



February 29, 2016

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

To Whom It May Concern:

The accompanying submission of information to the STARS reporting system regarding sustainability programs and activities at Austin College is correct to the best of our knowledge. It was prepared by the Director of our Center for Environmental Studies, Dr. Peter Schulze, Professor of Biology & Environmental Science, with assistance from the Coordinator of the Center for Environmental Studies, Alexandrina Ocañas. Several other College officials assisted with the accumulation of necessary data.

The Austin College Center for Environmental Studies was launched in 1997 with the initiation of a minor and a number of programs. We added a major several years later. Since the outset of the program all students who enroll in our introductory course, Fundamentals of Environmental Studies, have formally proposed means to reduce the college's impact on the environment. We have adopted some three dozen proposals to date.

President Emeritus Oscar Page signed the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment (now the Second Nature Carbon Commitment) in 2008, and I renewed our commitment when I became president in 2009. From our first greenhouse gas inventory (FY 2008) through FY 2014, we reduced our greenhouse gas emissions by 36 percent, despite an 18 percent increase in the campus building footprint. Our emissions per square foot of building space have declined by almost 50 percent.

During 2010 we completed our first Climate Action Plan and launched Austin College Thinking Green, a campus wide greening effort not limited to climate change.

Today our electricity use is 24 percent more efficient than in 2004 and our use of natural gas is 18 percent more efficient.

As of FY 2015 we had nearly completed a switch to 100 percent wind-generated electricity through the purchase of renewable energy credits. We will complete that switch during FY 2016 (this year).

*Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education*  
*February 29, 2016*  
*Page Two*

Our new science building, the IDEA Center, was awarded LEED Gold Certification for its design and the design of its surroundings.

Students have been heavily involved in all of our sustainability efforts. Honors thesis students completed two of our greenhouse gas inventories (under the direction of Dr. Schulze). As noted above, the College has adopted many student proposals. The student leaders of Austin College Thinking Green run an annual electricity saving competition (AC UnPlugged) and a green service day (GreenServe). They also choose projects funded by our Student Sustainability Fund, monies that the student government has chosen to allocate to student-initiated green efforts. Most recently, those funds expanded the number of water bottle refilling stations on campus. Other students were critical to the adoption of curbside recycling in our town, Sherman, Texas, and to the detection of a mismanaged wastewater treatment plant whose effluent is released into nearby Lake Texoma, a domestic and industrial water source. The chronic mismanagement had gone undetected by local, state, and federal officials.

Students are also central to our outreach efforts, notably through a program of field trips for schoolchildren at our Sneed Prairie Restoration. The school children who visit the prairie learn about their local biome, its land use history, and the potential of and need for ecosystem restoration. Very soon in 2016, the 10,000th school child will participate in a Sneed Prairie field trip led by one of our students.

Thank you for reviewing this information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marjorie Hass".

Marjorie Hass