

October 3, 2017

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,

It is with great pride and pleasure that I submit the first Saint Michael's College STARS Report for your review and confirmation. Students, staff and faculty worked together with great enthusiasm and commitment in order to complete the report over the past year. I can certify that this report represents an accurate reflection of the work our community has done to increase and expand sustainability measures on our campus.

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 286 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. I am very happy to note that Saint Michael's College has just been notified that the Princeton Review has ranked us #11 in its Green College Honor Roll, an honor that we are extremely proud of.

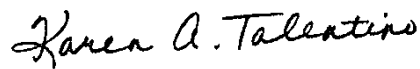
As reflected in our Report, over the past few years Saint Michael's has invested in a number of initiatives in support of sustainability on campus. For example, our two most recent construction projects (a residence hall and a student center) are both heated through geothermal energy. In addition, a few years ago we installed a solar array which contributes a significant proportion of our electricity on campus. And, we have had several capital projects to improve energy efficiency (e.g., window replacement, upgrades of boilers). Finally, our organic garden and permaculture site has expanded tremendously, both in size and in the amount of participation by students, staff and faculty. Through careful planning and robust productivity we are now able to source some of the food being served in our student dining commons.

As important as these initiatives are, I take greatest pride in the work that we do with our students. In fact, much of our effort in the area of sustainability is integrated directly into the institutional service and experiential learning opportunities we offer to our students. In many ways, we utilize our campus as a living-learning sustainability laboratory. We provide our students with meaningful opportunities on campus to apply what they are learning in the classroom and work on developing and testing solutions to the numerous environmental challenges the world faces. Student internships, classroom activities and student research projects have all contributed to the success of the garden and permaculture site. Student involvement in the “zero waste” initiative has been instrumental in providing recycling and food waste containers in every building on campus, and the spring electricity competition in residence halls has led to electricity savings and behavioral changes among students.

We will continue our efforts to become a more sustainable campus, and the STARS program will help us to assess our strengths and identify those areas where we need to concentrate in the future.

I greatly appreciate the work of AASHE because higher education must play a leading role in educating tomorrow’s citizens about the importance of environmental sustainability in the preservation of our planet.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karen A. Talentino".

Karen A. Talentino, Professor of Biology
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