



# Cornell University

David J. Skorton  
President

January 12, 2012

Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education  
213 ½ N. Limestone St.  
Lexington, KY 40507

Re: STARS submission

To whom it may concern:

I am pleased to endorse the attached sustainability self-assessment by Cornell University and to report our achievement of a STARS Gold rating under the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System.

As a charter member of STARS and a signatory of the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment, Cornell University is profoundly committed to sustainability. The university is guided by its strategic plan, adopted in 2010, which includes among its objectives effective stewardship of the natural and built environment. We have established a President's Sustainable Campus Committee to oversee all aspects of campus sustainability-related operations: energy, climate, water, food, waste, buildings, people, land, purchasing, and transportation. Each of these ten areas is the focus of a team of staff, students, and faculty who develop program recommendations, assess progress, and help implement policy recommendations. Moreover, sustainability is integral to the goals of Cornell Now, the fundraising campaign aimed to conclude in 2015, the university's sesquicentennial.

We are currently advancing sustainability in each of four priority areas: education, research, practice, and engagement.

*Education.* More than 30 student organizations have been catalysts for change at Cornell, working with energy and thoughtfulness to help the university address sustainability challenges. Student organizations have made energy and water conservation efforts visible with the Lights Off Cornell and Take Back the Tap movements.

*Research.* With the help of the David R. Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future, Cornell's colleges, schools, and units, along with external partners, are working together to transform promising approaches to the three tiers of sustainable life—energy, the environment, and economic development—into real-world solutions. Faculty associated with the ACSF have leveraged pilot project funding into nearly \$90 million in external project funding.

*Practice.* The Cornell Climate Action Plan (managed by the President's Sustainable Campus Committee) has set the Ithaca campus on a path to carbon neutrality by 2050 and signals universitywide commitment. In the first two years of its climate plan, Cornell reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent, due to the high performance of the Combined Heat and Power Plant and a decision to eliminate all coal combustion at the university.

*Engagement.* Whether preparing for new drought and flood patterns, reducing home and business energy costs, or providing research knowledge about biofuels and renewable sources, Cornell Cooperative Extension's Energy and Climate Programs help New Yorkers make informed choices to yield better energy outcomes for all.

I am proud of the concerted effort that has led Cornell to a gold rating under STARS. At the same time, all of us at Cornell acknowledge that there is much more work to be done. The STARS process is helpful as we make sustainability-related decisions and monitor our progress, and we are grateful to AASHE for this valuable metric.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David J. Skorton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David J. Skorton