

March 6, 2020

Dear AASHE STARS,

Binghamton University is proud to participate in the AASHE STARS rating system. We have made sustainability a priority in many ways on campus including in our physical infrastructure, development of new academic programs, to an emphasis on sustainability in our research. We recently adopted our first Sustainability Plan and hope to achieve a Gold rating from AASHE STARS this year. In this letter, I will highlight some of the accomplishments of which I am most proud.

First, some history. When I came to Binghamton University as President in 2013, the University was burning coal in our central heating plant. One of my first priorities was to transition that plant to burning biomass. This was accomplished in 2016 and we are now pursuing a Green Energy Master Plan to continue to reduce our carbon footprint and become carbon neutral by 2050.

Part of our effort to reduce our carbon footprint is to be conscious of energy use in new and existing buildings. All new construction or major renovation projects at Binghamton University have been built to LEED Silver or higher standards, including a LEED Platinum Engineering and Science Building, a LEED Gold Chemistry and Physics Building, and LEED Gold renovations to many residence halls and dining areas. Furthermore, we are about to go out to bid on our first Living Building, a net-positive energy building, that will serve as an environmental classroom in our Nature Preserve.

Although we have been constructing many new buildings over the past few years, we have chosen a strategy of rehabilitation instead of expansion. In doing so, we have helped the local economies of two neighboring municipalities that have suffered long and gradual declines. First, in 2007 we built a University Downtown Center in the heart of the City of Binghamton (despite the institution's name, the main campus is located in Vestal, NY) to house our College of Community and Public Affairs. Today, downtown Binghamton has seen a renaissance with new businesses opening in previously vacant building space, property value increase, and safety improvement brought by additional tax revenue to the city.

A similar effort is being made in the Village of Johnson City which has one of the highest poverty rates in the state. In 2018 the University constructed a new School of Pharmacy building in Johnson City with a vision to create a Health Sciences campus. Thus far the School of Pharmacy has spurred much needed private investments in student housing and retail business in the area. Our second project in Johnson City is underway to renovate an abandoned factory building to house our Decker College of Nursing and Health Sciences. We are hopeful to see the same revitalization of the village in a very near future.

Our Living Building will also reflect this commitment to repurposing. Although it will be located in our Nature Preserve, it will utilize the foundation of an existing structure and expand only on an area that was already covered by asphalt when the property was gifted to the University.

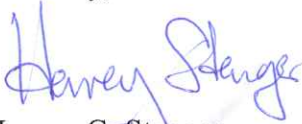
The Living Building will offer space for classes focusing on sustainability. Our curricular and research commitment to sustainability is significant and wide-ranging. Three of our six Transdisciplinary Areas of Excellence (TAEs)—Sustainable Communities, Smart Energy, and Material & Visual Worlds—have been involved in the design of the Living Building. The TAEs were initiated in 2013 to address critical social, scientific, technological, economic, cultural, and policy issues that can best be addressed by teams of faculty employing the perspectives and methodologies of multiple disciplines. Faculty from geology, electrical and computer engineering, art and design, biology, and environmental studies have been involved in the Living Building design and will be teaching in the new building once it is constructed.

Our Nature Preserve is a point of pride of the University. Encompassing over 300 acres, including a 20-acre wetland, the Nature Preserve is our largest and best-used laboratory on campus. We are committed to enhancing biodiversity not only in this dedicated space, but throughout campus by introducing new low/no-mow zones.

Because we approach sustainability from a three Es perspective, we are not only committed to the environmental and economic goals described above, but also strive for making the world a more equitable place. To that end, we announced this year that we will be seeking the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement in 2025. Our Center for Civic Engagement will lead this initiative and several working groups have formed to take on this new challenge.

In summary, Binghamton University has made great progress in recent years to become a more sustainable campus and to promote sustainability in our research and curricula. Several new initiatives are underway which we hope to report on in upcoming years.

Sincerely,



Harvey G. Stenger
President