

November 17, 2016

STARS Steering Committee
Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education
1536 Wynkoop Street, Suite 100
Denver, CO 80202

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to submit this letter of affirmation to highlight our Forced Aeration Composting Facility, which became fully operational after receiving the EPA approval in the fall of 2015, showcasing Southern Illinois University Carbondale's commitment to sustainability.

The College of Agricultural Sciences manages the facility, which is the largest of its kind in the Midwest. The program is a collaboration with University Housing and Plant and Service Operations. The food waste is collected at the dining halls, transported to the facility, dumped and placed into the large mixer with other materials (carbon/nitrogen ratio), then placed in a compost bin. The forced air, which enters the bin from the floor, eliminates the need to turn over or rake the compost for oxygen-exposure. After about 60 - 90 days, the compost is removed for a new batch.

Since we started collecting dining hall food waste in the spring semester of 2016, we have diverted over 150,000 pounds of food waste from the landfill. We use the compost product on university farms and landscaping. Since some of the produce from university farms is served in the dining halls, the facility offers a full-circle food waste solution.

This facility is an example of cross functional collaboration and problems solving, as it actively involves students, faculty, and staff. The facility is managed by the University Farm, faculty and students serving as a living laboratory from an educational and research perspective. The education component also reaches students who eat at the dining hall and the staff who work there. Everyone participants in doing their part and University Housing has on-going education as to what happens to the food waste. The dining hall staff are also evaluating the types and amounts of food to prepare as they observe what is going to the compost facility. Students in one of the Agricultural Systems class was also involved in the design and building the bin washing system needed to clean residue from the bins returning to the kitchens given there is no running water at the facility. The facility has received two grants from the Student Green Fee In addition being a model that students can replicate after leaving the university, it is an example for the greater regional area, as well.

In October of this year, we celebrated the compost facility with a Ribbon Cutting event and Open House. This event was hosted by Interim Chancellor Brad Colwell and was attended by students, faculty, staff, and community members. Some photos are included below from the event.

Sincerely,


Karen Midden, Associate Dean
Professor, Landscape Architect, IL



Interim Chancellor Brad Colwell discusses the importance of the compost facility collaboration, October 2016.



A student answers questions about the compost facility forced aeration process.



An example of a full bin.



Students demonstrate the movement of materials.