Boston University Sustainability

Facilities Management & Planning
120 Ashford Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02215
sustainability@bu.edu

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STARS Program
AASHE
2401 Walnut Street #102
Philadelphia, PA 19103

RE: IN-1 Nitrogen Footprinting

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to submit this letter of affirmation that the information presented for credit IN-1: is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. This is a forward-thinking project, an investment for the future.
Boston University is involved in a research cohort originally launched by the University of Virginia (UVA). The "N-Print" project was founded out of sponsorship from the Environmental Protection Agency who wanted an individual and institutional tool developed to track the impact of nitrogen. It is designed to bring awareness to the need to understand and manage human influences on the nitrogen cycle. The initiative draws the attention of students, researchers, and the larger society to nitrogen and its effects in order to mitigate its future damage.

The release of reactive nitrogen into the environment is responsible for a whole host of issues, from smog and climate change to acidification and eutrophication. A single nitrogen atom released into the environment can "cascade" through natural systems, impacting multiple systems before being converted back to unreactive atmospheric nitrogen. Unlike carbon, institutions cannot plan for nitrogen neutrality as nitrogen will always be released into the environment through vital processes, such as food production. Instead, our impact can be mitigated by fully understanding our nitrogen impact and changing behaviors to reduce the amount of free nitrogen released.

The first cohort of institutions launched in the summer of 2014 with seven institutions to develop and test an institutional nitrogen footprint calculator, similar to calculators used to quantify institutional carbon pollution. The following summer a second cohort of seven more institutions was invited to help continue development. Continued development, and introduction of a third cohort of schools, will produce an online tool integrated with the CarbonMAP online calculator.

Invited to collaborate in the second cohort of the project, BU became the first large, urban-based institution in the U.S. to participate. As such, the university stands in a position to offer its unique experiences and insight for the advancement of the research and development of the public tool. This includes challenges focused on dining and the procurement of local food products. Our role as a partner in this project has encouraged us as a university to calculate our own nitrogen footprint and to propose actionable recommendations that the university can engage in accomplishing, namely shifting food consumption habits toward plant-based diets and lowering fossil fuel combustion. Boston University will continue to develop education strategies and mitigation goals to help bring nitrogen pollution into mainstream consciousness.

Sincerely,
Boston University

Ryan Peters
Sustainability Intern