



# Cornell University

David J. Skorton  
*President*

February 28, 2014

Association for the Advancement of Sustainability  
in Higher Education  
213½ N. Limestone Street  
Lexington, KY 40507

Re: STARS submission

To whom it may concern:

I am pleased to endorse the attached sustainability self-assessment by Cornell University and to report our achievement of a STARS gold rating under the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System.

Today, two of our biggest global challenges are social inequality and climate change. As a charter member of STARS and a signatory of the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment, Cornell University is profoundly committed to addressing these pressing issues through our environmental, diversity, and international efforts. The university is guided by its strategic plan, adopted in 2010, which includes among its objectives effective stewardship of the natural and built environment. We have established a President's Sustainable Campus Committee to oversee all aspects of campus sustainability-related operations: energy, climate, water, food, waste, buildings, people, land, purchasing, and transportation. Each of these ten areas is the focus of a team of staff, students, and faculty who develop program recommendations, assess progress, and help implement policy recommendations. Moreover, sustainability is integral to the goals of Cornell Now, the fundraising campaign aimed to conclude in 2015, the university's sesquicentennial.

We are currently advancing sustainability in each of four priority areas: education, research, practice, and engagement.

*Education.* Recently sustainability was incorporated in the Skills for Success (used to assess employee performance) as an overriding principle that all faculty and staff are to demonstrate. "If every employee demonstrates the Skills for Success, together we will create an environment that makes Cornell the institution of choice," said Chris Halladay, associate vice president for organizational effectiveness in the Division of Human Resources and Safety Services.

*Research.* In the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, the Cornell Institute for Climate Change and Agriculture will act as a clearinghouse for research, climate monitoring, decision-support tools and applications at the intersection of climate and agriculture. "The institute grew out of a very real need to help farmers adapt to the marked changes in our climate that are

already underway,” said Professor Michael Hoffmann, director of the Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station. Two key functions of the institute will be to foster development of decision-making tools to help farmers know when to invest in changed based on science and sound economics, and to establish collaboration to address issues related to climate change and agriculture.

*Practice.* In partnership with Hersha Group, the School of Hotel Administration and the Statler Hotel have launched EarthView, a triple-bottom-line sustainability program that will evaluate and increase the hotel’s financial, environmental and social impact. Staff from the Statler and students in the Hotel Leadership Development program are working with Hersha’s EarthView team to catalogue what the hotel is already doing in sustainability, calculate costs and savings, and evaluate what new initiatives will have the most positive impact. “The Statler Hotel has made great progress over the last several years in integrating sustainable initiatives into its operations,” said Rick Adie ’75, general manager. “Through this unique partnership, the Statler will further enrich its educational program while also realizing significant triple-bottom-line results for the property.”

*Engagement.* A school pilot project, “Healthy Gardens, Healthy Youth,” was funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service as the sole recipient of this nationwide grant program. This is an extension partnership that aims to engage more than 4,000 elementary students in creating vegetable and fruit gardens at 54 low-income schools in four pilot states, as part of a 2.5-year research study.

I am proud of the concerted effort that has led Cornell to a gold rating under STARS. At the same time, all of us at Cornell acknowledge that there is much more work to be done. The STARS process is helpful as we make sustainability-related decisions and monitor our progress, and we are grateful to AASHE for this valuable metric.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David J. Skorton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David J. Skorton