



Gregory Washington, Ph.D.
President

4400 University Drive, MS 3A1, Fairfax, Virginia 22030
Phone: 703-993-8700; Fax: 703-993-8880; Email: president@gmu.edu

January 8, 2021

Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System Committee
Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education
2401 Walnut Street, Suite 102
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Dear Members of the AASHE STARS Committee:

I am pleased to present George Mason University's fourth submission to the AASHE Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS). Mason is proud to achieve a STARS Gold rating for the third time. This rating is welcome recognition of our ongoing commitment to sustainability; our efforts in research, teaching, operations, and community service; and the work of our students, faculty, and staff.

As Virginia's largest public research university, Mason sets the standard for a bold, progressive education that serves our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the globe. Our faculty drive cutting-edge research with worldwide impacts. Our graduates are well-rounded scholars, engaged citizens, and prepared to act. Sustainability is a core value for Mason: our *2014-2024 Strategic Plan* commits us to "manage the economic and natural resources entrusted to us responsibly and sustainably."

Since joining the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment (ACUPCC) in 2007, and forming the Office of Sustainability the same year, we have pursued several significant achievements. We committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050. We joined AASHE STARS as a Charter Participant in 2010, the same year we published our first Climate Action Plan. We became the first university in Virginia to earn a STARS Gold rating in 2014. We are regularly featured in Sierra Club's 'Cool Schools' ranking, and we have earned 10 consecutive features in the Princeton Review's Guide to Green Colleges. In 2018, Mason implemented large-scale composting of food waste generated in our Southside and Globe dining halls, to which our on-campus hydroponic greenhouse supplies fresh greens and tomatoes. In November 2020, we launched the Mason Sustainability Council, which is tasked with developing sustainability strategies for the institution, and integrating sustainability across research, academic learning, and operations.

Our Strategic Plan also drives us to align our academic goals with global sustainability challenges, both in the classroom and in our research. That Plan asks Mason to support resilient and sustainable communities by increasing research expenditures from \$50M in 2017 to \$80M by 2024. By 2018, we had already increased this research budget to almost \$68M, a one-year increase of approximately 28%. In 2019, Mason launched the Institute for a Sustainable Earth (ISE), a multidisciplinary, faculty-driven research institute that addresses the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The ISE faculty has over 550 members and represents researchers from diverse academic departments.

While we recognize that further commitment and action are always required, the Mason community takes pride in our progress. We submit this 2020 STARS report to not only measure our sustainability performance, but to share Mason's story about creating and maintaining a truly sustainable university.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in green ink, appearing to read "Gregory Washington".

Gregory Washington