



THE PRESIDENT

August 11, 2020

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

Dear STARS committee:

I present the San Diego State University (SDSU) report to the Association of Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) Sustainability Tracking Assessment Rating System (STARS). I affirm it is an accurate representation of our many sustainability initiatives and efforts. This report, spearheaded by our AASHE STARS student intern, Gener Abdon in the Facilities Services Office of Sustainability, reflects collaborative work across departments, business units and programs and contributions from students, faculty, and staff.

SDSU has much to celebrate -- (1) increased academic engagement; (2) sustainability-driven operational outcomes; (3) administration of programs and facilitation of discussions -- all aimed at intertwining sustainability best practices on our campus, in our homes, and empowering our students with the knowledge and commitment to make a difference beyond our borders. We recognize that our most effective impact will be the knowledge and commitment our students carry with them beyond graduation.

We participated in AASHE STARS in 2012 and 2018, and this year we anticipate achieving Gold. Since 2018, we have delved into the intersectional and interdisciplinary nature of sustainability. Two Office of Sustainability students interns focused on diversity and inclusion along with peer-to-peer education projects. Vecky Hernandez, the Office of Sustainability Environmental Justice student intern, hosted environmental justice workshops for the SDSU community. Jantzen O'Toole, Office of Sustainability Green Office Certification Program ("GOCP") student intern, led the effort for faculty and staff to integrate sustainability in their professional work and to provide incentives for sustainable practices through the GOCP. We are developing similar programs for adoption in our student residences as well. These programs allowed us to diversify the campus engagement in sustainability.

SDSU's Sustainability Major and Minor have grown rapidly. When the Major was first established in 2012, it had six students. The Major has attracted 173 students and the Minor 55. It is one of the fastest growing majors in the College of Arts and Letters.

The Major also has a flourishing internship/capstone component. Graduates from the SDSU sustainability program have pursued careers in public lands, parks and natural resource management, environmental conservation and restoration, environmental education, environmental and urban planning, and green energy sales. They also go on to professional and graduate schools in environmental advocacy, energy, private consulting, law, natural resource management, social sciences, and the humanities. In addition, many students pursue careers in organic farming, managing cooperatives, social-environmental advocacy, and green entrepreneurship.

The Center for Regional Sustainability (“CRS”) program connects the SDSU campus community with external groups engaged in sustainability initiatives including the Sage Project, BrightSide Produce, and the Social and Economic Vulnerabilities Initiative making an impact in San Diego. These collaborations with local partners address climate adaptation and resilience, homelessness and food insecurity, both on campus and in the broader San Diego-Tijuana region. Since 2013, these efforts have engaged nearly 4,000 students, and dozens of faculty. Through hands-on, real-world projects our students and faculty make impacts beyond our campus. In addition, CRS has brought in over \$500,000 in external funding to support these initiatives.

Sustainability transcends traditional curriculum through enhanced course offerings. The Office of Sustainability Food student intern, Barbara Green, created a campus map of edible fruits. Also new designs to encourage recycling on waste bins, and other campaigns for behavioral modifications were created by students. 1377 students participated in a sustainability literacy and culture survey. This allowed them to delve into topics of social equity such as acknowledging that SDSU sits on Native American Kumeyaay land and learn that low income communities feel the effect of climate change first so they are motivated to help SDSU be proactive in making sustainable change on campus. In addition, Sustainability has been incorporated into new employee orientation programs.

SDSU’s Climate Action Plan commits the University to achieving operational carbon neutrality by 2040 and full carbon neutrality by 2050. SDSU is mitigating carbon emissions in each of the three emission categories - campus operational efficiency, energy generation (renewables), and commuting.

The campus pursues Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification for new and major renovations on campus. Since 2018, the campus has earned LEED Gold certification for Engineering & Interdisciplinary Sciences. The Huāxyacac Student Residence Hall is on track for at least a LEED Silver equivalent rating. This year we met SDSU’s Climate Action Plan goal of reducing campus water usage 25% below the 2013 baseline year. Facilities Services has achieved operation efficiencies on campus. We recently completed campus lighting upgrades that removed fluorescent lighting and replaced it with LEDs for an energy cost savings of approximately \$95,000 for the fiscal year of 2019-2020.

To further reduce our carbon emissions from energy generation, SDSU has begun a 10 year project to decommission our cogeneration plant. The first phases are conversions of the steam distribution system to 10 localized natural gas boilers across campus. SDSU is installing one electric heat recovery chiller as a pilot. At the completion of this project, we will procure clean electricity from the grid further reducing our carbon emissions because California’s grid energy relies on renewables including solar and wind. We are currently awaiting responses to an RFP for up to 4 additional megawatts of solar on campus.

To reduce carbon emissions from commuting, we installed 26 electric vehicle charging stations and replaced 43 campus gas fleet vehicles with electric. We also subsidized trolley passes for students and implemented a sophomore year residence requirement so more students are living on campus instead of commuting.

Other notable efforts include: (1) True Zero Waste certification effort for the Aztec Student Union for diversion of 90% of waste; (2) Office of Sustainability Zero Waste student intern, Charlotte Roberts, worked with EcoReps to host a DIY upcycled wellness event, a single-use plastic art exhibit, and an educational trash-talking day to celebrate RecycleMania and cultivate conversations between campus stakeholders about waste; and (3) Office of Sustainability Energy Analyst student intern, Nick Poser, implemented a SDSU Green Labs Program. This program has strengthened partnerships between Facilities Services and Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) to provide education around energy savings practices and health and safety awareness for the laboratory users.

This year, there has been widespread support and motivation amongst the SDSU community to further sustainability. Associated Students passed a Sustainability Resolution late April, and the University Senate passed their own Resolution with supporting Policy being adopted early May. Sustainability plans are also included in Strategic Planning Priority: Resilience. Designed to Thrive for the next five years. We plan to collaborate with the talented students, faculty, and staff who are passionate about the Earth and ensure that SDSU continues to be a prosperous university.

We would like to thank you for the informative resources that you all have provided. We are pleased to see other universities share our passion and ambition for sustainability. Thank you for playing an impactful role in campus decision making and influencing collective conversations about the livelihoods of future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Adela de la Torre'.

Adela de la Torre
President