

February 3, 2021

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

Dear Committee Members:

I am honored to endorse and affirm Virginia Tech's fifth STARS submission, a reflection of our steadfast dedication to advancing sustainability. The university values its partnership with the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education and is proud to be a charter participant in the STARS Program. STARS is a premier sustainability management tool, and it serves as the foundation of our sustainability program.

The sense of urgency surrounding climate change is increasing throughout the world, the nation, and in our communities. As a global land-grant university, Virginia Tech has a duty to respond. This charge continues to underscore all of the exceptional sustainability efforts that have taken place at the university over the past decade since the Virginia Tech Climate Action Commitment was initially authorized. It remains the catalyst for the intentional integration of sustainability into the fabric of our university – throughout our Beyond Boundaries strategic vision, dynamic Campus Master Plan, rigorous curriculum, and unique hands-on learning opportunities for future leaders.

I wish to highlight some of the features within our STARS Version 2.2 submission below.

- The Academics (curriculum and research) and Engagement (campus and public) categories, and the Coordination and Planning subcategory, are Virginia Tech's sustainability strengths.
- University efforts to revise and renew the 2013 Virginia Tech Climate Action Commitment have been well underway over the past year despite a challenging COVID-19 environment. Developed through a highly collaborative process among students, faculty, and community members, the recommendations aim to guide Virginia Tech toward a greener, more sustainable future over the next five-to-10 years. The commitment continues to provide a Virginia Tech-specific,

actionable framework for advancing sustainability and energy efficiency in campus operations, facilities, academics, research, and more. The revised commitment will be presented for final approval by the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors in March 2021. At the heart of the revisions is our goal to become a carbon-neutral institution.

- Eighty-three student-generated university-funded sustainability projects have been implemented on the Virginia Tech Blacksburg campus over the past decade through the Green RFP program. The proposal process enables students to acquire real-world experiences that will serve them, not only in the sustainability field but in almost every sector.
- Currently in its eleventh year, the award-winning Virginia Tech Sustainability Internship Program provides students with invaluable opportunities to gain insights and professional skills in sustainability and university operations. Intern teams leverage campus as a living-learning laboratory, partnering with leaders from Energy Management, Stormwater Management, Dining Services, and more, to conceptualize and implement innovative projects that help reduce the university's environmental impact.
- Virginia Tech has 36 U.S. Green Building Council LEED-registered buildings constructed or in progress, with eighteen certified, seven pending certifications, four under construction, and four in design; this represents over 30 percent of our 10.2 million gross square feet of campus space.

We are pleased to share these achievements and to continue partnering with your organization to document and provide transparency to a topic our university community cares about deeply. Virginia Tech is committed to being a leader in campus sustainability, and our STARS performance is a direct reflection of that commitment.

Sincerely,



Timothy D. Sands
President