

23 November 2015

The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education
2401 Walnut Street Suite 102
Philadelphia PA 19103

RE: The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley STARS submission

Dear Member of the AASHE STARS Steering Committee:

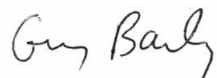
As President of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV), I take pride in affirming the accuracy of our inaugural sustainability self-assessment using The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System™ (STARS).

In 2013 building on the success of our legacy institutions, the Texas Legislature overwhelmingly supported the University of Texas System's vision to create a new university in south Texas—the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. As the first major public university in the United States to be established in the 21st Century, we intend to capitalize on this exceptional geographical and cultural positioning. Based on this distinguished history, UTRGV is committed to serving the social, economic, research, and most importantly, the educational needs of the rapidly growing, transnational, and culturally diverse population of the Rio Grande Valley. Our accomplishments have been recognized: *The Wall Street Journal* (1997) recognized our institution as contributing to the creation of a “powerful Hispanic middle class” in the Rio Grande Valley; *The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education Magazine* (2014) recognized UTRGV's institution among the top 100 best U.S. colleges for Hispanic students.

UTRGV demonstrates a continued commitment to sustainability in academics by making efforts to incorporate sustainability across all eleven colleges and schools—including its newest, the UTRGV School of Medicine. A review of UTRGV's courses indicates that at least 311 courses offer sustainability focused or related content, and the success of faculty development programs such as “Project Sin Fronteras” indicates that this number will grow as educator, student, and community demand for such topics becomes more apparent. UTRGV is also at the forefront of sustainability research studies through formally established programs and initiatives. Additionally, individually formed groups of students and faculty members are dedicated to integrating their research into classroom teachings. By researching sustainability issues and refining theories and concepts, institutions of higher education can continue to help the world develop new technologies, strategies, and approaches to address challenges and opportunities in the area of sustainability. With the research being conducted at UTRGV, we strive to implement an open access policy to ensure that these scholarly articles, theses, and dissertations, both by faculty and staff, are deposited in a designated open access repository.

As we begin the new chapter in higher education in the Rio Grande Valley, I look forward to the significant and positive impact our institution will have on our community and throughout the country. I strongly believe our commitment to developing our faculty, staff, and students will ensure they have the skills and expertise needed to serve as stewards of the environment, protecting the health and safety of our people, and operating ethically and responsibly within the communities we serve.

Sincerely,



Guy Bailey, Ph.D.
Founding President

Office of the President

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