



## **Ball State University Muncie, Indiana Assessment**

### **SCHOOL**

Ball State University, a public 4-year institution, serving approximately 19,000 students in Muncie, Indiana.

### **ABSTRACT**

A group of undergraduate and graduate students in the Building Better Community Fellows program working under the direction of Dr. Gwendolen White, Department of Accounting, prepared the university's second Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Sustainability Report. The GRI framework is used by some of the largest 250 companies in the world to report their sustainability activities using a standard disclosure framework. Ball State University's second GRI Report is correlated to that of the Sustainability Tracking Assessment Rating System (STARS) developed by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) for use in higher education.

### **GOALS AND OUTCOMES**

#### **Goals**

The goal of the project was to immerse students in learning GRI assessment techniques and to use this report as a base-line data survey for future reassessment and cross-comparison to the STARS rating system.

#### **Accomplishments and Outcomes**

The report was completed in a timely manner and is now available on the university's web site. President Gora prepared an introduction and the students developed a very attractive, easily usable graphic package to support the narrative of findings.



#### **Challenges and Responses**

The only challenge was to complete the project in one semester. Students had to learn the GRI framework, gather the data, and write the report. They were given specific deadlines for the completion of the work throughout the semester. A weekly group meeting with the faculty mentor was useful to keep the group on schedule and motivated to complete the project.

### **Campus Climate Action: Your School's Carbon Footprint**

The longer-term goal of such reporting is to help shape the conversation of the university as it enters the next cycle of strategic planning so as to continue to work toward reducing its greenhouse gases to achieve climate-neutrality on or before 2050. Since our climate action planning is integral to our five-year strategic planning, having the data-set from the GRI Report will assist in shaping policy adoption and operational decisions in the next five-year cycle.

### **Commentary and Reflection**

Ball State is only the second university in the United States to use the GRI Reporting framework and the first university to develop the cross-comparison with STARS. The impact and findings continue to unfold as the faculty work with the next round of students involved in the next round of GRI and STARS reporting, and we continue to work to clarify the commonality of data-sets that could be shared by the two report frameworks.

## **ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT**

### **Leaders and Supporters**

This project was undertaken as part of the Building Better Communities Fellows Program and administered through the university as a cross-disciplinary enrichment opportunity for students to engage in immersive learning. Students received support through the Building Better Communities Office and direct mentorship by Dr. White.

### **Funding and Resources**

The only costs encountered in this effort were those associated with the filing the GRI Report with the international organization for posting on the web page, the cost of physical reproduction of high-quality printed copies for distribution to university administrators, and incidental expenses associated with report drafts and production.

### **Education and Community Outreach**

The report is now available on the university's web site, has been disclosed internationally on the GRI web page, and we are garnering a growing interest from universities around the country wanting to learn more about the correlation between GRI and STARS and the methodologies used to accumulate the necessary data-sets.

### **National Wildlife Federation's Campus Ecology Program**

Although National Wildlife Federation's Campus Ecology Program materials were not used directly in the production of this project, we are delighted to share the information and make available the resources using the Campus Ecology Case Study web site. The most recent NWF publications, including the online case study database, have been very helpful in shaping the conversation and providing the grounding for students as they undertook this work.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

### **Contacts**

Dr. Gwen White, Associate Professor, Department of Accounting, 765-285-5116, [gwhite@bsu.edu](mailto:gwhite@bsu.edu)  
Robert J. Koester, AIA, LEED AP, Professor of Architecture, 765-285-1135, [rkoester@bsu.edu](mailto:rkoester@bsu.edu)

**Case study submitted by:** Robert J. Koester, AIA, LEED AP, Professor of Architecture, 765-285-1135, [rkoester@bsu.edu](mailto:rkoester@bsu.edu)

Image Credit: Gwendolen B. White