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Office of the President

April 12, 2021

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

Members of the STARS Steering Committee,

Saint Michael's College was founded in 1904 by members of the Society of Saint Edmund, as a residential liberal arts college. One of only 290 colleges nationwide with a Phi Beta Kappa chapter, and ranked among the nation's top liberal arts colleges, SMC offers a challenging academic program with a commitment to social justice and significant service learning and experiential education opportunities. Preservation of the environment is most certainly a local and global social justice issue and therefore our strong commitment to sustainability is in line with our social justice heritage.

As reflected in our Report, Saint Michael's has continued to invest in a number of initiatives in support of sustainability on campus, and amplified the work of individuals and organizations committed to environmental stewardship with more formal structures, greater funding, broader participation, and dedicated messaging.

Our most significant element of that investment in recent years has been the creation of our Center for the Environment, officially launched in November 2019, a broadly visible organization which brings together academic and co-curricular programs with a focus on workforce exposure and development and centralizes the shared priorities that motivate key environmental efforts on our campus. Acting powerfully on its three-point mission in its first 18 months, even amidst the pandemic, the Center – namely its director, affiliated faculty and staff, and impressively devoted students - has established itself as an example of leadership. Its mission states that the Center will:

- Prepare students to think and act critically, creatively to tackle the world's most complex issues as environmental leaders - locally and globally.
- Evolve the culture of sustainability on campus and in our community as a legacy for future generations.
- Foster connections between our students and learning opportunities in our community, state, and around the globe.

A key element of the Center is the work of our outstanding Farm Program (initially described to AASHE a few years ago as an “organic garden and permaculture site”), which has advanced and matured considerably in the past few years and provides fresh produce for dozens of CSA subscribers and practically all of our students through a partnership with our food service vendor. Likewise, course engagement with on-campus environmental resources grows year-over-year and internship opportunities for our students with sustainability focused and environmentally responsible businesses and organizations are multiplying. And most significantly, a core of our Center’s programming and effort is our Saint Michael’s Natural Area, a span of approximately 350 acres, which has been permanently preserved by a recent agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) wetlands easement program.

I am happy to say my Cabinet and I have decided with the leadership of the Center that we will create an endowed fund using money directed to the College in the easement purchase. We expect this decision to be ratified by our Board of Trustees at their upcoming June 2021 meeting. This endowment will provide stable, consistent, and permanent monetary support for the Center and ensure the natural area is a usable, vibrant example of sustainable and ecological learning for our community.

Finally, I want to emphasize that Saint Michael’s is profoundly aware that sustainability and environmental justice are inextricable from racial justice. At the same time that we are growing our Center for the Environment, the College has new leadership in our Center for Multicultural Affairs and Students, a newly established position in the Special Assistant to the President for Diversity and Inclusion, and a staff and faculty Racial Justice Task Force charged with considering all aspects of racial justice on our campus. Attention to racial and environmental justice, locally and globally, is central to our mission.

At Saint Michael’s College, we will continuously work to be a more sustainable campus, and continue to seek opportunities to learn as a community. The STARS program will help us to assess our strengths and identify those areas where we need to concentrate in the future. We greatly appreciate the work of AASHE in demonstrating higher education’s role in fostering the engagement our students are already demonstrating so broadly, and providing opportunities for those students to put their learning and their enthusiasm into practice promoting environmental sustainability and working for the preservation of our planet.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "D. E. Lorraine Sterritt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent dot above the final letter of the last name.

D. E. Lorraine Sterritt, PhD  
President