

DATE: February 10, 2016
TO: AASHE STARS
FROM: Todd Lookingbill
RE: Envision the James

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with pleasure that I write to endorse the University of Richmond's collaborative partnership with the *Envision the James* program for AASHE STARS Innovation Credit.

The University of Richmond is committed to providing its students with valuable, real-world learning experiences by partnering with a variety of local community organizations and programs. These direct community partnerships allow students to explore various fields and gain hands-on experience in their areas of academic interest all while helping local partners build capacity within their organizations and help achieve their missions.

Envision the James is a key community partner of the University of Richmond. *Envision the James* is a community-based, partner-led initiative focused on improving the conservation and recreation of the James River watershed. The initiative follows a collective impact model by working in conjunction with a diverse network of partners, ranging from higher academic institutions to government agencies to non-profits and private businesses. The positive outcomes of this sustained relationship are multi-fold.

Through this community partnership, students and faculty have access to myriad river-related resources and partners to create beneficial learning experiences and research opportunities. Students are provided with unique opportunities to directly connect to the broad network and core work of the initiative's partners through learning experiences like internships, individual research projects, and volunteer and service opportunities, which allow students to deepen their real-world experience and provide partners with much-needed support. Faculty members work directly with these community partners to integrate partner needs into their individual academic goals and course curricula.

The *Envision the James* partnership exemplifies the University of Richmond's commitment to providing its students with real-world experience while supplementing the diverse work of its community partners and increasing knowledge of and connections to the James River watershed throughout the greater Richmond community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Todd Lookingbill
Associate Professor and Chair
Department of Geography and the Environment