestyles and the environment.

As a result of this highly innovative approach, we believe that the vast majority of Augustana's students (our current student population is slightly under 1000) will graduate with a good working knowledge of and a commitment to environmental sustainability, an extraordinarily uncommon outcome in today's post-secondary scene, certainly in Alberta, but we would also venture to suggest, in Canada. Preparing a cohort of such informed and committed university graduates emphasizes the Augustana Faculty's commitment to Environmental Sustainability.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Harry Prest". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

Dr. Harry Prest
Associate Dean, Academic Programs

/HP