



Cornell University

Martha E. Pollack
President

March 3, 2020

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

Re: 2020 Cornell University STARS 2.1 Submission

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to endorse the 2019 AASHE STARS assessment for Cornell University using the version 2.1 reporting platform.

Sustainability is a signature area of excellence at Cornell University. I am proud of the innovation and commitment our faculty, staff, and students have displayed in addressing complex sustainability problems through operational improvement and living laboratory collaborations this year.

We are especially proud of our STARS innovation credits, which are a testament to our community's innovation and commitment to sustainability solutions that scale beyond our campus:

Residential Compost Managers Program

The Residential Compost Managers is a student volunteer program launched in fall 2018 to meet demand from residential communities for composting food waste on site. Early pilot programs demonstrated negligible contamination rates when residence hall kitchen compost buckets were managed by student volunteers. Forty-five student volunteers diverted over 10,000 pounds of food scraps from the landfill in the first year, and in 2019–2020 the program has been expanded to 65 student volunteers to cover additional residential facilities such as co-ops, fraternities and sororities, graduate student housing, and limited off-campus student housing.

Swipe Out Hunger

In an effort to tackle food insecurity among students, Cornell students can now donate “bonus meals” each semester to fellow students on the Cornell Dining Plan. Donated meals are collected in a central “Swipe Out Hunger Fund,” and qualifying students receive access to a “Swipe Out Hunger Meal Plan” based on self-disclosure. Over 400 meals were donated during the program’s first semester, and over 1000 meals were donated during Orientation Week in August 2019.

Golden Gorge Award

The Golden Gorge Awards recognize student sustainability leadership and achievements on campus. Award categories include, but are not limited to, “Rookie of the Year,” “Member of the Year,” “Event of the Year,” “Initiative of the Year,” “Ripple Effect Award,” “JUST Award” (Justice, Unity, and Sustainability Triumphs), “Lifetime Achievement Award” (given to a student who has made a substantial impact on the Cornell community during their tenure as a student), “Organization of the Year,” and “Biggest Fail” (“recognizing a student, student organization, event, or initiative that heroically failed in pursuit of something awesome).

Solar Trailer for Grounds Department

Cornell University Sustainable Design (CUSD, a student-led team, partnered with Cornell’s Grounds Department to build a solar trailer outfitted with solar panels, batteries, and charging ports to store, transport, and charge battery-operated landscape and grounds maintenance equipment. The trailer can also be used as an educational model, as well as a practical tool for events that require on-site, portable power. The solar panels are estimated to produce 1,151.2 kWh of energy over the course of the year—enough energy to power a normal 60-watt lightbulb for 19,187 hours or 2.2 years. If the renewable energy is fully used every day, it would be roughly equivalent to replacing 33 gallons of gasoline and/or diesel.

These are the types of projects that speak to the role of higher education in creating a more sustainable economy, society, and planet.

Our Ithaca campus submits STARS annually to make our achievements and progress accessible and transparent to campus constituents, our peers, and the world. Thank you for accepting our submission. We look forward to participating in another year of the program.

Sincerely,



Martha E. Pollack