



HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY

Office of the President

May 7, 2013

Dr. Paul Rowland, Executive Director
Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education
1536 Wynkoop Street, Suite 100
Denver, CO 80202

Dear Dr. Rowland,

On behalf of all the students, staff, and faculty of Humboldt State University, it is my pleasure to present the results of our first Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System effort to the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education for an official rating. The information contained in the assessment is true and accurate to the best of our ability and understanding of the criteria set forth.

The fundamental message of sustainability, as put forth by the Brundtland Commission in 1987 – “... the ability to meet the needs of today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” - is something Humboldt State University (HSU) has been incorporating into the core of the student experience here for many years and is reflected in many components of the University’s Mission, Vision and Values.

A key provision of the University Mission is to “...promote understanding of social, economic, and environmental issues.” This may be best exemplified by the Graduation Pledge of Social and Environmental Responsibility, formalized in 1987 and promoted to students as a way for them to think deeply about what they do with the education they have received. The pledge statement - I pledge to explore and take into account the social and environmental consequences of any job I consider and will try to improve these aspects of any organizations for which I work – foment a mindset for graduates to contemplate the impact their choices will have on the world. This concept is further captured in a value statement of the University Values (“We believe individuals must be environmentally, economically and socially responsible in the quest for viable and sustainable communities.”) and Vision (“We will be renowned for social and environmental responsibility and action.”).

Like many entities faced with often competing priorities, HSU continually strives to meet stated objectives and achieves them with varying degrees of success. By achieving the rating of “silver” in the STARS assessment HSU has room to improve on the standardized criteria of sustainability performance, while also demonstrating innovative ways of advancing sustainability locally and around the world, as exemplified in our Innovation credits.

HSU has a long history of providing undergraduates with a high degree of experiential learning in its natural resources and environmental programs, taking full advantage of the diverse natural laboratories available within short distances of the campus. The same model is fully embraced as the world has become a small place due to technology and ubiquitous information flow from around the world. This is best exemplified by the Innovation credit detailing the Schatz Energy

Research Center's work on the Grid Shares project. By examining a community issue on the other side of the planet and applying appropriate application of technology and cost structures, students and SERC researchers are solving common electricity access for communities in Bhutan. Resolving this seemingly simple issue has far ranging implications for the region's social, economic and environmental wellbeing.

Through various programs, HSU involves the entire campus community in tackling sustainability issues. One example is the Humboldt Energy Independence Fund, whose charge is to reduce the environmental impacts of energy use on campus. Each project undertaken by HEIF is conceived by students, developed into an actionable plan by students, and includes a close collaboration with facilities staff and faculty during planning and implementation. This model not only addresses energy use and climate change issues of the campus, but forges connections between all levels of the student, staff, faculty, and administration to collectively put the best thinking towards meaningful changes in how the campus uses energy.

In the last few years HSU has initiated several changes advancing sustainability campus-wide. In the spring of 2011 the Office of Sustainability was created and the director of that office was hired to act as the focal point of sustainability initiatives and activities for the University. In the fall of that same year, selling bottled water was phased-out of all the dining and bookstore locations on campus, which followed two years of bottled water free commencement ceremonies. And the fall of 2012 saw the culmination of a year-long project to identify over 380 existing courses as sustainability-focused or related.

I am pleased to see the STARS results' indicating the campus is doing well in one or more division of each focus area of the assessment, such as Co-Curricular Education, in Education & Research; Purchasing, in Operations; and Diversity and Affordability, in Planning, Administration & Engagement. However, it is just as important the assessment illuminated the areas we need to make improvements. For example: Climate, in Operations; Research, in Education & Research; Investment, in Planning, Administration & Engagement all garnered low scores in their respective credits. Since the campus has made advancing sustainability a campus-wide priority through 2015, the coming months will be spent working closely with the relevant campus entities to prioritize the areas of needed improvement to best use campus resources and synergy with other efforts.

With this first effort of participating in the STARS I genuinely welcome the opportunity to understand how HSU measures itself with other higher education institutions and also know we will use the information gained to set priorities for our campus to improve into the future for the betterment of the students, as well as our commitment to the world community.

Sincerely,



Rollin C. Richmond
President