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To: AASHE STARS Program Committee  
From: Tracy Dixon, Director, University Sustainability Office *TAD*  
Subject: Letter of Affirmation – High Impact Student Engagement in Sustainability  
Date: December 7, 2015

Learning doesn't just happen in the classroom. Research has shown that high-impact educational experiences complement classroom learning, increase student retention and engagement, and maximize the collegiate experience. NC State University has created programming that couples sustainability with high-impact educational practices, resulting in greater integration of sustainability into the cumulative student learning experience.

The landscape of higher education is changing. It's no longer about just completing semesters; it's about acquiring career-ready skills. The proof of learning is no longer just whether a student can ace a chemistry quiz but rather if that student can also communicate vision, lead a meeting, solve problems or prioritize workload on the job. High-impact educational practices encourage the development of these career-ready skills while also enhancing the likelihood of student engagement and retention. As high-impact educational experiences increase on NC State's campus, the University Sustainability Office and its partners sought to develop sustainability-focused experiences that would further student knowledge of and experience with sustainability issues while simultaneously achieving the benefits of high-impact practices. Examples of these programs include the NC State Stewards student sustainability leadership program, Pack Link to connect students with campus project experience, the student-run Sustainability Fund grant program and sustainability-themed Alternative Service Break immersion experiences during campus breaks.

On a campus where more than 63 percent of incoming students report that the university's sustainability commitment was a factor in their decision to attend NC State, the University Sustainability Office and its partners seek to provide high-impact educational experiences that integrate sustainability. The goals of these projects are to:

- Infuse sustainability into student learning beyond the classroom
- Work in partnership with multiple university departments, academic colleges and community organizations
- Advance student exploration of systems-thinking and multiple aspects of sustainability

The Sustainability Office, which tracks its active sustainability-related partnerships on campus, connected with 162 campus organizations, departments and centers last year -- demonstrating how several years' worth of high-impact activities are spreading sustainability's reach within the university. These partnerships create an ever-growing network of campus sustainability champions that have successfully demonstrated multiple aspects of sustainability -- from improving energy efficiency to advancing micro-entrepreneurship in an international country.

Student outcomes include gaining hands-on career experience while also learning about sustainability. Most importantly, are numerous testimonials from students who have been impacted by sustainability-related high-impact activities. While their experiences cannot be adequately described in numbers, student transformation is undeniably the most significant outcome of NC State's sustainability high-impact activities.