

January 31, 2022

Meghan Fay Zahniser, Executive Director
The Association for the Advancement for Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE)
2401 Walnut Street, Suite 102 Philadelphia, PA 19103

Dear Ms. Zahniser,

I am pleased to submit the AASHE STARS (STARS) inventory for the University of Minnesota Morris (Morris). As a pilot participant and charter member of the STARS program, we are glad to see STARS gain status as a nationally-recognized, peer-reviewed framework for assessing sustainability progress on college campuses.

The STARS inventory is an important tool to help assess our progress, and it allows us to build upon the foundation established by the University of Minnesota Board of Regents policy on “Sustainability and Energy Efficiency,” adopted in 2004.

UMN Morris has deep connections to the land and the people of Minnesota that reach back 150 years, to the founding of the first educational institution on what is now our campus site. That institution was an American Indian boarding school. UMN Morris has acknowledged this history and is working toward greater truth telling, understanding, and healing regarding the boarding schools’ devastating and continuing impacts. We are proud to be the only four-year college in the upper Midwest qualifying for federal designation as a Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institution. American Indian students comprise more than 27% of the current UMN Morris student body.

Since the campus founding in 1960, we have responded to the needs of the people in this region and their aspirations. UMN Morris is the state’s only public liberal arts college, and we define our role as an undergraduate-focused institution that grows leaders who are prepared to ask and answer the big questions of our time. We celebrate the sustainability progress we have made as we strive to develop the potential of our natural resources and our people.

In 2020, we were recognized as the campus in the United States that produces the most clean power per student. In 2020, we also achieved carbon neutrality in electricity. During the past three years, we partnered with the private sector to improve carbon neutrality planning in Minnesota; we worked to build a shared water ethic in our region; we launched a new program focused on developing diverse sustainability leaders; we launched a new electric bike program; we launched a new composting program with the county; we added nearly 250kW of new solar PV; we began developing new energy storage projects—and more. Our new UMN Morris Strategic Plan and UMN Systemwide Strategic Plan both emphasize sustainability elements.

As an evolving living and learning laboratory, we will continue our efforts to provide students an authentic sustainability-informed education.

Sincerely,



Janet Schrunk Ericksen
Acting Chancellor
UMN Morris