



Department of Environmental Science and Policy

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Dear AASHE STARS colleagues:

As the professor who first registered Mason to become a Charter STARS member, I have been collaborating with our Office of Sustainability to advance sustainability on campus for over six years. My areas of sustainability research and pedagogical focus include applied ecology, water resource management and stewardship, climate mitigation and resilience, and environmental and sustainability education in K-12 through postgraduate levels.

In this capacity, I recognize Mason's Permaculture Design Certificate (PDC) as an innovative program that serves as a keystone for our students learning and practice of sustainable gardening, landscaping and community-based agriculture in the suburban region in which we serve. The PDC was first offered over Mason's spring break in March of 2012. Mr. Wayne Weiseman of the Permaculture Project LLC delivers this 72-hour intensive course, covering many areas of sustainable and responsible living. Illustrative topics include: agro-ecology, sustainable food production, renewable resource collection/utilization, natural building, to name a few. Since its inception, this practicum course has trained scores of students interested in integrating food security and ecological sustainability, with enrollment per cohort up over 70% from 2012 to 36 students in 2014.

Beyond Mason students, community members and federal agency (Defense, EPA and USDA) representatives have also participated annually. Thus, our students have been able to work side by side with practitioners across the region to obtain important permaculture skills while also learning informally how professionals plan to make use of such skills in their post-collegiate lives and careers.

To my knowledge, this program is the only one of its kind to be offered at an institution of higher education in our region – perhaps more broadly. Thus it is unique and, for a suburban university like ours, an innovative contribution towards advancing sustainability on campus, in our communities and through our students life choices and careers.

If I can provide further evidence in support of your consideration of Mason's Permaculture Design Course for an STARS innovation credit this year, please feel free to contact me via email: [dsklarew@gmu.edu](mailto:dsklarew@gmu.edu).

Gratefully and sustainably yours,

*Dann Sklarew*

Dann Sklarew, Ph.D.  
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(and former Sustainability Fellow in the Office of the Provost)