

December 13, 2018

Ms. Meghan Fay Zahniser  
Executive Director  
AASHE  
2401 Walnut Street  
Suite 102  
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Dear Ms. Zahniser:

We live in complicated and changing times—perhaps more so than at any other period in modern history. Long-term prosperity, growth and more holistic returns on investments are increasingly influenced by major trends like climate change, finite resources and a growing global population with diversified needs. Across both the private and public sector, thought leaders and innovators are responding to the potentially disruptive impact of these trends by developing new types of research, engagement and entrepreneurship that are transforming how we think about mobility, health, the ecosystem, diversity and inclusion, energy, human capital, manufacturing and distribution, equity, urban development and natural resources.

These trends are driving change across the planet, and right here at the University at Buffalo. As a premier public research institution, UB is focused on finding solutions to global challenges through research, education and innovation. We are setting and meeting high expectations of efficiency and effectiveness within our campus community while collaborating with our broader community to encourage more circular, regenerative, inclusive and effective systems.

Through our integrated and collaborative resource planning strategy, UB is [recognized nationwide](#) as a model of higher education leadership in sustainability. Our commitment spans more than four decades—from the origins of the environmental movement at Love Canal to today’s operational measures, which save the university millions of dollars every year while dramatically reducing our environmental footprint. Our successful triple bottom line approach to sustainability entails stewarding our natural resources; empowering our staff, students, faculty and community; and creating smart, long-term, financially efficient strategies.

Simply put, sustainability at UB is focused on building a better world for future generations. We are committed to creating sustainably literate leaders through our teaching, research and engagement. This effort is exemplified by student-focused initiatives including [Education and Leadership Fellows in Sustainability](#), our entrepreneurial projects [Erie Hack](#) & [World Challenge](#) and innovative pedagogical tools such as our [clean-energy education center](#). All of our work—in classrooms, labs, in the field and beyond—is anchored in teaching and research that aligns with the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), 17 global commitments that are aimed at, among other things, ending all forms of poverty, fighting inequalities and hunger and tackling climate change. With hundreds of sustainability courses offered, UB has more than 200 faculty researchers working to address the SDGs, and half of our academic departments are striving to integrate these goals into the curriculum to cultivate tomorrow’s agents of change.

Because we appreciate the importance of supporting a strong and resilient Buffalo-Niagara region, our work in this regard doesn't stop at our campus borders. UB partners with sustainability-centered community organizations to help drive and advance conversations about sustainability throughout Western New York. Central to our engagement with the community is playing a key leadership role in establishing the [Western New York Sustainable Business Roundtable](#) (the region's green business group), the [Western New York Environmental Alliance](#) (an umbrella group that strengthens the work of our region's environmental community) and our regional sustainable development plan, known as [One Region Forward](#).

In addition, we are working to reach numerous measurable goals in the sphere of sustainability. These include moving toward [zero waste](#) and our commitment and [planning](#) to becoming [climate neutral by 2030](#)—and we are well on our way. We are achieving this in part by implementing programs like [Localizing Buffalo's Renewable Energy Future](#)—an initiative that aims to invest in the region while reducing energy costs for Buffalo-area anchor institutions by providing 50% of their overall energy demand with clean renewable energy. Our [numerous renewable energy projects](#) work in tandem with decades of energy conservation measures and sustainable capital construction that have resulted in substantial carbon reduction and cost savings—\$85M over the past two decades—including purchasing 100% of the university's overall electricity use from renewable energy credits.

All of our efforts are built on a foundation that supports greater efficiency and cost savings in areas such as, but not limited to, procurement, financial reporting, budgeting and overall financial decision-making. This integrated approach leads not only to economic efficiency but also to better levels of service to students, faculty and staff as we decrease our carbon emissions and adverse environmental footprint. The University's [Operational Excellence](#) campaign—focused on data-driven decisions—exemplifies this approach and can be seen in 13 business-process and system-improvement initiatives that are redefining the way we operate here at UB. By viewing our business services, human resources, resource planning and university facilities through the lens of sustainability, we are leveraging technology and culture change to address the internal and global challenges we face. While some initiatives are yielding quick savings—U Plan, UB Edge, Capital Remapping & Redesign, and E-Travel—the long-term return on our efforts is empowering our campus community to create broad, inclusive, positive change while leveraging greater human capital in our work. This is exemplified by the university's investment and commitment to institutionalizing a [culture of equity and inclusion](#) throughout our entire campus community. We have worked diligently with academic and administrative offices to develop strategies that empower all members of the campus community—whether faculty, students or staff—to achieve their full potential, unburdened by barriers to advancement based on stereotypes and bias.

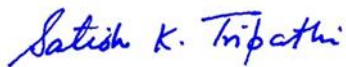
Our integrated approach has enabled us to create the positive momentum to launch the innovative [State of Sustainability report](#), achieve our first [STARS gold certification](#) from your organization and rank [first among colleges and universities for using green power](#). We won Governor Andrew Cuomo's [Energy to Lead prize](#) of \$1 million and were recognized by the Environmental Protection Agency as an [Environmental Champion](#). While we are proud of this record of leadership, we are not content to stand still; we recognize that sustainability is not just a goal to be achieved, but culture change for creating a better future. As we advance our model of sustained resilient evolution for our university, we're focused on embedding a culture of sustainable thinking and practice into all aspects of day-to-day activities and long-term plans for our university.

On behalf of the university community, I am honored to endorse and submit UB's third STARS report. This submission demonstrates that UB has made solid and sustained progress over the past three years. This designation is a source of immense pride for our university. Moreover, it serves to motivate and inspire our campus community as we continue to both fulfill our commitment to climate neutrality by 2030 and to advance the Sustainable Development Goals.

We appreciate the work done by AASHE, and by our colleagues throughout higher education who share our commitment to creating the change our world demands. STARS is an invaluable tool for assessing the current state of UB's sustainability. More importantly, it helps guide us in identifying our next steps and goals for the future as we continue to build on our strengths.

Thank you for considering our submission.

Sincerely,



Satish K. Tripathi  
President