



October 12, 2015

Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education  
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Re: The University of Kentucky STARS submission

The University of Kentucky proudly submits this sustainability self-assessment using the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS), administered by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE).

As President of the University of Kentucky, I am pleased to affirm the accuracy of this submission.

Today, at its 150-year anniversary, the University of Kentucky is pioneering new ways to carry out its mission to our students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends, and the people of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. It is the idea that we have been charged to lead as our state's flagship and land-grant institution, through a multi-faceted mission of education, research, service and health care.

Part of that shared vision involves carrying out our work in an environmentally responsible and energy-conscious manner, serving as a model for students and the state. This commitment led to our adoption of sustainability as one of the seven core principles in our Campus Master Plan in the fall of 2012.

We submitted our first STARS report in February of 2012, shortly after I arrived on campus. Much progress has been made during this time, which demonstrates the importance of sustainability on our campus and to our community.

The physical campus of the University is undergoing an unprecedented transformation with more than \$1.8 billion in capital construction projects initiated since our last report. Using the US Green Building Council's (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) system, we have targeted silver level certification for almost all of these projects.

When the projects currently under construction are complete, UK will have 24 buildings with a total of more than 3 million gross square feet certified by the USGBC, representing more than 15 percent of our total building space.

Our campus transformation has also brought into focus our campus greenspaces and urban forests. The University recently adopted Campus Landscape Guidelines that include requirements and guidance for designing, developing and maintaining campus landscapes that enhance our sense of place, prioritize ecology and environmental stewardship, and maximize the positive impacts of our financial investments in these spaces. The Tracy Farmer Institute for Sustainability and the Environment, one of the academic units driven by our Vice President for Research, has also formed a diverse working group focused on Urban Forests composed of faculty, staff, students and experts from industry and government agencies.

The University of Kentucky also has been recognized as a Tree Campus USA by the National Arbor Day Foundation for the past four years. The Grounds Department from the Physical Plant Division has partnered with campus organizations including the Department of Forestry, the Forestry Club and the UK Urban Forest Initiative to meet the criteria necessary to maintain this designation and to provide opportunities for our campus community to engage in the care and growth of our campus trees.

Moreover, we have made exciting advances in the transportation options available to our campus, making it easier now than ever before to thrive at the University of Kentucky without a car. This summer, for example, we launched a new partnership with LexTran through which all University of Kentucky students, staff and faculty can use public transit for free just by showing their UK ID. We also installed more than 900 new or upgraded bicycle parking spaces this summer and completed construction on several key facilities that make bicycling to campus safer and easier.

Since our last STARS submission we have more deeply integrated sustainability with our curriculum through the addition of a degree program in Environmental and Sustainability Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences and the creation of The Greenhouse, a sustainability-themed Living Learning Community that is a partnership between the Colleges of Arts and Sciences and Agriculture, Food and the Environment. Students participating in The Greenhouse live together in one of our new, LEED silver residence halls and take connected courses that bring rich learning opportunities to their campus living environment.

We have worked diligently to create meaningful, sustainability-driven engagement opportunities for our campus community. The Campus Sustainability Challenge Grant Program, launched in 2014, has been designed to engage multidisciplinary teams from the University community in the creation and implementation of ideas that will promote sustainability by simultaneously advancing economic vitality, ecological integrity and social equity.

Proposals were received from 22 interdisciplinary teams requesting more than \$450,000 in funding in the first year of the program. Through a very competitive selection process seven projects were awarded a total of \$100,000 to pursue initiatives that engaged students and used the campus as a living laboratory in pursuit of the objectives mentioned above. Based on the success of the first year of the program, four key campus funding partners have joined to double the funds available to the campus for the second year of the program.

The highlights in this letter tell only part of our story to promote sustainability in our community, through our operations, curriculum, research and outreach.

The enclosed STARS submission further details the multitude of initiatives and programs; research centers and outreach services and classrooms; and curricula, that compose our vision for integrating sustainability into a 21<sup>st</sup> century flagship, land grant research university. This process has helped us identify areas where we can improve, and we look forward to continuing our progress.

Thank you for your continuing dedication to a better, more sustainable, future for higher education and those we serve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eli Zepilonto". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "E".

President