



October 17, 2014

AASHE STARS Committee
Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education
213 ½ North Limestone
Lexington, KY 40507

Dear Committee Members:

The Pennsylvania State University – University Park is pleased to submit its second STARS (Sustainability Tracking and Rating System) assessment. I confirm the accuracy of the information included therein.

Sustainability is an integral part of Penn State’s mission as a global leader in teaching, research, and service. We recognize that sustainability represents one of the nation’s most pressing issues, and that higher education can play a unique role in creating and modeling solutions and producing graduates who can lead society toward a more sustainable future.

Our first STARS assessment, submitted in 2011, helped us to identify opportunities for improving our sustainability efforts in academics, operations, engagement, and planning and administration. Those insights, combined with making sustainability an institutional priority, have bolstered our STARS ranking this time around, from silver previously to gold this time. We are proud of this achievement, while recognizing that there is still much more that can be done.

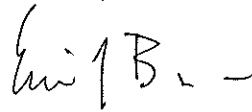
Some highlights of our progress include:

- Developed a pioneering approach to embedding sustainability throughout Penn State by incorporating it into unit-level strategic planning, producing a Guidebook and other tools to facilitate the process.
- Initiated the “Reinvention Fund” to seed the development of collaborative sustainability innovations across the University.
- Continued to conduct groundbreaking research in many fields that are relevant to sustainability. (In fact, more than 17 percent of our faculty who conduct research are involved in sustainability-related investigations.)

- Added new degree programs in areas such as Energy and Sustainability Policy, Biorenewable Systems, and Renewable Energy and Sustainability Systems.
- Kicked off the Sustainable Communities Collaborative, a partnership with our local community that provides students with engaged scholarship opportunities and supports local sustainability initiatives.
- Rolled out a comprehensive campus-wide recycling and composting program – mobius - which is expected to divert an additional 25 percent of Penn State's waste from the landfill (from our current 60 percent baseline).

I commend AASHE for providing a recently updated, comprehensive, transparent assessment tool for higher education. Thank you for allowing us to share our story and strengths, identify areas for growth, and learn from others on our collective journey toward meeting the sustainability challenge.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric J. Barron", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Eric J. Barron