

Finance & Administration

Planning, Construction, & Real Estate

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Dear AASHE STARS Program,

I am writing to affirm the innovative nature of Portland State University's (PSU) travel offset program. PSU, led by its Campus Sustainability Office, implemented a voluntary 2% fee on all business travel expenses (including flights, per-diem meal expenses, lodging, and ground travel) to offset their associated greenhouse gas emissions. Our program is unique in that funds raised through the fee are invested directly back into our campus through PSU's Green Revolving Fund (GRF). As part of the Billion Dollar Green Challenge, PSU created a GRF two years ago. To date, over 1.5 million dollars has been allocated through the fund to energy and water efficiency projects that reduce our emissions footprint and improve our campus.

Developed to meet goals in the University's Climate Action Plan, it is an innovative solution that few other institutions have enacted. Most organizations looking to offset their travel-related impacts turn to purchasing third-party carbon emission offsets that fund projects such as renewable energy development or reforestation efforts offsite. PSU's program allows for the funds to remain on campus to further reduce future climate impacts.

With third-party offset programs charging a range of prices—anywhere from \$10 to \$50 or higher per ton of carbon emissions, the 2% fee in PSU's travel offset program represents a relatively generous charge of approximately \$30 per ton of emissions (based on recent travel emissions totals), which puts PSU more in line with the Obama administration's estimated 2015 social cost of carbon of \$36/ton.

While the travel offset program is one of several funding streams for the GRF, it is one which engages a broad cross section of departments from our campus. We currently have 19 departments offsetting their travel through the program, consisting of over 500 employees, with more signing up each quarter.

I am proud of PSU's efforts to engage departments in purchasing carbon offsets for travel, and to pursue carbon emissions reductions right here on campus.

Thank you for considering this effort as an innovation point in our 2016 STARS report,

Sincerely,

Dan Zalkow

Associate V.P. for Planning, Construction & Real Estate