



# Cornell University

David J. Skorton  
President

March 6, 2013

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.

As a charter member of STARS and a signatory of the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment, Cornell University is profoundly committed to sustainability. 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.* More than 35 student organizations have been catalysts for change at Cornell, working with energy and thoughtfulness to help the university address sustainability challenges. Student organizations have made significant impacts. Cornell University Sustainable Design provides educational infrastructure to communities in South Africa, and they recently completed a national green building education tour. On campus, the peer-education EcoReps program has become a for-credit course and continues to grow.

*Research.* With the help of the David R. Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future, Cornell's colleges, schools, and units, along with external partners, are working together to transform promising approaches to the three tiers of sustainable life—energy, the environment, and economic development—into real-world solutions. In April 2012 the CARE-Cornell partnership was launched to advance sustainable solutions to global concerns, including world hunger and climate change. This unique collaboration unites Cornell's leading scientists in sustainability and

CARE's professional staff in more than 70 nations to address the most urgent needs of women, families, and communities in the developing world.

*Practice.* The Cornell Climate Action Plan (managed by the President's Sustainable Campus Committee) has set the Ithaca campus on a path to carbon neutrality by 2050 and signals university-wide commitment. Since 2008 we have reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 32 percent, due to the high performance of the Combined Heat and Power Plant and a decision to eliminate all coal combustion at the university. A garden at the entrance of Mann Library has achieved certification by the Sustainable Sites Initiative (SITES), a comprehensive national rating system to assess the sustainability of built landscapes. Cornell is certified by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) for its use of sustainable seafood in our dining halls, a first in the Ivy League.

*Engagement.* Cornell Cooperative Extension's Energy and Climate Programs help New Yorkers make informed choices to yield better energy outcomes for all. In December 2012 Cornell hosted a workshop on willow biomass heating and biofuels, which attracted attendees from growers to manufacturers of harvesting and biomass heating equipment. And, in another effort, Cornell brought together state, industry, and academic leaders to enhance and grow New York's yogurt and dairy boom.

I am proud of the concerted effort that has led Cornell to a gold rating under STARS. Our use of this metric has allowed us to make sound sustainability-related decisions and to continue to improve our sustainability efforts across multiple endeavors at Cornell.

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