VirginiaTech
College of Architecture
and Urban Studies

School of Public and International Affairs
112 Architecture Annex (0113)
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
Voice: 540/231-2291
Fax: 540/231-3367
E-mail: spia@vt.edu

STARS Letter of Affirmation - Innovation Credit #1

**"Sustainability Plan Implementation:
Improving Administrative Practices and Behavior through the Green Campus
Challenge"**

July 14, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure to offer my endorsement and approval of STARS Innovation Credit #1 titled "Sustainability Plan Implementation: Improving Administrative Practices and Behavior through the Green Campus Challenge" (Green Campus Challenge). The Green Campus Challenge was an innovative outreach strategy to improve the culture and behavior of our campus departments and employees to conserve energy, water, and materials. Additionally, the Green Campus Challenge served as an excellent educational tool for the implementation of the Virginia Tech Climate Action Commitment and Sustainability Plan and other key university policies such as University Policy 5505: Campus Energy, Water, and Waste Reduction.

Virginia Tech's Green Campus Challenge was inspired by the Commonwealth of Virginia's "Green Commonwealth Challenge" which invited agencies to see how many deliberate, voluntary actions could be achieved over a five-month period to reduce impacts to the environment. Virginia Tech placed third overall in the "Green Commonwealth Challenge." Unique to Virginia Tech's submission was the intent to create our own Green Campus Challenge to be modeled after the "Green Commonwealth Challenge."

Virginia Tech's Energy and Sustainability Committee, of which I am a founding member, created, administered and evaluated the Green Campus Challenge Survey which asked all departments with ten employees or more if they had policies and practices to reduce energy and material waste, maximize recycling, and avoid transportation impacts of meetings and commuting. The primary aim of the Green Campus Challenge was to educate and prompt action by departments through encouraging and providing them the opportunity to adopt such policies and practices in the process of completing the survey and thus score points. Fifty departments participated in the challenge representing over two-thirds of the Virginia Tech Blacksburg campus workforce. The vast majority of the fifty departments that qualified to participate in the Green Campus Challenge identified a Green Campus Communication Representative from their department that continues to participate in cross-campus dialogue about sustainability practices.

Invent the Future

It is my belief that the Green Campus Challenge meets all of the STARS Innovation Criteria, and especially reflects criterion #1 and #8:

#1 - Innovation credits are reserved for new, extraordinary, unique, ground-breaking, or uncommon outcomes, policies, and practices that greatly exceed the highest criterion of an existing STARS credit or are not covered by an existing STARS credit.
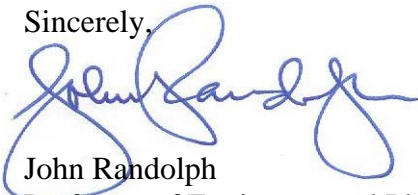
> The Green Campus Challenge was a unique, ground-breaking exercise in reaching out to our departments and employees to improve administrative practices and behavior to create a more sustainable campus culture.

#8 - While the practices that led to receiving an award may be appropriate for an innovation credit, winning awards and/or high sustainability rankings in other assessments is not, in and of itself, grounds for an innovation credit.

> While the success of the Green Campus Challenge earned Virginia Tech a Governor's Environmental Excellence Gold Award in April 2011, we feel that the Green Campus Challenge itself was the innovative program that qualifies as a STARS Innovation Credit.

For the reasons stated above, I highly recommend the Green Campus Challenge for the STARS Innovation category based on its unique approach towards changing the campus culture of our departments and employees here at Virginia Tech.

Sincerely,

John Randolph
Professor of Environmental Planning
Urban Affairs & Planning
Interim Director, School of Public & International Affairs
energy@vt.edu
540-231-7714