



HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY

Office of the President

April 13, 2017

STARS Administrator
Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education
2401 Walnut Street, Suite 102
Philadelphia, PA 19103

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to present the results of Humboldt State University's response to the Sustainability Tracking Assessment and Rating System (STARS). Our campus affirms and attests that the information contained herein is true and accurate to the best of our ability – and that it has helped us to achieve a gold rating from AASHE! Furthermore, as this is our second time undertaking this assessment, we are thrilled to see improvement from the silver rating we established with our 2013 STARS report. We look forward to analyzing and comparing the results from both assessments in depth, which will assist in identifying the areas in which we are making strides supporting our campus as a socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable place. In addition, we plan to utilize our findings from STARS this year to interpret, plan, and, most importantly, implement necessary changes that further enhance our campus responsibilities to the planet and community.

This year, the publication of our STARS report aligns with the recent release of our campus Climate Action Plan. The plan includes ambitious goals for Humboldt State, building on several historic commitments to sustainability that our campus has undertaken. One tradition is the Graduation Pledge, founded in 1987, in which HSU graduates promise to consider the social and environmental consequences of choices and decisions. The Climate Action Plan pushes this pledge further by introducing strategies to incorporate sustainability curricula and analyses into the everyday scholarly experience of HSU students. In another example, the Climate Action Plan applies new strategies for conserving energy and implementing renewable energy, actions that underscore the philosophy of a decade-old student fee called the Humboldt Energy Independence Fund (HEIF). The Climate Action Plan, with more than 50 action items, is bold and far-reaching, touching every area of campus operations and bolstering the importance of institutional planning around sustainability initiatives.

In addition to the Climate Action Plan, our STARS report this year aligns with HSU becoming a signatory for the Second Nature Campus Climate Commitment in 2016. The Second Nature Commitment encompasses goals of both achieving carbon neutrality and improving community resiliency. In this endeavor, HSU joined over 680 higher education institutions nationwide to play a prominent role in shaping a vision for a sustainable future.

Both of these recent undertakings also align with our campus strategic plan, completed in 2015, which contains an ambitious agenda to help all of our students succeed, to provide an education with our values of social justice and environmental sustainability at its core, and to manage our campus in a sustainable way. The strategic plan brings together STARS, the Climate Action Plan, and our Second Nature Commitment because it demonstrates an applied emphasis on social, economic, and environmental sustainability. This emphasis in the classroom and throughout campus operations will help graduates of Humboldt State University be better analytical thinkers, more competitive in their professional endeavors, and more effective community contributors in the world.

I would like to highlight a few of the key achievements in our STARS report. Humboldt State performed well in the following areas: curriculum, campus engagement, purchasing, coordination and planning, diversity, and affordability. Specifically, the number of departments offering courses focused on or related to sustainability concepts has increased from 25 to 31, making sustainability a more widely interdisciplinary discussion on our campus. Within the realm of campus engagement, students are dedicated to teaching their peers about topics such as waste, energy, water, and appropriate technology; this is demonstrated by the efforts of groups such as the Waste Reduction and Resource Awareness Program, Green Campus, the Campus Center for Appropriate Technology, and the Humboldt Energy Independence Fund. One example of an innovative engagement campaign transpired in 2016, when students led a movement to “Kill the Cup” by promoting behavior change to encourage users to bring reusable beverage containers from home for coffee and other drinks. The positive effects of this effort continue.

Accomplishments in purchasing include the maintenance of a 2005 campus-wide policy to use 100% recycled content paper, priority for EPEAT certified electronics, and the practice of using Green-Seal-certified janitorial cleaning supplies, all of which are standard operating procedures at HSU. Our campus has a growing sustainability office, with three full time staffers, and a robust participatory governance structure with representation in most campus matters from faculty, staff, students, and, at times, community groups from outside the institution. Finally, while more work must be done, we are committed to maintaining an environment that is inclusive, just, and free of discrimination, and to making our campus accessible and welcoming to students, faculty, and staff from traditionally underrepresented groups. At Humboldt State, we mandate training in unconscious bias for all members of hiring committees. We were the first campus in the California State University to develop a university-wide bias response team, recently formalized the Faculty and Staff of Color Collaborative, and support several new Cultural Centers for Academic Success.

While we have accomplished much, we look forward to new growth and opportunities to make our campus even better. We will re-launch a sustainability committee during 2017-18, which will facilitate action and coordinate progress on sustainability initiatives. We will be hiring a new Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in 2017, and we hope to expand the reach and impact of programming in this area. As new ground is broken in the

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transportation, energy, and climate sectors, we look forward to exploring new solutions for outdated infrastructure.

We appreciate the opportunity that STARS offers to share our successes, and we welcome the opportunity to learn from our shortcomings. Furthermore, we hope some of the information shared in our STARS report may help other institutions learn about new programs and new ideas. We are proud to be a member of AASHE and to participate in the STARS rating system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa A. Rossbacher". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "L" and "R".

Lisa A. Rossbacher, Ph.D.
President