



American Council on Education
One Dupont Circle, NW
Washington DC, 20036



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Policy, Economics, and Innovation
Sector Strategies Division (MC 1807T)
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

December 10, 2004

Dr. John Smith
President
ABC University
Springfield, OH

Dear President Smith:

Colleges and universities are facing ever increasing review by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other regulatory agencies. While regulatory compliance is the aim of every academic institution's environmental program, the ultimate goal for all institutions is to be good environmental stewards and to improve environmental performance. To that end, we are asking you to assess with your environmental professionals:

- What is the status of your institution's environmental policies and programs?
- Are adequate resources provided to meet environmental program needs?
- Is there a continuous improvement process in place to assess and set goals for your institution's environmental performance measures?

We urge you to review your institution's role in promoting excellence in environmental stewardship as an integral part of its broad mission for teaching, research, and service. Two voluntary initiatives that may assist you in this review are using the resources of the Colleges and Universities Sector of the U.S. EPA Sector Strategies Program and developing an Environmental Management System (EMS).

In May 2003, the EPA Office of Policy, Economics, and Innovation established the Colleges and Universities Sector as one of 12 partners in its Sector Strategies Program, which is part of EPA's National Center for Environmental Innovation. Five higher education organizations – American Council on Education; APPA: The Association of Higher Education Facilities Officers; Campus Consortium for Environment Excellence; Campus Safety, Health and Environmental Management Association; and National Association of College and University Business Officers – and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute make up the Colleges and Universities Sector. In partnership with the EPA, the Sector is working to overcome regulatory barriers that impede compliance and environmental improvement, promoting the use of Environmental Management Systems, and measuring environmental performance within our nation's colleges and universities. Information on the Sector program can be found at <http://www.epa.gov/sectors/colleges/>.

In addition to the Sector initiative, we ask that you consider the merits of developing an EMS or similar integrated approach. An EMS is a dynamic process that assesses environmental impacts, sets improvement targets, carries out plans to achieve them, and monitors results. It does not require formal accreditation and certification, but these are available options. A management system can integrate compliance, education, and research and promote individual environmental responsibility. Further, a management system can help ensure that environmental stewardship is engaged in the planning and development stages of policies and programs when it can have the greatest potential impact for conserving and protecting the current and future health of the environment.

An increasing number of higher education institutions are committing to protect human health and the environment by using an EMS or similar integrated, coherent, and concerted system. For example, these systems are successfully in use at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of Massachusetts-Lowell, the University of Missouri-Rolla, Washington State University, University of Colorado-Boulder, and the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center.

Because colleges and universities are diverse, a management system is most effective when an institution tailors its program to reflect its own distinct culture. In light of this, the Sector formed a work group of roughly 15 volunteer members tasked with developing tools to help colleges and universities set up and manage defined EMSs. The workgroup explored different management system options and developed a Web site and fact sheet that address the special needs of campuses at all levels of EMS development. The Web address is www.CampusEMS.org.

You are welcome to have your environmental staff contact the Colleges and Universities Sector Coordinating Committee Chair, Bruce D. Backus, assistant vice chancellor, environmental health and safety, at Washington University in St. Louis at backusb@wustl.edu or (314) 362-6816.

Thank you for considering this initiative to promote environmental stewardship within our nation's academic community.

On behalf of the Colleges and Universities Sector,



Sheldon Elliott Steinbach
Vice President and General Counsel
American Council on Education (ACE)



Robert S. Benson
Director, Sector Strategies Division
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency