



Ball State University

Muncie, Indian

Assessment

SCHOOL

Ball State University, a public 4-year institution, serving approximately 19,000 students in Muncie, IN. Ball State University employs over 2,800 faculty, staff and service employees. It has operating expenses of \$390 million with \$268 million reflecting payroll expenses. The university has net assets of \$597 million and receives \$130 million in general operating funds from state appropriations. BSU was the only public institution in Indiana to be listed among the country's most environmentally responsible in the 2010 Princeton Review Guide to 286 Green Colleges. It was ranked 20th in up-and-coming universities in 2010 by U.S. News and World Report and was noted to have made the most promising and innovative changes. For the 7th consecutive year, US News and World Report has also recognized Ball State's 1st year programs. The Princeton Review has ranked the university among the top 25% best in the Midwest for the past 6 years. It won the 2009 Academic Institution of the Year Award from the Mobile Marketing Association and was named a 2011 Military Friendly School.

ABSTRACT

A group of Business Fellows Students working under the direction of Dr. Gwen White in the Department of Accounting, prepared the university's first-ever Global Reporting Initiative-Based Sustainability Report. The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) is used by some of the largest 250 companies in the world to report-out their sustainability activities using a standard public-disclosure framework. Completion of this first GRI Report positions Ball State to correlate the tracking of sustainability as indexed by this international business assessment technique against that of the Sustainability Tracking Assessment Rating System (STARS) developed by AASHE for use in higher education. Efforts are underway to prepare the second of each report for filing next year.



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 digestible graphic package to support the narrative of findings.

Challenges and Responses

Since this data-gathering activity was conducted in parallel to that of data acquisition for the STARS reporting, there was some overlap with the two initiatives. Nonetheless, the student team charged with developing the GRI Report was able to work with appropriate staff in the various sectors of campus operations to gather data needed to complete the GRI Report. In some instances this required front-end notification by the faculty mentor so as to assure university staff that the request for data was legitimate.

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 Business Fellows Program 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 have been very

helpful in shaping the conversation and providing the grounding for students as they undertook this work. These publications are noted in the checklist below.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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