



Merry Lea
Environmental Learning Center
of Goshen College

November 24, 2014

AASHE – STARS
1536 Wynkoop St., Ste. 100
Denver, CO 80202

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is in affirmation of the work done by Goshen College to involve students with the research, planning and implementation phases of various sustainability improvements on the campus. Although the College has a lengthy history of seeking out and incorporating student ideas into campus operations and infrastructure improvements (incl. solar hot water heaters and biodiesel generation from used kitchen oil, among others), this was a particular emphasis of an entire class (BIO207, “Roots of the Environmental Crisis”) during the spring of 2013.

As a way to address many of the carbon and energy footprint concerns that were discussed in the course, the professor, Dr. Ryan Sensenig, working with Glenn Gilbert (Sustainability Coordinator) and STARS student interns, helped the ‘Roots’ students to analyze large amounts of data on the consumption patterns of various parts of the College’s infrastructure, and to suggest numerous efficiency improvements that could be made based on those analyses. Many of those have been implemented in the campus’ operations since then, which is in itself a fantastic demonstration for those students of how real data can drive relevant decision-making. This can be immensely empowering, especially in the context of issues (such as climate change) that can seem overwhelming to students in their scope. Nearly a year and a half later, when I encounter students in my classes who were part of this experience, it is clear that it has stuck firmly with them. They can easily talk about the significance of the content that they learned in that process, but also still sound proud of the changes that they helped to bring about.

It is precisely this combination of increased knowledge and improved sense of agency that I think makes learning experiences like this one so powerful, and I am happy to commend Goshen College for their efforts in this regards.

Sincerely,

Jonathon W. Schramm, Ph.D.