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## Interview transcripts of 2012 SUSTAIN Cohort in 2013: ID 1216 and 1209

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G: Does this annoy you really badly? [the recording device] We're just gonna put it here, and we won't even think about it?

C: You can put it closer to us, too.

G: Here we go.

C: Just make sure you can hear it.

G: It's really just so I, um, have a way to reflect on what we talk about.

C: Yeah, for sure.

G: The coolest thing about what we're setting out to do in asking these questions and, really, I don't have a lot of specific questions, to be honest with you, is to just get a handle on, um, what happened to everybody? Like—not 'where did you go'—but, um, 'what was the impact?'—like what was the impact of the program, and we don't . . . I'm not gonna ask a lot of specific questions about that, at least to begin, I'm just gonna say 'start talking.' And if you, if you have to talk with your mouthful, then that will be embarrassing, but we'll all survive it.

[laughing]

R: Okay.

G: So, start talking—anybody. What do you think happened to you? Or you can talk about anything . . . just reflect. Go. Look at you—they're hitting each other. Dear Transcriber, they're hitting each other.

R: It's hard to forget that it's there. Um. I was actually talking with, uh, ██████████ about this today during our meeting and just how it's kinda just a different atmosphere I'm learning, and we, I mean, we kind of expected that. I think I even remember in the application to Sustain tat it said, you know, warning [laughing]

G: something bad might happen to you later

[laughing]

R: Yeah—or like you won't appreciate classes and you won't, you'll be accustomed to this style of learning.

G: Okay

C: 'I understand that I may not find fulfillment in my future classes' or something like that

R: Yeah—that was it.

G: Was that like a waiver?

R: I just remember thinking like, "What?!" Are they joking, like are they serious? Like, I'm so confused right now. . .

G: Oh—that happened to you.

C: Where'd your fork go?

G: Here's your fork.

R: Thanks.

C: I'm gonna reach over and take the pad thai.

G: This is really good—yeah.

[pause with restaurant noise]

G: The transcriber is like, 'strange plate-moving noises'

[laughing]

R: Sorry, dude. . . Um, where was I? I'm too into the food right now.

G: It's okay

R: Okay, different learning environment, just, we were talking about how having a sense of community just had such an impact and you don't even really realize it, or realize the severity of it until you don't have it anymore. Like, I'm in this math class right now, it's pre-calc, pre-calculus/algebra, which I took in high school. I went up to calc 2 in high school, but, like, I don't have the correct credit to transfer it to Cal Poly, so I had to go back and take it again.

G: I had to do that.

R: So it's like basically remedial math, and it's taught by this graduate student who you can tell doesn't want to be there and he's just doing it for credit, and he, I don't know—he just looks like he wants to be anywhere else but there.

G: That's too bad.

R: I think he kind of assumes that everybody remembers everything right off the bat and then when, like I answered a question wrong the other day in class and he just, I don't know, he just reacted in a way that was like 'are you serious?' whereas I feel like that would never happen in Sustain and it just kinda made me go 'whoa.' You know. It does matter.

G: Mmmhhmmm.

[pause]

C: I thought you were gonna respond to that.

G: I'm just trying to hear.

C: Oh.

G: I'm trying to bite my lips off and not try to say too much. I mean, you can ask me anything, but I mostly want to hear.

C: I think some, we all knew that we were gonna have to face a change. For me it was just Sustain was just going back to what I had in high school, it was just like a temporary break from the reality, not really like a whole new thing for me, but, definitely not having a learning community is hard, like ██████████ said, especially for classes that are more challenging, that you want help, that you kinda would like help and motivation in because, I think what I realize in all classes, there's the opportunity to get something out of it. In college classes even when it seems like you're not really learning much, or that it's not hard material or that, you know, remedial or whatever it is, you can put the extra effort in and get more out of the class or you can kind of just skate by with the bare minimum and do just fine, and it's definitely a lot easier to put in more time and get more out of the class when you're kind of discussing the topics with other people—

G: —sure.

C —rather than just reviewing and memorizing what the teacher says in lecture.

G: Yeah.

C: Cuz if you talk to other students, you hear about how they, you hear their perspective and how they interpreted the material versus how you interpreted the material—even if it's something that's like quote unquote factual? Like I took ██████████ ██████████'s Bio 114 class with the Sustain students and, you know, when I would talk with him about some things, you know, we'd just go over what we talked about in class, just like, not even analyzing, just talking about what we thought was interesting,

G: Right

C: you know, everybody thought about something else and focused and really retained some-- a different piece of the lecture, and I thought, you know, I learned so much more just listening to what they got out of the lecture than what I, you know, just wrote down because you know their lens is different, their perspective is different so that's

G: Well you get like a natural second run-through

C: Ummmhmmm

G: Yeah.

C: But like a run-through through somebody else's eyes.

G: Ummmhmmm.

C: Cause reading your own notes is just re-reading what you thought about what the teacher was saying.

G: Right

C: But when somebody else talk you through it—

G: Yeah

C: You just see things you missed.

G: Yeah.

[pause]

C: Then there's the people who just didn't want to go back to it, so they left. And I think that's equally valid. Sustain definitely opened some people's eyes and showed them there's definitely more than kind of standard education and to inspire them to go out and find something new. And there are students who are this year experiencing the same thing, and more power to those people. . .

G: I would back up and say one thing to ██████████ and then one thing to you, ██████████, that I could have said right away. I'm super sorry that math guy was mean to you!

R: Yeah, I mean . . .

G: I don't wanna skip that—I'm super sorry.

R: He wasn't even that mean, it was just kind like—

C: She's a tough cookie.

G: Well, of course. Of course. And I don't really think that you're crying about it, but it is sort of like, 'really mockery in math class?'

R: Especially from my teacher.

G: Yeah—absolutely.

R: I mean . . .

C: I had this English 145 teacher

G: Don't start with me.

C: [sarcastically] She made me feel so embarrassed, always calling me out in class.

G: Mmmhmmm. Mmmhmmm.

C: I just want to be left alone—I don't like to talk in class.

G: We both know that's a lie. Nice try, though.

[laughing]

How do you—say more about what you think about, you said Sustain was break, like high school it was a break from reality. Flesh that out, would ya?

C: Well, I had a teacher last quarter and I was gonna have to miss a day of class because I have a job and we are going to this really cool sustainable farming conference. So it's like an academic thing. It was for my job, which is working for the college of agriculture. Completely legitimate. I offered to have my boss send in a letter and do a write up or some sort of follow-up for the thing, and he just kind of like, he treated me like I was a criminal almost. He was like, 'well if you miss the lecture, I don't want to hear about it, you know, if you don't feel like you got everything out of the class that you wanted to and then I wasted your money and...

G: Wow

C: like, blah blah blah blah blah, and I was just like 'you don't'—or that you're not—and then if you're behind and you miss something and then you don't get it, you know, you miss out a piece of information and I grade you down for that, that's not my fault. You can't, you know, and part of it is that he's a lawyer so he's just kind of naturally used to

covering his . . . himself, right from the get-go. But it was just kind of like, I, I emailed this teacher, you know, before the quarter even started, to let him know the situation, and he's never met me before. He has no idea who I am, and he just presumes that I'm lazy and I'm just trying to get out of going to class, and the whole quarter he was like, I don't want the standard 'cal poly, you know, yes, but which really means,' er 'the standard cal poly maybe that means no' or 'the standard cal poly essay that really is just a summary or, you know, copied from the internet' and just all, he just had all these presumptions, and I just feel like so many teachers are jaded and just think that we're all, you know, trying to skate by with the bare minimum, that we don't care, that we're just doing it because we have to and they almost just don't, they don't wanna be there, they don't, or I just feel, I don't know, like...

G: [to ██████████] You're nodding.

R: Well, it's almost like...

C: I mean, I guess your math teacher, you're saying like he feels like he doesn't want you to be there.

G: Yeah, yeah. There's a--

C: I don't know why you teach if you think that we're not gonna get anything out of it. . . Sorry, I know that's your—

G: No—[all laughing]

C: —That's your chagrin.

G: There's no need to say sorry, but...[pause].. I don't either—for now I want to hear from you and I'm happy to say what I think about that later, but for now let me hear from you. ..Which, which, what are your thoughts about what she said? Or...

R: Um—

G: --You don't have to agree, obviously, I mean...

R: I've...okay, so I work for the mechanical engineering department, um, as a student assistant and I so interact with professors all the time

G: okay

And we kind of get to hear the inside scoop on things and, you know, kinda see professors behind the, behind the scenes a little bit and um.... there's this one in particular that just has no faith in our generation.

G: Oooohhh. Huh.

R: And I feel like that—

G: That's interesting—boy, that's interesting—

R: —especially in engineering, he, I mean he just comes to work every day and he just is so cynical about everything and everyone. He thinks our entire generation is lazy, we don't know anything, all we do is sit around on the internet and do things that don't matter and, is very traditional, conventional kind of guy, and, but he's so stubborn and he doesn't really provide solid evidence for his arguments all the time, and doesn't really like to hear what you have to say and, of course, I work there, so I'm not gonna get into it with him, but I hear other people do and just, I don't know, I—some faculty just, I guess, are here because they're tenured and they [muffled]—

C: They just expect us to fail

R: --they don't like it.

G: But what is that about? Like, like you can ask the question, you know, 'why are they still teaching?' but what do you—what are your thoughts about why they approach students that way. Of course we don't know, but what do you think it is? Or do you have thoughts about that?

C: I'm sure there's--

G: See how hard it is for me to ask an open-ended question, ya'll?

C: I'm sure that there's people...I mean, I've been in classes and I've seen how some students treat teachers, and, I can completely understand if you've been teaching, you know...for twenty years, and you've seen it all at that point, but I would just hope that every quarter you start out with the hope that you're gonna come across at least one student that is there because they want to be there and they're excited about what you have to say and they want to learn from you. And that that, you know, or at least a couple students who are genuinely thoughtful could make it...that you would put aside, you know, the other stuff and just see the glass half full and be there and support those students rather than just throw everybody in the category 'you're lazy and you don't care, so I'm not gonna waste my time on this' um, and I just don't, I don't, I think it's interesting that it's happening here, because I feel like Cal Poly, like the reason that, that people come to Cal Poly instead of a big UC is that the, a lot of the UC professors are there doing research and that they care more about graduate education—

G: --Right

C:-- and, um, doing research and writing books and stuff and that they, and so the reason that people come to a school like Cal Poly is that yes there's research happening, but the focus is primarily undergraduates, and then I come across a professor who's just like 'I don't care—you, you know, you're not learning anything' and yet that same professor takes you to China, and it's just kinda like 'you're putting in extra time and yet you all, you think that all of us aren't gonna get anything out of it, so that case I just don't understand, but generally I don't understand why you'd be at a school where you're not really doing, maybe, I don't know what the benefits of being a professor are—you get summers off, I guess, to do whatever you want, but I don't understand why you'd be working with kids if you don't think that college students have any potential. Um... [pause]

G: Yeah.

C: I know you're biting your tongue on this one because you have definite thoughts to say.

G: I'm a little bit biting my tongue, but I'm, I'm honestly, I—it's not that I've got six things ready to say, I think...I have thoughts about why that might be from my own experience, and if you want to know 'em you can ask me later, but I think it's terrific insight for you all—I think, I'm wondering if that's something that, is that insight that you feel is connected to your experience in Sustain? Or is that something that saw, you know...

C: Um

G: It doesn't have to be causal, but I'm just wondering if you see if it's related

C: No, I think why I brought it up is that in Sustain I really felt like, I mean I took classes that I really didn't feel comfortable with—for example, physics, and I'd never taken a physics class before, and I just felt like...all of, you know, the first day, all of our teachers expected, not expected but were open to that fact that we, that they had no idea what our potential was, and just gave us a fresh slate, and I think that that gave, made me feel confident to just go out and try things and, you know, answer a question in class that I didn't necessarily know if I knew the answer to because they weren't gonna shoot me down and be like 'are you serious—you don't know the answer to a basic physics question—are you dumb?' because they, you know, they just supported us in going 100% and I think a lot of other classes, people don't raise their hands in class or they don't maybe write about a, write an essay about a topic they don't know very much about because they're afraid the professor is just gonna call them stupid and give them a bad grade. And I don't even know if it's nece—I mean, you know, it's just about the GPA, but also it's really hard to get a paper that says, 'your ideas aren't worth anything, here's an F' or 'you didn't understand the topic well enough, you didn't, you know, you couldn't answer it on a scantron in 50 minutes—here's an F. And just like being told that that's what you, you put all this work into and it wasn't worth anything—that's scary.

And I would cry if that, my GPA got tanked like that, I'll be honest, but I felt confident and supported to try new things, and really push myself and learn something, and I don't feel like that in other classes. That's my piece.

R: Snaps..I definitely. I've considered what's supposed to be normal.

G: Hmm. What do you mean?

R: Like if the Sustain experience is what I should be basing 'normal' off of or the [muffled] experience

G: Oh so you're trying to decide which is normal—that's really interesting.

R: Yeah—because I also, I went to public charter high school that was project based.

C: We went to weird people schools.

R: I--Yeah.

G: Different ones though, right?

R: Oh yeah.

G: Yeah yeah yeah. That's right: San Diego, okay.

R: So it's this public charter school called High Tech High and it was basically--or you probably know a lot about this--

G: I--Maybe not.

R: Maybe not, um, so charter schools get some funding from the state, and then less funding, or more private funding, so they have a little bit more leeway in the curriculum—they still have to meet standards, but I mean, like I said, we did a lot of projects and I didn't have a textbook till college.

G: Oh wow.

R: So, I mean, that is what my normal was, and then Sustain was like that, so that was kind of the normal that I came from, but I realize my normal is not most people's normal, I guess, cause they went to, I mean, most people went to public school and, and then, again now, so it's it's kind interesting that..

G: yeah—what's it—what kind of effect is that decision having on you—like the decision about trying to decide what's normal for you and—is it having any effect on your decisions or your—

R: I mean, I think I've just basically concluded that—

G: --your choices

R: --there's not one set normal and just comparing normals with other people is more of the interesting part. I'm just kind of seeing, just kind of seeing how people interact with life.

[pause]

[laughing]

G: This is all interesting stuff that you guys are sharing.

C: We're insightful.

G: Yeah.

C: That's why we're going to dinner and not sitting in a library.

G: You're not kidding! You know how to live—I'll give you that.

C: You know—thai food just brings out thoughtfulness.

G: It does, right?

R: Must be the spices.

G: I know I thought about like getting a thai iced tea and then I thought 'oh, I'll never shut up if I drink one of those.'

C: I thought about it.

R: I thought about it too—oh my god!

G: Maybe after—maybe we push stop and we can all have a thai iced tea, because I love those but they spin me out.

R: I'm down with the plan.

C: We are gonna have a really good time with a textbook tonight, so I might do that.

[laughing]

R: Oh my gosh, financial accounting.

[muffled]

G: Is there any workload difference?

C: Mind-numbing work

R: Yeah, it's, it's a different kind of work.

G: What do--Tell me—tell me what you mean.

C: I literally have to prevent myself from thinking critically in order to, I've just taken so much accounting lately, basic accounting...I overthink the problems.

G: [laughing] the math problems and your and your story problems?

C: And it's really simple when you just don't think about it.

G: You're like—but are those pink shoes in season or out of season?

R: Make sense when you're not thinking... Did you guys see that commercial?

G: What is it?

R: It's a commercial for a phone company and they're like, they're pitching this really weird idea, and then they're like 'makes sense when you're not really thinking'

[laughing]

G: Yeah yeah.

R: yeah yeah

G: yeah yeah. So mind-numbing workload: okay.

R: It's just, I mean, you're inquiry project was on evaluation, right?

G: Mine? Yeah--It was.

R: And...I think about it a lot too and just how that affects your entire class organization and everything that you kind of have to, if you're gonna teach to a test, that's how the entire class is gonna go and then if you have a different kind of evaluation, it's going to involve a different kind of working and achieving goals, I guess?

G: Oh yeah

R: I mean, you probably know all about that.

G: I mean, not from an expert's point of view, but I think the thing that was the funniest to me, or maybe it was the saddest, but that surprised the heck out of me is that... I designed—I did my very best to design what I thought an open-ended, non-evaluatively-focused syllabus, and I even said, 'and as mine to be able to co-learn, I'll go study evaluation' and as I lobbed those sections to you all, it was really clear that I had set them up like grading sections, like [laughing] I had designed them as a means to grade you—even though—does that make sense?—I said, you know.

C: You know something that's true though--

G: Well—

C: --I just think people were so afraid, cause we—you know two quarters is a long time, but it's almost not enough time to really—I came in without the AP grind that a lot of people experience in high school—and so did she [██████████], and so I think that we were a lot more open to Sustain.

G: Huh—that's interesting

C: But I feel like you just get trained to like, because a lot of people I have in class, because another reason why the business curriculum is really attractive is because it's really hard to get into business because it's impacted. It's not that hard, per say—and you get a lot, there's a lot of free electives. You come in with a lot of AP credit, that just bumps into your AP, into your free electives, so you have, you can, anyone who's taken a few APs in high school can very easily finish quickly.

G: I see.

C: So it's economical because you're gonna get a job that pays you a lot of money and you don't have to pay that much to go to school, so a lot of people I'm in class with, you know, have thought through all this stuff and just know how to ...just memorize the information, pound through it, get it done, cause that's what APs are like. I—my school stopped teaching, stopped teaching AP classes because they had to force you through the curriculum so quickly. Did you ever teach high school?

G: No, I took an AP class when I was a high school student, though.

C: Yeah, they just force you through that material so fast you don't, you don't have time to think about it, you just have to memorize it. You cannot think about it. 'Where—what's the theory behind this?' you know, in math, you know, or I don't even know how you teach the AP, about the AP Liter—I just mean AP math, like you don't get to think about it. You just memorize the concepts and regurgitate on the test, and that's what

people are just conditioned to do cause they did it for four years, they did it for a quarter at Cal Poly, you know, you succeed when you memorize and repeat, for the most part, and the classes that they have us take as a freshman, they're just, you know, scantron tests. And then you get to Sustain and everyone's like 'just--just slow down—just think about it. What are you interested in?' Well—we've been so busy A—doing APs, playing sports, you know, filling up our resumes with things, we don't know what we're interested in, we don't know what we're passionate about, we don't know what we like to do. Because no one's ever given us the time to just think about something.

G: I think for that project in our class, that was the thing that surprised me the most is that I—that that was the part of the...the four, of the whole project that ,um, you know, 'do this kind of personal inventory to figure out what topic you wanted' that I thought would be the easiest for everybody, and that would go quickly

C: It took the longest part.

G: It's what took the longest, and it's what was the most painful, cause I thought 'oh gosh—look at all this freedom: you can consider anything you want and—

C: No—freedom's scary, cause we're not given freedom. I was given freedom in high school. I like that. Wasn't given freedom here.

G: yeah.

C: And also, you know, the whole 'pick whatever you're interested in'—it's a catch 22. You have to pick what your teacher's interested in.

G: Do you think that's really true?

C: I , was, been in meetings with faculty that are like, 'I'm not gonna support this senior project cause I'm not interested in it'

G: At Cal Poly you've been in those meetings?

C: 'I will not take a senior project that does this because I'm not interested in that and I don't want to spend my time doing it.' That's fine. But don't pose something like it's open, 'do whatever you want' because like you don't want to read a paper that's about something, don't let that be an option, and then punish a student for picking a topic that you're not interested in. If you have specifics on topics that you want to be covered, then only give them those topics, and people won't complain.

G: Yeah yeah.

C: I don't think you would do that, but I just like—I knew...

G: Well, I mean, I have on occasion said ‘it’s an open-ended topic, but please don’t write about, for instance, steroids in baseball—or if you’re gonna write about steroids in baseball, you’re gonna have to prove to me that you’ve got a personal connection to steroids in baseball,’ you know, but...

C: But you put that out there on the table to begin with, you don’t just say ‘do whatever you want’ and then somebody writes a par about steroids in baseball and you punish them for it.

G: I’d have to think about whether I’ve ever done that.

C: Well, if you have, just don’t tell me about it.

G: Okay, that’s fair.

C: Cause—

G: Why? Why don’t you want to know?

C: Cause in my world ██████████ has a little halo over her head.

G: Yeah—well, I don’t know if I should have a halo. I think that, actually, and you know, if this part becomes irrelevant later, we can just take it out, but... I wonder about that as a side note about whether or not you have an idealized—do you think you have an idealized perspective on faculty, sustain faculty? I haven’t asked anybody else that question, but..

C: I do.

G: You do?

C: I totally do. I know, I mean, I just met ██████████ and ██████████ and you and all of you guys, and I’m just like ‘I don’t care if they know what they’re teaching about or not I like them as people, because that for me was more important. I was taught to make relationships with my teachers and value those relationships since kindergarten

G: Yeah

C: So honestly, I care a lot more about who my teachers are as a person and how they communicate with me and how they treat me than what their, you know, where they got their degrees, and you know, that kinda stuff. I’ve never looked up the bio on my teacher. I’ve never read the polyratings about a teacher ever. I will go to a class and interact with a teacher once or twice and if I feel like, I mean, I personally feel like I have good emotional intelligence and I can just read teachers pretty, pretty well, but if I just feel like

this person is not gonna treat me well, they don't care about who I am and what I'm interested in, I will probably try and get out of that class.

R: Aren't you considering dropping a class right now because you're not learning anything?

C: Well, I can't drop that class—I have to take it, but I would like to drop that class. My teacher wants to go to Hawaii, so we're not having a final.

G: Fantastic. . . that was sarcastic, I apologize.

C: I'm okay with that.

G: I think I, I just would even say that about the idealized faculty comment because one of the things that strikes me in listening to you is that I think my experience in Sustain had—I experienced a new kind of freedom just like you did, so that's why I couldn't look back, honestly and say I'd never gotten a paper, for instance, on steroids and baseball and didn't judge the person turning it in. Cause my experience of that paper is 'you know what?—it's heartbreaking to me that you clearly just wanna get by' but you know, that that's so what was interesting for me to do, um, to do that inquiry project with you all, you know there I was, like with, kinda, like barely on time with my, you know, whatever phase we were in, and then my papers were too wrinkled, and they weren't numbered and, you know, I'd written all over them, and I just thought—'oh, this is the kind of final work that I have judged in the past, poorly—that I've said, 'this is an indication that the person doesn't care'

C: Our work was like that or your work was like that?

G: In my past, in my pre-sustain classes, if I would—when I received work from students that looked like the work that I turned in in our class, I would've interpreted that to mean a lot of things that it didn't mean for me turning it in. I was so into it that I lost track of time. I was behind. It was too much.

C: But you're, yeah but--

G: You know?

C: It's different, though. I think it's different. I don't think even for us, I don't think it would've—I don't think it's acceptable to turn in a paper like that. Maybe I've just been drinking the Kool-Aid too long, but I think—[laughing]—there is like, I feel like there's a quote somewhere that I read.

G: This one time?

C: This one time, on the Internet but... about—it was—oh: you know what it was? It was, it was like the Princeton, like dean of students or the something dean of students that was giving the, I want to say it was the graduation address, but I don't think it—I don't really know why you'd say this in the graduation address, but they like 'this is the only time in your life when people are gonna read something that is not your 100% work and actually give you feedback and basically, they're saying in the real world, no one's gonna waste their time if you don't put 100% of your effort into something. And they shouldn't have to. In college is your opportunity to kind of learn and figure that out, and I think that—okay, yeah, for freshmen fall quarter I did that to you, that would be one thing. But if a senior brought in a paper that was wrinkled and didn't have, you know—then they didn't take those four years to learn what is, how to present your work in the best way possible. And yes, you shouldn't judge a book by its cover, but lets be real: everybody does. They put pictures on menus for reasons.

G: What do you mean by that?

C: Like, are you gonna order the dish that you just see the words, or are you gonna order the dish that has the pretty picture?

G: I wish there was more pictures of [muffled]

C: See—see the pretty pictures?

G: I know, right?

C: I'd order the stuff that's marketed best!

[pause]

G: This is good stuff—keep talking, keep telling me.

C: Do you want? [about the food] It is your favorite thing.

G: No, I'm really full, thank you. Eat it up. What else are you thinking about?

C: I'm gonna go to the bathroom, sorry.

G: You can. What else are you thinking about, ██████████? [pause] Don't worry about being deep, just tell me about what's going on in your life.

R: I've, I'm just trying to figure out things to say. [laughing].

G: Why? Is the recording too stressful?

R: No, it's okay. Um, I'm kind of just reflecting on the transition in the moment. Between last year and this year. Cause you kind of just, when the summer between, it's not like they're right next to each other.

G: Right

R: Um, but...you know, I don't know. The whole normal thing has been on my mind a lot. Kinda get in these, like, depressing, cynical moods like questioning life and stuff, and that's one of the questions on my mind.

G: What other questions are on your mind? [pause] Too personal?

R: No, I'm just trying to phrase them into words that make sense in a real sentence.

G: That's always good.

R: Um. Well, I mean just kind of like the future and I'm learning new things every day and meeting new people every day, and just kind of wondering how the world is gonna progress based on, I don't know, time and technology. I think about technology a lot.

You do?

And. Yeah—it's insane. If you just look at, like, the iPhone. That just came out less than a decade ago. We went from this big brick like bitmap software to beautiful touch screens. They're probably—that don't have real buttons anymore. That's ten years. And processors are getting half the size and twice as fast every six months. Like, there's only so much time that we have before technology is better than biology.

G: Really? Do you think so?

R: Yeah. It's, It's called the Singularity Theory by Ray Kurzweil. It's a book—it's a really big book about how technology is on an exponential curve for advancing and, you know, pretty soon it's gonna, code is gonna write itself. Computers will write their own code, which means they don't need us anymore.

G: Are you reading this book in connection with a class you're taking.

R: No.

G: You're just reading it—

R: I, I, I didn't, I—okay—honestly, I haven't read the entire thing, but, just, I've read enough to understand the theories, I think. It's a really thick and detailed, like theory book, and there is a bunch of data and you know, things to prove that, so I didn't read the entire thing. And in high school we, for our second semester, we had the choice of doing

either an individual senior project or taking a class that any of the senior teachers would, would choose to teach this kind of immersion class for the last, um, semester of school? And so I chose to take a class with my calculus teacher. And he taught one about consciousness and technology and the brain, just kind of open, that kind of stuff, and we talked about that a lot. And ever since then I've kind of been thinking about it and my new experiences with the world, keep thinking about it, and I don't know how I feel about it. Like rather than aging and getting weaker, we could age and get better. Cause—

G: What's the connection? Tell me.

R: Well, if I'm aging and getting better, that means I have so many more years to learn things and do things. I don't know, this is probably like a crazy tangent, but you just asked what else is on my mind. [laughing]

G: No way! There's no such thing as a tangent in these conversations. ██████████ ██████████, that's who I'm quote there. No—it's all interesting stuff. Is any of that connected to what you study at Cal Poly? I don't remember what your—

R: I, I think so

G: --area is—

R: I'm graphic, I'm graphic communication and the whole industry is changing so much right now and it's kind of, like people have an idea of what's going, but it's really just, the entire industry is dependent on technology and what technology is capable of, and you know, I think it has a lot more potential than people give it credit for. People are saying 'print is dying' you know, why would you go into that field? Blah blah blah. And it's just kinda like, 'well, you don't really understand everything that's going on. You still need, you know, human input. These machines are not conscious—they can't make emotional decisions.. .What if they can someday? . . . You know?

G: You look kinda freaked out. [laughing] yeah.

R: That's that.

G: I'm interested in that. Let me, let me ask one directive question. If you think about—well I gotta make sure that I'm, I need to make sure that I'm, not sure that I've asked directly of people—so we've talked about the classes in Sustain and the difference in your experience now. What about the community project piece? Do you have anything to say about that? You don't—and it can be like 'no,' but do you? Anything? [muffled] We're at a restaurant—that's funny.

C: So, my community...I'm deciding if I want to say this on tape. . . Well, one could say that my community project didn't really have a deliverable, but I think what I learned from that experience and what all of the people on my team—no, actually, I'm not gonna

speaking for all of the people on my team: I would hope that many people—at least some of the people on the team learned from that experience is that you don't have to have a deliverable, deliverable to have learned something and accomplished something, and I definitely felt at the end of last year, like, a little disappointed that we hadn't done something—I'm quoting myself right now [laughing] For the person who's—

G: That was an airquote

C: --airquote for whoever's transcribing this and I definitely was disappointed in that for a while and kinda in to the summer and I thought about it for a while, and it hasn't been until later this year that I realized how much I actually, how much I really learned from the experience and grew from my community partnership even though... I don't know how they feel and I don't know how the rest of my team feels about our quote unquote failure, but I just know that when I talk about failure in one of my classes with Pete Schwartz, that was not something that came to mind, even though I think maybe previous to this experience I would've, and that's definitely something that's made me able to cherish many and more experiences and get value out of almost everything I do—even if I don't, you know, have this amazing thing to show for it, like an 'A' on a paper, I really learned how to value the process and learn from the process, and make that the deliverable instead of like, 'oh I just rushed through the process for the final product and put all of my attention on the final product.' Sorry—this is a really roundabout way to finally get to what I guess I was thinking, which is—

G: Super interesting—

C: --valuing process and taking, just, monitoring—not monitoring, um, observing and participating in every step so that you gain something out of every step and that you, even if you end in a completely different place, or if you end nowhere, you still... have the process to look back on.

G: Mmmhmmm. Mmmhmmm.

C: Pad thai in the throat [coughing].

G: Do you think there's anything about... so, so I'll preface this by saying I'm really, I don't have a particular answer in mind—we just have more time, so I'm still asking you questions, and I really like you guys, so I'm ... and you're willing to talk at a level of analysis that I think is really, really interesting.

C: Told you: we're deep people.

G: I know—you're super deep, right? Do you think there's anything, um, do you think there's anything about your experience in Sustain that surprised you? [pause]

[laughing]

G: No. Okay, different question.

C: Well, I think, I think the process piece for me. I—I didn't realize that I was a—there's a word for it, like 'final-product-oriented person'? What do you call? I guess

G: Yeah—product-focused, as opposed to process-focused.

C: Right, yeah. I always thought that I... kind of was introspective and valued whole experiences, not just the end result, and I'm really surprised to find--I also learned how extremely annoying I am to be on a team with. [laughing] That was fun.

G: Really?! Were you on her team?

R: No.

C: We probably wouldn't be friends if she was on my team. Shockingly, I'm still friends with my teammates, but--

G: Why were you annoying?

C: I am bossy.

G: Oh.

C: And I don't compromise very well, I've learned. And I'm working on it. And I talk too much.

G: Are you working on it? I don't think you talk too much, but are you working on it? Really?

C: [pause] Um.

G: You're distracted [whispering] Well, we are kinda talking a lot about being bossy, so

C: I'm just really bossy, and I talk a lot, and I don't necessarily take the time to listen to people, and I really, I'm not doing a very good job of it in this interview—

G: What do you mean?!

C: But I'm trying to take time to listen to other people. You're not talking—

G: Okay, well—

C: I pause and wait for you to talk, but then you don't talk, so then I just keep talking.

[laughing]

G: I will say that I had one of these interviews done for me? By ██████████ ██████████, and I said the same thing about every 10 minutes—‘should I be talking so much? Should you talk?’ She’s like, ‘No, that’s how this goes.’ [laughing] The person doing the interview is supposed to just—

C: I think that’s why I like job interviews, because I’m allowed to talk the whole time. I have to remind myself, ‘oh I should ask some intellectual question about their company right no’ [laughing] I don’t really care, I can keep talking.

G: I don’t want, I don’t want my being quiet to, to create awkward space that you feel like you have to fill with stuff you don’t mean, but I really am--

C: Oh, I don’t—I always have things to say [laughing]

G: --just trying to listen. And you’re welcome to—I mean, I’m an open book, and as soon as you feel like we’ve said everything about this, I’ll just push, I’ll push stop, and then you can ask me whatever you want to ask me, and I’ll tell you everything. [laughing] Do you have more to say?

C: Surprise you?

R: Surprise me?

C: Besides meeting me.

R: I think the people surprised me.

G: Oh yeah?

R: I, I mean I knew I came from a really different background and with my weird public charter scho—public charter school, and I was surprised to find other people that kind of thought the same way—

G: Mmmm

R:--just because, it was so different, but then I went through a quarter of cal poly without this, and it was very different. And then so many ideas of different.

G: Yeah.

R: But then, Sustain was... people that kinda cared more, wanted to have a fulfilling experience while learning things, and not just trying to pass a class. All of that. So it was—it was a good surprise.

G: Do you have any dreams or wishes about continuing it?

C: Yes. I wish I could take my whole curriculum in Sustain.

G: Hmmmm.

C: But I can't—I've yet to come across a professor that teaches business that would want to that, so—besides, maybe, Norm Borin, but—

R: Are you saying continue sustain as in 'with the same people'? Or as in 'a sustain environment' or 'sustain philosophy' ...in other classes

G: That's a really good differentiation. I really, uh, it's an open-ended question because—it, it sounds like I have some sort of secret bomb to drop on you, but I don't. I have just wondered if people had any, you know, looking now at your transition, is there something, some way that you wish you could've stayed connected, like I know that the TA opportunity was available. . . You're making a squishy face.

C: I mean, I think the best thing that was made available was that they let us take the classes, and I wish that that had stayed as an open opportunity, that ... there, you know, there's some ex—if there's extra space that we—that that was made more well-known at the beginning, cause I, I don't actually think that, I mean I guess their decision wasn't really that there was actually a thing. I just kinda bugged them enough that they let me do it—

G: Okay—

C:-- but I think there's a lot of people that are so excited that they get to take more classes with the sustain students, and even though you don't have the full experience, I think that we gained enough from our experience last year that we can still be contributing members of the class, like I think I helped people. I like to think that I helped, I was a positive contribution to the students in my bio lab and I think that the alumnae who are taking music are going to do the same thing, so. I think that that's a good way, a really good way to integrate us, and I wish there were more opportunities like that.

G: Did you want to say anything about the differences that you were asking about? Like sustain model versus our, our, our group as sustain.

R: Oh yeah. Um, well, I just. I was kind of thinking about it, and I wish all of the general education classes were offered through sustain.

G: Mmmmmmm.

R: And, I think it would be awesome if my major classes were a bit more, less lecture, dictating, student, word-vomiting-what-you're-supposed-to-remember. Um, I wish, I wish they had a different evaluation method, basically. Um, but when you're teaching a really technical class, like how to operate this, you know, Heidelberg Speedmaster, Sheet-Fed Lithographic Press, like it takes some sitting down like, 'okay, this is this, this is this, this is what you do, then we go to a lab, and we, and we look at everything we learned in lecture, and it makes sense to kind of learn something like that that way.

G: Mmmhmmmm.

R: But things that are more based on ideas and theories, I wish were more like sustain.

C: I think sustain is working with lots of different, there's lots of different components, and different people zeroed in on different things, but I think it's not necessarily necessary or possible to implement all of the things that we did in all of our edu--, in all of our classes, like there's certain things you just have to learn, you know certain topics that you just need a whole quarter to focus just on that cause you do have to become proficient in something that's a major class, but that's not to say that they can't incorp—so the interdisciplinary piece wouldn't really fit. Or maybe the kind of different ways of teaching, the different teaching styles or um integrating a community partner more effectively into a class, like business classes do an awesome job of incorporating community partners, because our work is so much—so applicable to what's going on that the teachers recognize, well why would you have us create a fake marketing campaign—

G: Right

C: --when you could do a marketing campaign for a company? So they, there's a class that pairs you up with companies, and you help them create a basic marketing campaign. It's free for them, and you get real life experience, so that's kind of already part of it, so then maybe linking that marketing class with a GE that you're having, you know and like targeting companies, doing something like that, so just taking at least some part of sustain into other things.

G: Mmmhmmmm. Mmmmmhmmmm.

C: I think that it would be cool if maybe other, people who weren't, who aren't a part of sustain are invited to sit down and observe what's going on because I feel like everyone, that's what, the cool part about sustain is is that everybody takes away a different experience. That's what you're gonna see in these interviews—all of us have a different perspective on what we valued and what we learned. And if people could just come and sit in and maybe for a week or a day or something and just see what's going on, they'll take something out that they can incorporate.

G: Hmm.

[pause]

R: Interestingly, I was talking to ██████████ today about this, and people, everyone that hears about sustain um and kind of the whole idea and how it's impacting students. Not everybody thinks it's a good thing and one of those people, namely being the dean of engineering, the college of engineering, and they're trying to like kick ██████████ out of her department because they don't like what she's bringing to the college of engineering by being so involved with sustain. And they think that, you know, Sustain is not engineering. And it's misrepresenting what they stand for in their department and I just... that makes me so sad...and...it, even like ██████████ ██████████ wrote a letter to the, to the dean, and I guess Linda had him write a letter to her explaining how sustain impacted his life, and especially his, him being an engineer and his experience and, um, all that, and she was mad. She just basically took it as a personal attack, and didn't value what he had to say at all.

G: Mmmmmm

R: And I, I hope nothing bad comes of it because also working at mechanical engineering, I know this woman is not the easiest person to deal with, and she's very stubborn, so I hope nothing bad happens with that. It makes me pretty sad.

C: I can see that, though. I mean, I think that her response is probably more out of fear because sustain is really threatening...a system that's been around for a really long time, and some people...when confronted with change embrace it and are excited by it. I, or I personally, and I think Rachel's the same kind of person, we get excited by new opportunities and new developments, but some people feel very threatened by that, and I'm sure you know all about this, but, they just feel scared and they don't know what to do, and they don't know if they're equipped to—because if you do the same things for so long, I almost feel like you lose the ability to be creative and to adapt and to grow, and so when confronted with this thing that could possibly change everything about what you know and what you do, what your job is, what your title is--

G: --Mmmhmmm. Your expertise.

C: Your expertise—what your responsibilities are.

G: Yeah.

C: I mean, a lot of people get really scared when they have to, when their job description changes and they get more responsibilities. And I think that's really sad to me, because, you know, I personally get bored doing the same thing forever, or I would get bored doing the same thing forever, and I love the opportunity for new things, but I can totally see people who see sustain as a threat to the way they're doing things because they're not

sure if they're going to be able to thrive and have the same kind of level of...oh...not hierarchy, level of...whatever—that they wouldn't be, you know... as...why can't I speak right now? Just that they wouldn't be as high up, as important in this new thing  
Because—

G: Huh.

C:--um.

G: Status?

C: yeah, they wouldn't have the same status because they don't have, you know, they're not the best at innovation and the best at, you know, coming up with interdisciplinary opportunities, so they'd rather kind of shut that down, it's a self-preservation kind of thing. I don't know. Maybe.

G: Hmm. Yeah, I think that's insightful. I think there's a lot there.

R: I think it's interesting they're willing to make such a huge change as to convert our entire curriculum to semesters, and not open to—[sneeze] sneeze pause—[laughing]

G: --sneeze pause

R: —not open, not open to, um, something like Sustain, something that, something like semesters that the student body so strongly opposes and—[sneeze] sneeze pause—  
[laughing]—sorry

C: That wasn't as, that—

G: --the student body opposes semester?

C: Yeah. But that wasn't the school's decision. That was the chancellor of the CSU system that passed that decision down. I mean I know that, this is off topic, but—

G: I mean it might be, but one thing that's interesting to note about the conversation that I see is that you all started with your experience and then you hovered above to all sus, to other students like you, and then you hovered above to all of sustain, and then you hovered above to the college, and then you're hovering above to university, and that is interesting to see the shape...of the, the level of insight. It was fun to hear you talk about. You know, I'm just trying to keep biting my lips off for now. [laughing]

R: I don't know if we're as credible to make all these general statements, but it's just kind of at least a feeling based on experience [muffled]

Sustain Interview Project

██████████ ██████████ (C) & ██████████ ██████████ (R) interviewed by ██████████ ██████████ (G)

Interviewed on 4/8/13

G: Well, and that the beauty of the interview, because I really am just asking you what you think.

R: Excellent.

C: And we're not getting graded on this, so we don't have to be right.

[laughing]

R: No concrete examples!

G: Do you want to add anything? That was a fantastic last line.

C: No, okay, that was my punch line.

G: That was your punch line. Beautiful.