



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

College of Education

Oct 30, 2016

To Whom It May Concern,

As an Assistant Dean of the College of Education at the University of Arizona, it is my pleasure to provide this letter of affirmation regarding the University of Arizona's 100% Engagement Initiative for the University of Arizona's 2016 AASHE STARS submission. My academic background is in education outreach in both informal and formal learning contexts. As an outreach educator, my work with students and the community revolves around creating exciting experiential learning experiences for them to gain access to the oft times complex research activities taking place at the University. It is for this reason that I am very pleased to see the UA 100% Engagement Initiative become a major university-wide initiative as it will have widespread impacts on student experiential learning and the academic culture of our university. From a sustainability perspective, what is impressive is the way in which the initiative has been structured to include sustainability as a core competency alongside six other core campus values. This is an example of sustainability becoming less silo'd on our campus, and more integrated into the fabric of campus culture and values. Furthermore, it creates a platform to elevate UA's sustainability efforts alongside the university's educational programs in dimensions of global awareness and engagement, diversity and inclusion, research and discovery, and a wide range of professional development opportunities.

My understanding is that AASHE STARS wishes for letters to affirm several statements are true:

- 1-The project is innovative, new, extraordinary, unique, ground-breaking, or similar
- 2-The project is not already covered by a STARS credit or greatly exceeds the highest criterion of a STARS credit
- 3-The project has occurred in the last three years
- 4-The university has not received a STARS innovation credit for this project before

I will comment on these in sequence. First, the unique and ground-breaking nature of this project from my perspective is the deep integration of sustainability into a core institutional area of investment and priority. This elevates sustainability as a major contributor toward University of Arizona's institutional progress toward goals the Arizona Board of Regents has set forth for the university. In short, it aligns sustainability with the mission of the university in a deep and central way. And it creates a platform to recognize existing experiential learning around sustainability at UA, and an opportunity for many new developments.

Second, I am not an expert in the AASHE STARS framework. However, 100% Engagement Initiative combines and extends several elements of that framework – student engagement and leadership, community service, using campus as a living laboratory, sustainability literacy, curriculum and sustainability learning outcomes, and I think probably more. This is an initiative that goes well beyond emphasizing and encouraging service learning. This is about accelerating change around pedagogy within our institutional culture regarding education and learning outcomes. To me, it does not fit neatly in any one STARS category, though it resonates with several. And none of the STARS categories around engaged learning speak to the importance of aligning sustainability with

institutional priorities at a Regents scale of priority. This is what integration of sustainability into 100% Engagement accomplishes. I believe this means the sustainability aspects of 100% Engagement greatly exceed the highest criterion of a STARS credit.

Third, this initiative was initiated just two years ago, and continues to develop. It is clearly within the three year time limit.

Fourth, since UA's last STARS submission was in 2012, it clearly predates the development of this initiative.

I very much hope that this letter is sufficient to affirm UA's 100% Engagement Initiative for a STARS credit with University of Arizona's next STARS submission. It is an impressive alignment of sustainability with UA's institutional priorities and mission. And it is a powerful platform for accelerating and recognizing student literacy and learning outcomes related to sustainability.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sara Chavarria". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and a long, sweeping underline.

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