



Meghan Fay Zahniser  
Executive Director  
Association for the Advancement of  
Sustainability in Higher Education  
2401 Walnut Street, Suite 102  
Philadelphia, PA 19103

August 2, 2021

RE: UCI's 2021 AASHE STARS Submittal

Dear Meghan:

I am pleased to verify that the University of California, Irvine's responses to AASHE's Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS) are complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. UCI's commitment to sustainability is broadly evidenced across our teaching, research, and public service mission, and is embodied in campus operations.

UCI's dedication to sustainability as a core part of our mission is established in UCI's Strategic Plan. Our Plan commits UCI to address significant societal challenges – particularly those related to health, energy, food, climate, and water – through the convergence of research from traditional academic fields. The Plan directs UCI to partner with our local community, regional agencies, and businesses to develop new, more sustainable models for water resource management and energy production, delivery, and consumption. Finally, achieving an ethos of sustainability for all UCI students, faculty, and staff is identified as a key learning outcome.

This past year, UCI demonstrated its ongoing commitment towards achieving campus and systemwide sustainability goals, as evident in its perseverance to achieve sustainable progress in the midst of a global pandemic. As the campus shifted to remote learning and work, sustainability champions across campus quickly adapted to developing virtual tools and resources to encourage ongoing engagement. "[The Sustainability Spot](#)," a student-run blog, serves as an outlet for sharing research, experiences and hopes for the future. "[The Sustainability Corner](#)," a staff-run blog, provides a behind-the-scenes look into campus operations and empowers greater sustainable behavior while working remotely or on campus. The online, interactive [Sustainability Tour](#) helps us visualize campus sustainability features, allowing us to remember how the campus operates, even when working and studying from a distance.

Today, nearly 50 percent of academic courses at UCI are sustainability-related and are offered in over 96 percent of academic departments across campus. Additionally, over 32 percent of UCI faculty members collaboratively research across an array of sustainability-related topics, ranging from conservation biology to ocean health and water resource management; energy conservation, power generation, and transportation; derivative problems of global climate change including famine, disease, and poverty; and social issues such as land-use planning, environmental law, public health, and social justice. Sustainability research takes place in dozens of multidisciplinary research centers. For example, [Solutions that Scale \(Sts\)](#) is a new initiative under

the leadership of Physical Sciences Dean James Bullock that aims to converge scientists and academics, policy makers, business leaders, and global citizens to identify and accelerate climate change solutions that scale. Fundamental to our research enterprise is the engagement of our students, graduate students and undergraduates alike. Furthermore, our research is used to inform policymakers locally, nationally, and globally on issues of importance to both humans and the environment.

As a complement to our research and teaching achievements, UCI's campus operations have been recognized as a national model for green operations. This includes UCI's campus energy systems, water systems, green building program, and transportation systems. As an example, UCI's Smart Labs energy efficiency program has been internationally recognized for its success in reducing laboratory energy use by up to 60 percent. The program has provided the foundation for the Department of Energy's (DOE) Smart Labs Toolkit, jointly developed by the DOE under leadership of the National Renewable Energy Laboratory and the International Institute for Sustainable Laboratories. The Smart Labs Program is now being implemented at seven United States National Laboratories.

Additionally, UCI was awarded LEED Platinum certification for three new buildings over the past year, bringing our total to 21 LEED Platinum certified buildings. Our campus also maintained an 80 percent waste diversion rate, and was declared the 2021 winner for the Large Campus Food Organics category in the Campus Race to Zero Waste. UCI also received two awards from the NAFA Fleet Management Association, recognizing our green fleet of electric buses, hybrid-electric vehicles, and pure electric vehicles and carts. Our campus received designation as a Bee Campus USA, a movement initiated by student activists committed to educating their peers and administrators about the environmental importance of bees. UCI also attained the greatest CO<sub>2</sub> reduction of all UC campuses in California's Clean Energy Optimization Pilot. Finally, UCI participated in the procurement of electricity for direct access accounts through the UC Power Program, which is 100% carbon-free.

We applaud AASHE's efforts to develop consistent and meaningful metrics for evaluating campus sustainability activities, and I am proud to submit information on UC Irvine's success in this arena for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wendell Brase', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Wendell Brase  
Associate Chancellor for Sustainability