

### ***Suggestions Regarding Letter-Writing***

While there is no length limit to your letter, we do suggest that letters are as specific, concise, and insightful as possible. Please avoid language such as “I feel” when referring to metrics or initiatives. We realize that it is unclear to many people in our community what initiatives are occurring; the AASHE Report (The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education) is one step toward assuaging Bennington’s neglect of aggregating metrics regarding environmental impact. ‘Summon, Spring’ is a logical next step of opening a review of sustainable initiatives to our greater campus community.

‘Sustainability’ is no longer charged with clear meaning, and is often poorly defined. The epistolary format of this discourse aims to foster reflection *regarding what might be sustained*. When writing, speaking, or thinking about ‘sustainability,’ whether economic, environmental, health-based, or otherwise, it is useful to position the process of sustaining in relation to something being sustained. Does environmental sustainability encourage increasing compatibility between humans, the built environment, and the ‘outdoor’ environment? This expression of discourse hopefully allows time for candor stemming from careful reading and retrospection. Be careful to avoid self-referential adjectives in your writing, such as ‘excellent’ and ‘meaningful’ and even ‘sustainable’ without defining. The term sustainability is often used as if in a vacuum, and without referent. When speaking of any kind of sustainability, to define *what is being sustained* is paramount. Not all problems have solutions, and tradeoffs may need to be reviewed. Is there a design or idea which may solve a specific problem or fits an envisioned need? What are the tradeoffs? How are materials sourced? How can the change occur, and who needs to be involved? How might tradeoffs and solutions to specific problems be balanced and understood? How does Bennington college’s pedagogy challenge or provide opportunities for sustaining compatible human & earth systems?

Reflection Examples: One might design a vermin composting bin for a residential house to use, a portion of a zero-waste model in which garbage can be easily sorted. We encourage designs and letters to relate to your own areas of knowledge, potentially ecology, economics, architecture, visual art, APA, language. You have utmost liberty in what you may write about so

long as it is thoughtful. Participants are also encouraged to review portions of the AASHE report they wish to criticize or comment on. It is, and was not, the hope that the standardized assessment of the AASHE report is meant to be an end only towards collegiate accreditation or rank. While Bennington College has received a provisional Silver, this rating does not holistically reflect the nuance of Bennington College's challenges and capacities for environmental sustainability and resilience.