



MICHAEL T. BENSON
PRESIDENT

March 20, 2018

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

Re: Eastern Kentucky University STARS submission

Eastern Kentucky University is proud to submit its first comprehensive sustainability self-assessment using the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS), developed and administered by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE).

As President of Eastern Kentucky University I am pleased to affirm the accuracy of this submission.

Within our strategic plan entitled "*Make No Little Plans: A Vision for 2020*," Strategic Goal #5 states that we will "*prioritize sustainability (5.1.5)*". In response, the Office of Sustainability was founded in August 2015 and tasked with weaving sustainability thinking into the University's fabric. Campus engagement and support for sustainability has grown measurably—from the over 50 individuals who comprise EKU's "Sustainability Network" to the hundreds of students, employees, and community members who attend events like the #EKULocal Festival, EKU Earth Day festival, Colonel's Cleanup litter pickup events, American Chestnut orchard plantings, and environmental documentary screenings.

In October 2015, I signed the Second Nature Climate Commitment and commissioned the subsequent development of EKU's Climate Action & Resiliency Plan—an aggressive plan that outlines an economically viable path toward achieving carbon neutrality by 2036. One mitigation strategy that has already been enacted has shifted the University's core operating hours in the summer months to reduce our buildings' electricity consumption during peak cooling hours.

Campus revitalization has also been a priority during my Presidency. Since joining EKU we have undertaken one of the most aggressive overhauls to our built environment in the University's history. With that, our campus revitalization efforts reflect our commitment to sustainability. Our Campus Master Plan, completed in 2016, details our strategy to "*maximize existing campus infrastructure to accommodate growth, plan for sustainable systems to anticipate growth, steward the rich heritage of Eastern Kentucky, and celebrate the campus' unique sense of place.*" (EKU Campus Master Plan, 2016)

The completion of recent construction projects like our LEED Gold Science Building and South Hall residence hall are testaments to our commitment to building with sustainability in mind.

As an institution of higher learning, EKU also proudly supports its environmental sustainability and stewardship minor program and is actively exploring new ways to incorporate sustainability into the curricula of a multitude of disciplines.

This letter serves to highlight only a small fraction of our ongoing initiatives to promote sustainability on our campus, in our communities, and in the classroom.

The enclosed STARS submission provides further details on the environmental performance of the University and the myriad of educational programs, activities, and outreach dedicated toward improving economic welfare, ecological health and social equity.

Thank you for your enduring commitment preparing the academic community to lead our planet into a sustainable future, and for providing STARS as a mechanism for holding universities like ours to a higher standard.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Michael T. Benson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr. Michael T. Benson

President, Eastern Kentucky University