



PennState

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AASHE STARS Committee
Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education
2401 Walnut Street, Suite 102
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Dear Committee Members:

Penn State University Park is pleased to submit its third STARS (Sustainability Tracking Assessment and Rating System) assessment. I confirm that the information contained therein has been checked for accuracy.


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 last STARS assessment, submitted in 2014, helped us to identify opportunities for improving our sustainability efforts in academics, operations, engagement, and planning and administration. Some highlights of our progress include:

- Hiring a new Chief Sustainability Officer/Director of the Sustainability Institute, significantly elevating the stature of this position in the University, and reflecting sustainability's importance to Penn State's mission;
- Adding a new General Education requirement in Integrative Studies—which encompasses sustainability—and incentivized new course development in this area;
- Continuing to conduct groundbreaking research in many fields that are relevant to sustainability (almost 17 percent of our faculty who conduct research are involved in sustainability-related investigations);
- Continuing our strong commitment to public engagement in sustainability, including a significant expansion of the Sustainable Communities Collaborative, a partnership with local community organizations that provides students with engaged scholarship opportunities while supporting local sustainability initiatives;
- Renewing our commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from campus operations by joining other universities, businesses, and municipalities in signing an open letter to the international community declaring “We Are Still In” the Paris Climate Accord; and,
- Reducing our greenhouse gas emissions per weighted campus user by 40 percent, and our building energy consumption per gross square foot by 50 percent, relative to a 2005 baseline.

I commend AASHE for providing a 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,



Eric J. Barron