



December 6, 2018

Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE)
Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS) Steering Committee
1536 Wynkoop Street, Suite 100
Denver, CO 80202

Dear AASHE STARS Steering Committee,

I am pleased to endorse James Madison University's 2018 report to STARS. Our institution's commitment to a sustainable future is evident on our campus and in our report. Many of our core qualities, including engagement; access and inclusion; fiscal and facilities resource management; and, innovation, align with STARS. Consistent with a better world for all generations, our vision is to be the national model of the engaged university because we believe engagement is a critical pathway to student enlightenment. Our most important intended outcome is to help create high-character citizen-leaders who contribute to improving the human condition.

Specific to the environmental dimension of sustainability, environmental stewardship is part of our culture and our broader sense of citizenship. November 2018 was the 10th anniversary of the creation of the Institute for Stewardship of the Natural World (ISNW), an office and committees that coordinate the collaborative efforts of the university for environmental sustainability and stewardship. The ISNW's vision is an environmentally literate community whose members act individually and collectively as model stewards of the natural world. Accordingly, the ISNW in collaboration with other units on campus, tracks and advances student environmental stewardship knowledge and reasoning, student sustainability education engagement, and campus sustainability culture.

Highlights of performance in these areas, as documented in our STARS report, include the following:

- For the 2017 National Survey of Student Engagement's Sustainability Education Consortium questions, the mean for the more than 500 JMU freshman respondents was either equivalent to the mean of the participating institutions or significantly higher on 18 of the 20 questions.
- The average environmental stewardship reasoning and knowledge learning gains over undergraduate students' first 18 months at JMU were about 4 percentage points.
- Consistently in response to the Office of Residence Life Perceptions Surveys from 2013 to 2017, approximately 69% of student respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the residence hall they lived in was environmentally friendly, and they could see real efforts being made by residents to recycle, conserve water, and save energy.

JMU employees in the Division of Administration and Finance led the work behind much of what is reported in the Operations Category of STARS. Highlights of accomplishments include:

- 40% of materials were diverted from the landfill by recycling, composting, donating or re-selling in Fiscal Year 2017 compared to 18% in Fiscal Year 2009.
- Facilities Management's robust rainwater management was externally recognized for innovation.
- An assessment was completed to identify environmentally sensitive areas on campus.

STARS has been useful for conducting comparisons across institutions, and the projects and practices reported in the Innovation & Leadership Category have been inspirational. We appreciate the effort needed to provide and continually improve STARS.

Sincerely,

Jonathan R. Alger
President

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