

April 8, 2016

Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS) Team
Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE)
2401 Walnut Street Suite 102
Philadelphia, PA, 19103

Dear STARS Team,

Re: Niagara College Sustainability – STARS Application

Niagara College's Research & Innovation Division provides real-world solutions for business, key industry sectors and the community through applied research and knowledge transfer activities. We conduct projects that provide innovative solutions, such as producing and testing prototypes, evaluating new technologies, and developing new or improved products or processes for small- and medium-sized businesses. With funding support from various regional, provincial and federal agencies, students and graduates are hired to work alongside faculty researchers to assist industry partners leap forward in the marketplace.

Niagara College Research & Innovation is happy to provide this letter of affirmation for the Aquaponics Innovation Credit, as part of Niagara College Sustainability's AASHE STARS application. The Niagara College aquaponics system is located in Niagara College's 16,000 square foot greenhouse located at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Campus. The equipment was funded by a successful proposal to the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada's Applied Research Tools and Instruments funding stream. The installation was finalized in March 2015, and it is currently managed by the greenhouse staff, which includes current students. The system is used in the curriculum of both the Horticulture and Greenhouse Technician programs, within the [Sustainable Food Production](#) course. Further, it is also incorporated with the second year final project, and students are given the opportunity to oversee one half of the system for 2-3 months.

The aquaponics outputs (vegetables including leafy greens, kale, green onions, and more, as well as tilapia) are used by the Niagara College Canadian Food & Wine Institute courses and dining operations. The tilapia are raised without any antibiotics, and the fish waste that is not utilized by the plants is composted on campus. The aquaponics system has become one of the most popular stops on campus for tours and open houses; the fish, flowing water, and self-contained system help to attract potential students and external interest. Currently, the Niagara College Agriculture & Environment Innovation Centre is developing aquaponics applied research projects with Niagara and Ontario-based potential partners. We firmly believe the aquaponics system's incorporation with applied research projects, curriculum, and public outreach demonstrates Niagara College's efforts in food sustainability.

Sincerely,



Marc Nantel, Associate Vice-President, Research & Innovation