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UMM to track sustainability via STARS

Summary: UMM has been selected to participate in the pilot phase of a rating system for sustainability in higher education called STARS—Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System.

(February 18, 2008) UMM has been selected to participate in the pilot phase of a rating system for sustainability in higher education called STARS—Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System. UMM joins 90 other college and university campuses to test the self-assessment tool developed by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). Participants will provide feedback to AASHE throughout 2008.

The goal of the STARS program is to:

1. Provide a guide for advancing sustainability in all sectors of higher education, from governance and operations to academics and community engagement.
2. Enable meaningful comparisons over time and across institutions by establishing a common standard of measurement for sustainability in higher education.
3. Create incentives for continuous improvement toward sustainability.
4. Facilitate information sharing about higher education sustainability practices and performance.
5. Build a stronger, more diverse campus sustainability community and promote a comprehensive understanding of sustainability that includes its social, economic and environmental dimensions.

"A huge component of sustainability is transparency. UMM strives to be an institution that puts her ideals into action," said Troy Goodnough, UMM campus sustainability coordinator. "This system will help us to do an honest accounting of the work we have done to be more responsible citizens and it will help us to identify ideas for future improvement. As a pilot member of the program, UMM is helping to identify concrete steps that institutions can take to be more sustainable."

Although STARS is similar to the LEED (Leadership in Energy Environmental Design), a green building rating system, it applies to an entire campus rather than to a single building. STARS also "evaluates social responsibility as well as environmental stewardship."

According to AASHE, the campuses "were selected to represent a wide range of institutional types, sizes and geography. They include public and private schools, community colleges and research universities."

Other Minnesota four-year and graduate institutions that will participate are Augsburg College, Bemidji State University, Carleton College, The College of St. Benedict/Saint John's University, Gustavus Adolphus College, Macalester College, St. Olaf College, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, University of St. Thomas and Winona State University.

AASHE is an association of colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada working to create a sustainable future.
was founded in 2006 with a mission to promote sustainability in all sectors of higher education - from governance and operations to curriculum and outreach - through education, communication, research and professional development. AASHE defines sustainability in an inclusive way, encompassing human and ecological health, social justice, secure livelihoods, and a better world for all generations.

Photo: Troy Goodnough (in white lab coat) engages high school students from Buffalo in an energy-related demonstration during a UMM visit.

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