January 31, 2012

Michael Lizotte
Director of Sustainability
University of Wisconsin Oshkosh

Dear Dr. Lizotte:

The UW Oshkosh effort to develop arts-based events for sustainability is a strong candidate for Innovation Credit in the AASHE STARS submission. A key partner in this effort has been RuckusRoots (www.ruckusroots.org), an organization focused on engaging young people in the environmental issues through the arts. This organization helped us develop an event called TRASHformation for Earth Week 2010. TRASHformation was an interactive, collaborative 3-day event in which students, faculty, and RuckusRoots artists used university solid waste to construct large sculptural art pieces. The finished products included large birds, palm trees, robots, potted "flowers", and a stage from which the Chancellor delivered his Earth Day address. The events were combined with an outdoor waste sort and teach-ins about waste, recycling and art in our lives. For Earth Week 2011, RuckusRoots returned to UW Oshkosh to anchor "Bike Bash" - art on wheels. Again they worked with students to decorate their own bikes, and design and build bikes for towing carts, a stationary bike that charges small electronics using pedal power, a solar-powered loudspeaker and digital message bike, and kinetic art built from bike wheels. This event was designed to get students thinking creatively about transportation, energy use, and to build a community around biking at UW Oshkosh.

The arts-based approach encourages students to think creatively and collaboratively about sustainability issues. These innovative events also expanded our sustainability outreach by attracting students and faculty from a diverse range of groups and departments on campus.

Sincerely,

Dr. Stephanie Spehar
Chancellor's Fellow for Sustainability
University of Wisconsin Oshkosh
920-424-7073
spehars@uwosh.edu

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES AND ANTHROPOLOGY ▪ COLLEGE OF LETTERS AND SCIENCE
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN OSHKOSH ▪ 800 ALGOMA BLVD ▪ OSHKOSH WI 54901
(920) 424-4406

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