



March 4, 2020

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

Dear Ms. Zahniser,

It is my great pleasure to submit Warren Wilson's 2020 STARS Report—the first of my presidency. When I arrived at the College in 2017 and immersed myself in our pedagogy, campus life, and operations, I saw that sustainability as a working principle was evident in all we do. Building upon the legacy of generations of Warren Wilson faculty, students, staff, administrators and trustees, who embedded the sustainability ethos long before the public discourse, we persevere and we translate. Our compass is indelibly fixed upon a just and sustainable world as evidenced in both the legacy of our strategic plans and mission statements and our new 2022 Strategic Plan. The STARS audit is invaluable to our work and helps to keep us oriented to “best practice” progress.

Our campus is a living laboratory of sustainability with a wide aperture. We are steeped daily in the work of sustainability: we experiment with resilient land management practices for our 1,050 acre campus; we apply an overarching civic engagement framework to guide our intentionally integrated curriculum of academics, work and community engagement; we seek interdisciplinary understanding and dialogue to support our pledge to a diverse, equitable and inclusive campus. Our campus is fully engaged.

Starting in the 1970's and continuing into the 1980's, we quietly pursued our sustainability pledges. Since the 1990's we have been recognized by national organizations such as the National Wildlife Federation, Second Nature, the US Green Building Council, Sierra Club, the Princeton Review, and AASHE. We have also garnered distinctions such as these: best climate action plan for an institution of our size, best campus recycling, first LEED Platinum dormitory in the nation, most sustainable campus in the nation for an institution of our size and best campus recycling program. Recent recognitions include best college farm in the nation, a Campus Pride ranking of 4.5 out of 5, and recognition from Princeton Review in 2019 as one of the top 10 service learning colleges in the nation. We seek to continually build on these accomplishments, not just for competitive advantage but because these recognitions reflect progress toward our deepest pledges.

What is central to our progress is the spirit of innovation and the practical application of learning. These qualities are fundamental to solving the increasingly complex, most pressing issues of

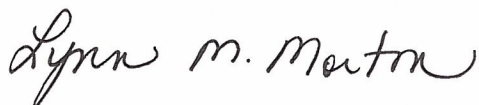
our time. Our land, our pedagogy and our highly diverse campus community provide broad parameters for innovation. The land itself—the 300-acre working farm, 11-acre garden, 600-acre managed forest, bordered by the Swannanoa River—serves as a living laboratory for the sustainable practices that are brought to life through academics, work and community engagement. Our students work this land, they study its complex systems, and they engage with regional partners to address pressing community needs and issues. Our students learn to innovate, and they also learn how to apply what they are learning in the classroom to real situations. This holistic model forges, in real time, the critical skills, imagination and resilience needed to build a just and sustainable world.

Our students are passionate, concerned, and in need of hope. We immerse them as participants in the community work of sustainability, not as observers. This is the defining quality of a Warren Wilson education. Gathering data for this STARS report has been a confirmation that our pedagogy is more relevant now than when it was first crafted in the 1950's. Our model of shared governance serves to facilitate even greater involvement. Diversity, inclusion, living wage, fossil fuel divestment, vegan and vegetarian dining options, investment in LEED certified buildings for new construction—all of these topics, and many more, are subject to cross-campus deliberation and action. Students' participation in building a just and sustainable world is multi-dimensional, daily work.

We submit programs of distinction and innovation with this audit. Our Land Innovation Program enhances student research opportunities in cutting edge adaptations for a changing climate and serves as a teaching model for landowners in the region and beyond. Our Civic Identity Framework integrates learning from academics, work and community engagement into measurable outcomes that are essential for the work of building a just and sustainable world. In fulfillment of our pledge to an inclusive, equitable and positive climate for our highly diverse campus, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Programs at the College are broad, deep and engaging. For a campus as formally pledged as we are, from our strategic plan to a wealth of sustainability commitments, these initiatives provide structure and goals and reflect what we are—a dynamic work in progress.

I am very pleased to submit our STARS report. I affirm that the responses have been thoroughly checked for accuracy. The data we've gathered has simultaneously indicated that our sustainability commitment is robust and revealed some focused areas for action. With gratitude for AASHE's enduring translation of sustainability into a process rather than a static outcome, we at Warren Wilson College are grateful for the roadmap and the lantern.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lynn M. Morton".

Lynn M. Morton, PhD
President, Warren Wilson College