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Russ College of Engineering and Technology

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Members of the AASHE STARS board,

As Professor of Civil Engineering and Executive Director of the Institute for Sustainable Energy and the Environment here at Ohio University, I would like to advocate for the assertion that the compost facility at Ohio University is worthy of a STARS innovation credit. While familiar with its impact, I am independent of the compost facility, which is operated by our facilities management department.

Although STARS already recognizes institutions for waste diversion in credit OP 23, our compost facility is unique and deserving of an innovation credit. It is the largest in-vessel composting system at any college or university in the county. The operation of the compost facility was greatly improved by its expansion in 2012, less than three years from our STARS submission date of March, 2015. The expansion included multiple systems including; 1) a 4-ton expandable in-vessel system (WEMI-8000EX), enabling the university to compost 100% of its pre- and post-consumer dining waste; 2) a 31.1 kW solar array to completely power the current site and expansion; 3) a 1.4 gallon solar thermal water heating system to improve the ability of workers to clean the collection bins with harvested rainwater; 4) a windrow turner; and 5) a waste-oil burner to heat the pole barn during the winter. These best management practice improvements set a valuable example for other compost facilities around the nation. In addition to its purpose for creating compost from waste, the compost facility serves an educational purpose. Many tours are given each year to students, community members and visitors including my Solid and Hazardous Waste Management and Basics of Environmental Engineering courses. The tours cover the sustainable aspects of the facility and therefore educate the tour participants about sustainability. The innovative sustainable aspects of the compost facility in totality are not covered by any other existing STARS credits.

Furthermore, the outcomes of the compost facility expansion on our solid waste generation have been extraordinary. In FY11, before the expansion of the compost facility, Ohio University sent 3214 short tons of waste to the landfill, and composted 252 short tons. In the most recent fiscal year (FY14) Ohio University sent 2184 short tons of waste to the landfill, and composted 1094 short tons. Our landfill waste has decreased by 32% and our composted waste has increased by 334% within 3 years.

I appreciate your consideration of the Ohio University compost facility as an innovation credit for STARS for our 2015 submission.

Sincerely,

Ben J. Stuart, Ph.D., P.E.

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