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AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

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To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to affirm that the Styrecycle program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign qualifies as an innovative practice, in the context of the STARS reporting system.

Expanded polystyrene (EPS, or Styrofoam) is a significant component of the landfill volume from research intensive universities. However, recycling this waste stream is a significant challenge, and one that few higher education institutions have successfully tackled. The major challenge is the extremely low density of the material, which makes it economically infeasible (and environmentally questionable) to ship any significant distance to a recycler.

In some major cities, EPS recycling facilities exist close enough to universities to make recycling viable, but even then the collection on-campus can be a challenge. The University of Wisconsin at Madison overcame this challenge, and has been a national leader in EPS recycling. However, the nearest EPS recycler to us is in Chicago, a roughly 2½ hour drive.

Our campus has tackled this challenge in a unique way, by purchasing an EPS densifier, which essentially removes the gas from the “foam” and produces high density “noodles” of polystyrene which are economically feasible to ship to Chicago for recycling. We have partnered with a local recycling company, which houses our densifier, collects EPS from two centralized locations on our campus, densifies the material, and handles the shipment to Chicago. On campus, a student organization called Styrecycle has spawned to collect EPS from various buildings on campus and bring it to the pickup points, using a bicycle trailer.

We hope that our success in recycling EPS in the absence of a local EPS-recycling company will serve as a role model for other higher education institutions, and we are actively promoting our efforts on the website of the Institute for Sustainability, Energy, and Environment, at <http://sustainability.illinois.edu/campus-sustainability/actionsinitiatives/styrecycle/>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'B.J. McCall'.

Benjamin J. McCall
Assistant Director for Special Projects
Institute for Sustainability, Energy, and Environment