

1/21/2013

Dear AASHE Program Staff,

I am pleased to confirm that Cornell University Sustainable Design's (CUSD) Schoolhouse South Africa design-build project meets the criteria required by the AASHE STARS Reporting Framework for Innovation credits. Details about the project are available at <http://cusd.cornell.edu/ssa>.

I have been involved with Schoolhouse South Africa (SSA) since its inception in fall semester 2010. The design-build project offered students engaged co-learning opportunities in a broad array of initiatives and tasks related to sustainable design and development from ideation to construction. SSA empowered students, faculty, staff, international partners, and local workers to innovate and utilize an interdisciplinary, research-based approach in the design, fundraising, and construction of a 80-children schoolhouse cum teacher training facility outside Johannesburg, South Africa. SSA promoted education through action, empowerment, and innovation in sustainable development including, but not limited to: research, design, planning, fundraising, construction, public relations, human resources, and operations. The project is unique in that it is CUSD's inaugural project after its departure from the Department of Energy's Solar Decathlon competition, thus requiring a diverse team to execute tasks both on and beyond the construction site. The SSA team was comprised of 7 faculty advisors, 114 undergraduate and graduate students, and dozens of professional experts, all hailing from various fields including architecture, civil and environmental engineering, hotel administration, urban and regional planning, computer science, design and environmental analysis, anthropology, psychology, and communication. Every undergraduate college and several graduate schools were represented. The project was an international collaboration amongst Cornell University Sustainable Design, Play-With-A-Purpose, Basil Read Developments, Education Africa, and the City of Johannesburg and 80 additional companies and organizations. Additionally, it is the only student-led initiative ever to have been integrated into the Bachelor of Architecture architectural design studio curriculum.

SSA has demonstrated leadership in interdisciplinary student-led collaboration in international contexts on various scales within 'green' development to realize and promote resiliency and ecological, social and economic sustainability in the built environment. Focused on hands-on education, SSA started as the realization of a single structure, but has led to further sustainable development initiatives including: the US Green Building Council's Students@Greenbuild bus tour (November 2012); Sustainable Neighborhoods Nicaragua (January 2013); Sustainability Research Facility living laboratory for Cornell's Ithaca campus (current); and Cornell NYTech Campus consulting (current). I expect that this project will be an invaluable precedent in harnessing creativity and innovation in the application of technology and volunteerism in development projects while fostering sensitivity in both low and high tech design solutions for the Cornell campus, the built environment, and beyond.

Thank you for your consideration of the innovation credit for this exemplary program. If I can provide any further information on SSA or the greater CUSD organization, please do not hesitate to contact me at the email address below.

Sincerely,

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