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Partnership for a Green City
c/o Brent Fryrear, Director
Joan Riehm Memorial Environmental Leadership Award
100-G Jouett Hall
University of Louisville
Louisville, KY 40292

Dear Members of the Partnership for a Green City,

We were so pleased to hear about the Joan Riehm Memorial Environmental Leadership Award. Joan Riehm's work in developing Louisville as a thoughtful and sustainable community is legendary and having this award to preserve and protect her memory and her life's work is just wonderful. We have a leader at the University of Louisville who is well deserving of this important and meaningful award—a leader who embodies what this award stands for and one whose impacts are far-reaching.

Our nomination for the very first recipient of the Joan Riehm Memorial Environmental Leadership Award is **Larry L. Owsley**, the Vice President for Business Affairs and the Chair of the Operations Committee of the Sustainability Council at the University of Louisville. Larry has been the key leader at the University of Louisville in implementing a greener more sustainable campus—not only in terms of operations, the focal point of his university work, but also in terms of financial and community issues as well as research and teaching. Thus, the outcomes of his sustainability efforts extend far beyond the issues in which he is tasked to work. They can be felt across campus and into the community. Further, he is a role model to students, staff, faculty, and administrators. Larry is always the first to volunteer and always does an excellent job. He encourages others and is open to students, who clearly are the next generation of leaders in this movement. In short, we are nominating Larry for the important outcomes of his work and also for the manner in which he accomplishes these outcomes.

In our letter of support we will address each of the five questions that form the basis for this award. We will first address question one by discussing both how Larry Owsley has promoted a more sustainable University of Louisville and how he has provided an ambitious vision for how U of L can better partner with Metro Louisville and JCPS to lead to a more effective and efficient community. For question two we will characterize the size and scope of his impact and reference our supporting materials and documents that detail a range of specific contributions to the University of

Louisville and beyond. We know that many of the people on the committee from the Partnership for a Green City are well aware of these accomplishments. Question three is of central importance to this award as the focus is on leadership qualities. From what we have read about Joan Riehm, it is clear that she was a very special leader for the community. We have both served with Larry on the University Sustainability Committee and have worked alongside him on a multitude of sustainability initiatives. As faculty at the University of Louisville we know what it means to go the extra mile and we believe that we are in a unique position to evaluate what Larry Owsley has done in terms of providing environmental leadership and collaboration. To address question four, we will describe why we see Larry Owsley as an innovative and creative person and discuss how that innovation and creativity impacts his leadership. Finally we will address question five and discuss how Larry Owsley's work has benefitted the University of Louisville and how this success has been measured.

(1) Environmental Cause at the University of Louisville

Larry Owsley has addressed the need for the University of Louisville to become more sustainable in all aspects. The U of L vision of sustainability that Larry has championed is to utilize the campus as a living laboratory—a place for teaching, researching, and implementing initiatives centered in environmental sustainability. Through Larry Owsley's ongoing efforts, U of L has mobilized to establish increasing organizational support for academic research, education and partnerships to address sustainability challenges facing Louisville and other metropolitan regions, and generate innovative solutions that enhance the natural environment, economic vitality, and social equity of cities worldwide. This is what is so special about the environmental cause that Larry has addressed. It is not just about greener operations or more environmental friendly facilities, though these are important aspects. The environmental cause is to engage students, faculty, and staff in gaining an understanding of our current patterns of environmental impact and the consequences of these behaviors, as well as educate citizens, professionals and students to advance sustainability in their civic and professional lives. All of these efforts will help make the University, as a microcosm of the broader Louisville community, an exemplary model of viable sustainability. Thus, clearly Larry's cause is a broad and deep one, and his efforts are already having important outcomes.

(2) Size and Scope of the Project, Sustainability of Project

The size and scope of the work that Larry Owsley has done is immense. In the appendix of this nomination we have included descriptions of his work in tabs 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13. These sustainability efforts have fundamentally changed the University of Louisville. Making the institution more green from operations to philosophy involves many aspects of the institution. The University of Louisville has taken bold and visionary steps in becoming more sustainable in terms of operations and facilities, research and education, and community stewardship. As evidence of this, the University of Louisville's strategic plan, *The 2020 Plan. Making It Happen*, includes a focus on creative and responsible stewardship, which builds on the major sustainability efforts in operations, research and education, and community stewardship. Larry Owsley is the leader who provided the hard work, vision, and guidance to jumpstart this process, and his continued leadership has allowed it to grow in many directions simultaneously with enthusiasm and joy. In Summer 2008, University President Jim Ramsey and Executive VP and Provost Shirley Willihnganz established the U of L Sustainability Council to provide oversight and direction, coordinate activities, and recommend policy regarding sustainability at the University of Louisville. This step would not have happened if Larry Owsley had not been working on sustainability issues in operations for the previous years. He was working on sustainability issues before people knew what sustainability meant, let alone the significance of a sustainability movement for a university. Larry agreed to Chair the Operations Committee of the Sustainability Council. In this role, he anchored efforts, in conjunction with the Sustainability Council, to develop new policies and programs at the University to improve its

operations in being more environmentally sustainable, increase the breadth and scope of education, research, and outreach on this issue, and assure that financial investments were not detrimental to environmental sustainability. Coincident with the establishment of the Sustainability Council, the university undertook a 35 million dollar energy audit with the Siemens Corporation to change facilities and operations and guarantee energy savings. Simultaneously, it promoted renewable energy alternatives. Larry Owsley was the leader for these two initiatives, both of which support research and education in sustainability and engineering. All of these events have added to a variety of other university activities related to environmental stewardship, including our commitment to the Partnership for a Green City, participation in purchasing consortiums, support for the U of L/Jefferson County Public Schools Center for Environmental Education project, and support for the Kentucky Pollution Prevention Center, to name but a few. In short, Larry Owsley has changed the university in fundamental ways. His work follows in the spirit of Joan Riehm in that her advocacy both rallied people around her as well as provided direction for changes in Louisville.

(3) Leadership Qualities

Larry Owsley is one of those leaders who provide the atmosphere for change. He is a person who continues to ask how something can be done differently, how even good projects and undertakings can be improved. He is open to new ideas and new challenges. He has solid and interesting ideas of his own but he sets the stage for others to develop their ideas from across all levels of the organization. He does not close the door on anything. He pushes to consider new ways to increase renewable energy sources to replace the current coal with vigor. He does this by continued reflection and honest communication. We believe that his leadership is very unique and highly effective in addressing environmental issues. He brings about the best in his teams and he empowers others. Perhaps most important in a university setting, he welcomes student involvement and works to incorporate students on committees, in planning efforts, and in decision making. Because today's students are tomorrow's leaders, this aspect of Larry's leadership is crucial—he is training the next generation of environmental leaders. Larry also played a key role in hiring U of L's first-ever Assistant to the Provost for Sustainability Initiatives, Justin Mog. Larry chaired the search committee for Justin's hire, ensuring that the University identified and hired an individual who would further drive our momentum, propelling us even further. Time and time again, we have been impressed with Larry's abilities to communicate with and motivate groups across campus. Whether dealing with first-year students, high-level administrators, faculty and staff, or community members, Larry is a wonderful leader. Like many good leaders, Larry has high expectations for others, which allows them to rise to the challenge. But he never asks or expects anything of others that he wouldn't do himself. In fact, part of what is unique to and vital in his leadership is his willingness to go the extra mile; he sets high standards for himself and always exceeds his commitments. We feel fortunate to have the opportunity to work with him on these efforts, and indeed the University and the community are enriched by his leadership.

(4) Creativity and Innovation in Leadership

We first became aware of some of his uniquely creative and innovative leadership qualities when we started working with him and talking to him about the academic side of sustainability. Larry Owsley was not only interested in hearing about the student work done in an undergraduate honors class that his colleague, Russ Barnett, was teaching, but Larry wanted to attend the final class in which Russ's students were providing their recommendations to the University as to how to make operations greener and more sustainable! Later, he hired a team of these students in the summer to work with his operations folks. As two professors who have been at U of L for close to twenty years, we had never seen this kind of open invitation to innovation and excellence. Since this first example of green leadership, it has become a tradition that at the end of the undergraduate seminars related to

environmental operations, Larry Owsley and some of his team show up to listen to the final student presentations. This experience is magical for the students and for the instructors alike. Honestly, this model is a good one for how high-quality ideas can move into fruition. What this story encapsulates for us Larry's open and engaging leadership qualities. He walks the talk. He also talks the talk and presents his ideas at a number of University meetings and related initiatives (see tabs 2 and 3 in documenting materials). None of this activity is in his job description. Rather, he is excited by the possibilities and wants to talk with and learn from others, believing that by working together we can achieve more. Such factors also drive him to empower others to make a difference. Larry Owsley is a remarkable leader for sustainability, and he flashes sides of himself that can only be described as brilliant in terms of innovation.

(5) How Success is Measured

This letter of support documents the recent significant and meaningful progress that the University of Louisville has made in sustainability under Larry Owsley's leadership. We have made progress in sustainability in the areas of operations and facilities, outreach, research collaborations, and educational activities. External documentation of our progress includes U of L's most recent rating on the *College Sustainability Report Card*. We have provided the report cards in tab 4 of the attached documentation. On this reporting measure, U of L earned the grade of 'C' in Fall 2007, and our institution grades have increased steadily each year, such that in Fall 2009 U of L earned the grade of 'B+'. Currently, U of L is the highest ranked public university in Kentucky on this report card. We share the highest grade for sustainability in the state of Kentucky with Berea College. (See www.GreenReportCard.org; an interactive website that provides in-depth sustainability profiles for hundreds of colleges in all 50 U.S. states and in Canada. See also <http://www.greenreportcard.org/report-card-2010/schools/university-of-louisville>.) Successful progress in sustainability cannot be measured more painstakingly and with more clarity. Larry Owsley has led or provided the groundwork for the many initiatives that have allowed the University of Louisville to make this significant progress.

We cannot be more proud of our colleague, Larry Owsley, who has done so much to change the heart and soul of the University of Louisville. The work he has done is significant, sustainable, and impacts all aspects of our work life, and these impacts will continue to be felt long after we are gone. Larry Owsley's work represents the kind of effort that we believe should be honored by the Joan Riehm Memorial Environmental Leadership Award. Truly, he is leader who is changing current University practice and planning, and one who is crafting a new, more sustainable future for not only our university, but universities in general as well as the communities in which they reside. It is an honor to work with Larry Owsley and a pleasure to submit this nomination.

Sincerely,

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2008-2009 Chair of the Sustainability Council

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