



Senate of the Associated Students of the University of Nevada

88th Session, 2020-2021

A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF STARS REPORTING AT UNR

Resolution Number: 143

Authored By: Intern Ngo, Senator Stoddard, and Senator Stanfill

Sponsored By: The Committee on Safety, Sustainability, and Wellness

Whereas, STARS stands for the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System;

Whereas, STARS was created by AASHE, The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education, which has over 90 members in the continental US;

Whereas, AASHE defines sustainability in an “inclusive way, encompassing ecological and environmental health, social justice, secure livelihoods, and a better world for all generations;”¹

Whereas, institutions are assessed in Academics, Engagement (Campus & Public), Operations, Planning & Administration, and Innovation & Leadership, whose scores cumulate into a platinum, gold, silver, bronze, or reporter rating valid for up to 3 years;

Whereas, the positive effects of STARS include gaining international recognition for sustainability efforts of the campus, enabling meaningful comparisons over time using common measurements developed by the international campus sustainability community (statistics, engagement percentages, etc.), and creating incentives for continual improvement toward sustainability;

Whereas, according to the STARS website, “nine out of ten participants report that STARS has instigated changes that have moved or will move their institutions toward being more sustainable;”²

¹ “AASHE, the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education.” The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education, 15 July 2020, www.aashe.org/.

² “Why Participate.” The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System, 14 Apr. 2020, <https://stars.aashe.org/about-stars/why-participate/>.

Whereas, 1,018 global institutions have registered for the STARS reporting tool, 672 of which have earned a STARS rating;

Whereas, the aforementioned universities include UC Davis, American University, and Arizona State University (ASU);

Whereas, an article on the ASU Sustainability Website details, “ASU uses its experience with the AASHE STARS data-collection process to refine annual benchmarks used to assess its progress in advancing its university-wide sustainability program;”³

Whereas, since ASU first reported in July 2011, it has created successful sustainability initiatives such as the University Sustainability Practices Program Assistants, an annual sustainability climate survey to revise engagement goals, multiple social media handles dedicated to promoting sustainability, and even a Carbon Neutrality Plan which earned ASU its platinum rating in March 2020;

Whereas, Rob Melnick, executive dean of ASU’s Global Institute of Sustainability, praises STARS with teaching leaders to “engage their community and demonstrate a commitment through effective sustainability practices;”

Whereas, the University of Nevada, Reno has been a member of AASHE since 2006 and currently has a STARS subscription valid until October 31, 2021, although UNR isn’t actively reporting;

Whereas, Assistant Director of Environmental Programs John Sagebiel is a primary staff advocate for STARS;

Whereas, in an interview with Mr. Sagebiel, he emphasizes the importance of STARS is, “it shows us where our weaknesses are, it shows us how we can improve, and gives us simple ideas on how we can make our university more sustainable in the future;”⁴

Whereas, actively measuring sustainability criteria can easily create tangible improvements towards campus sustainability;

³ “Arizona State University’s Sustainability Achievements Rated GOLD by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education.” Global Institute of Sustainability and Innovation, 9 June 2020, <https://sustainability-innovation.asu.edu/news/archive/arizona-stateuniversitys-sustainability-achievements-rated-gold-by-the-association-for-the-advancement/>

⁴ Ngo, Olivia J, and John Sagebiel. “STARS Overview.” 10 Dec. 2020

Whereas, a lack of responsive human resources has been a primary obstacle for reporting to STARS in the past;

Whereas, this is due to the decentralized structure of UNR administration, so responsiveness from potentially hundreds of individuals whom have individual responsibilities is hard, especially when measuring campus or community engagement;

Whereas, in the Fall 2020 Semester, the Eco-Socialism Committee of the Young Democratic Socialists on campus contacted Mr. Sagebiel to offer assistance in bringing the UNR STARS report to fruition;

Whereas, the Eco-Socialism Committee recruited volunteers from some student organizations, including the Environmental Club and Engineers for the Common Good, to conduct research and outreach to assemble a STARS report, but progress has been slower than anticipated due to the small number of volunteers and the challenges of reaching staff escalated by the COVID-19 pandemic;

Whereas, by initiating a culture of reporting, STARS will encourage collaboration between departments to provide data and open a line of communication about sustainability understanding;

Whereas, ASUN has an enormous voice and a captive audience, and its support can bring greater awareness and enthusiasm about STARS to administrative authority;

Whereas, engaging with STARS facilitates conversation and development of future ASUN and university sustainability initiatives that successfully draw in diverse people across campus to better evaluate sustainability throughout their daily lives;

Whereas, such initiatives can include:

- 1) Continuing liaison work by Senators, especially in the Committee on Safety, Sustainability, and Wellness to establish frequent communication about STARS criteria and ensure data is being recorded for future reporting;
 - a. Communication with the Provost's Office is especially beneficial, as they fund the STARS subscription and have the authority to expand upon sustainable projects completed by Environment Programs;

- 2) Expansion of the Wellness and Sustainability section on the ASUN website to include relevant sustainability statistics, tips for students to follow sustainable practices, a map of sustainable features of campus, or promotion of events on campus that take active measures to be sustainable;
- 3) Collaborations with the ASUN Office of Sustainability or Department of Event Programming to coordinate student experiences with incentives to be more sustainable;
 - a. On August 26, 2020, this Senate body passed “An Act to Create the Department of Sustainability,” which integrates an Assistant Director of Sustainability position into the SAS beginning in the 89th Session, giving ASUN more human resources to promote sustainability efforts;

Whereas, STARS will help the Associated Students and the higher education community keep the university accountable and ensure transparency in areas such as sustainable operation, interdisciplinary academia, and open access to research, as well as diversity, equity, and inclusion;

Whereas, Mr. Sagebiel stated, “There’s a value in expressing our values as a university, and by letting the public know that UNR is sustainability-inclusive, there will be a positive change in the UNR community’s attitude toward sustainability, regardless of the rating;”

Whereas, for students to become well-rounded global citizens, it is critical for sustainability to transcend the curriculum into recognizable actions of daily life;

Whereas, STARS criteria is closely related to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s), which is a 15-year agenda outlining a vision for increased economic, social, and environmental sustainability in 2030;⁵

Whereas, the SDG’s include no poverty, climate action, decent work and economic growth, and reduced inequality, which a considerable amount of ASUN Senate legislation, either directly or indirectly, reflect a desire to work towards;

⁵ “STARS Technical Manual, Version 2.2.” STARS by AASHE, The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education, June 2019, <https://stars.aashe.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/STARS-2.2-Technical-Manual.pdf>

Whereas, the strategic plan *No Walls 2025: A Student Vision for the University of Nevada* envisions “students [becoming] leaders in the sustainability movement on campus, and assisting in campus sustainability projects;”⁶

Whereas, STARS will inevitably help guide the No Walls vision forward, preparing UNR to make deeper global impacts as an institution;

Be it resolved that, the Associated Students support the University of Nevada, Reno in reporting its sustainability-related statistics to STARS;

Be it further resolved that, the Associated Students will continue to advocate the importance of student and staff engagement in overall campus sustainability;

Be it further resolved that, this legislation will be sent to the following:

- ASUN Director of Sustainability, Elizabeth Guillen
- ASUN Director of Campus and Public Relations, Kyla Kwan
- ASUN President, Dominique Hall
- Assistant Director of Environmental Programs, John Sagebiel
- Associate Vice President of Facilities Service, Denise Baclawski
- University Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Eloisa Gordon-Mora
- Vice President of Student Services, Shannon Ellis
- Provost, Jeff Thompson
- University President, Brian Sandoval

Adopted in Senate on February 24th, 2021

Attest:

Hope Cronan, Senate Secretary

Keegan Murphy, Speaker of the Senate

⁶ The Associated Students. “No Walls 2025: A Student Vision for the University of Nevada.” 2015.