



June 11, 2013

Dear AASHE STARS Program:

I am pleased to write a letter of verification in support of UW-Stout's I LOVE TAP WATER program for the STARS Innovation Credit.

Several years ago, our campus had a very high usage of plastic water bottles and in an effort to reduce bottle usage, the Sustainability Steering Committee explored a variety of options. While some schools have eliminated the sale of bottled water on their campuses, they didn't see that as a good solution. Instead, they took an approach to change the behavior of students, faculty, staff, and administrators.

This approach was innovative because its intention was to educate consumers by redirecting their behavior in drinking tap water rather than purchasing bottled water on campus. We believe this approach has a much greater long-term impact on sustainability by consistently delivering and reinforcing the message that tap water is safe, healthy, economical, and better for the planet.

The impact of this program has been tremendous. The campus has seen a significant drop in bottled water usage. The campus has purchased over 50 bottle filling stations and reusable water bottles have been distributed to faculty, staff and students. To date, over 840,000 plastic bottles have been saved.

For my doctoral research, I recently conducted a focus group to look at the impact of campus sustainability initiatives. Students indicated that this I LOVE TAP WATER program has altered social norms for students, making it common-place for students to use water bottles from home instead of throw-away containers.

For the reasons outlined above, the I LOVE TAP WATER program merits consideration as a STARS Innovation Credit.

Very truly yours,

Wendy Stary, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Plastics Engineering