

Spring 4-11-2013

# Interview transcripts of 2012 SUSTAIN Cohort in 2013: ID 1223

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Sustain Interview Project

██████ ████████ (M) interviewed by ████████ ████████ (H)

Interviewed on 4/8/13

H: Is this weird? I'm doing it this way just so I don't have to write a bunch of weird stuff down.

M: Oh. Totally fine—I mean, I would kinda do the same

H: I know, right?

M: —I mean just a cheat sheet—like, “I’ll just record someone.”

H: I know. I love that—the whole voice memo thing. So fantastic.

H: So I just want to hear..we just want to hear how you are!

M: Um, well, in general, I'm doing really well—I'm glad—I can't believe I'm finishing up my second year right how (Oh my God)

H: That is weird, huh?

M: Yeah—it's gone by too fast, like way too fast. I was talking to my parents, I was like, “I felt like I just started, but I'm almost half way done.” Alright: cool.

H: Are you gonna be out of here in four years?

M: Yeah—so happy.

H: Wow.

M: I know.

H: That's impressive, ████████.

M: Well, I mean it's because my major's not that impacted. Natural Resources, so.

H: Okay

M: So, I'm kinda glad to be out of here in four years. But then I don't know what to do with my life, because I've been in school for so long and then all of a sudden you just stop and you work and it's just like “Aaaaaaaa” It's just weird.

H: [Laugh]

M: It's weird—like I've had a daily routine for like 18 years purely school, you know?

H: Yeah.

M: I'm excited for next year too. I'm probably gonna study abroad, but probably not during the school year, maybe over break—like summer. Um, I'm probably gonna go—I was talking to my Dad, cause I have a lot of family in Mexico—and probably I'll go study over there.

H: Oh wow

M: Um yeah, and since some of them live in Mexico City, there's this big zoo slash park thing and I probably just want to volunteer there. So I'm pretty excited to do something like that. Cause . . .

H: Wow

M: Yeah—because I want to go into wildlife biology

H: Oh, man!

M: Yeah—I'm kind of excited to do something like that

H: That's really cool!

M: And so...

H: Did you have a clear sense of that a year ago?

M: Uh—no. No, I didn't think about that until recently—like a couple of months ago. I was thinking about it because I wanted to go to Australia to study abroad, but it's a little expensive...

H: Right

M: It's pretty expensive so I was talking to my Dad to see where some of my relatives live and he was telling me, "Oh yeah some live here, some live here, and some live here," and then I remembered in Mexico City there's like this, a huge zoo—and I was thinking, "Oh—I could save money from housing—I could probably just go buy tuition, and so I'm excited for that

H: Yeah—that's exciting

M: It would be really fun to do—and my Dad, well of course my Dad would be ecstatic for me because I haven't seen my family in about ten years?

H: Oh wow

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M: Yeah—it's been really really long time since I've gone to see them. Like, um, ██████████, she was telling me how she's going to Germany.

H: Really?

M: Yeah—I don't know if she told you...

H: I haven't talked to her

M: Yeah—she's going to Germany, um, cause apparently she has family over there too, and she's studying abroad over there, and I think she's going the same thing kind of what I'm doing. And I kinda got the idea from her too.

H: Are you in touch with Sustain people still?

M: Yeah. Oh yeah.

H: Yeah? Who?

M: I actually have class with, um, ██████████, ██████████, ██████████ and ██████████. It's a Natural Resources class, and we're all together in the same class and I'm like 'Oh God—it's like Sustain all over again.'

[laughing]

M: And then I talk to—uh, I talk to ██████████ and ██████████ a lot, --and then ██████████ I see around all the time with ██████████.

H: Do you? That's fun.

M: Yeah—and then we've... I don't think we've had like another meeting, like just a, a kind of like a get together. It would be nice to have another one, like towards the end of the year, just to see how everyone's doing.

H: Yeah.

M: It would be nice.

H: It would be.

M: And I've actually gone to some of the sustain meetings this year. And I'm helping out—like some of the groups, but I heard like a lot of students like dropped from sustain.

H: Oh really?

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M: Yeah—like two or three from the group I was helping out dropped, and now I think like I'm the only one in the group which, I don't know how that's going to work out because I'm not officially officially in Sustain, I'm just helping out. Yeah—it's just kinda like confusing.

H: What do you think it's about?

M: Like why they dropped?

H: Yeah—or—I don't know...

M: I think it was cause it I think we were talking about with... I was talking about it with one of the members of the group that I'm helping out, um, I was telling him how we had all our classes together, like the first quarter it was all Sustain students, so we really got to know each other, we really like interacted with the professors, and he said last quarter it was like integrated, like very integrated with the rest of the school. So I feel like maybe they didn't feel like it was that much of a difference.

H: Ummhmmm.

M: Sustain from regular classes. So, maybe that's why they're dropping out—because they feel like it's the same thing, except with a little extra work.

H: Yeah. What do you think about your experience looking back?

M: Oh, I loved it.

H: Did you? Tell me. What did you love about it?

M: I really like how we got so close with the professors, like even though none of the professors are from my area of study, like I know theres... I have professors on campus that I think ask for advice and that I'm really in touch with.

H: Who are you in touch with?

M: I talk a lot to ██████████ and ██████████.

H: Cool.

M: I always see them around campus and I was gonna be a TA this quarter too for them, but the schedule didn't work out for me, which kinda sucked.

H: Yeah.

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M: But yeah, like, and the cool thing is that they always try to keep in touch with us too. Lik they will send us emails like. I got an email just recently about, uh, over the summer a colleague intvited sustain, I think, to like uh , like the study abroad type thing? I don't know if you heard about it—it's ilke ES Es Esla? I don't know—it's like a religious studies, study abroad, and you get GE credit for it.

H: Oh—ok.

M: And like she invited us, even the alumnae, and I thought that was really cool that she still involves everyone else into it.

H: Yeah. Yeah

M: Yeah, so I—I just really enjoyed my experience last year. It was, it was, it was very different and since the classes were a lot smaller, I felt like the one-on-one was way better than—I felt like I was back in high school almost? Because the classes were very small. There was one professor and everyone knows each other in class. I think that really, really made my experience, like, much better.

H: Yeah—you're really bright faced talking about it. That's fun!

M: Yeah—it's just I really enjoyed it and that's why I feel like I—a lot of us—like from the alumnae of Sustain—come back and help. Because we are—well, we talk about it, we just get so excited about it and we're just “Sustain was awesome--Sustain was so much fun—we love this stuff.” And yeah. I feel like that's what it was. But—I don't know how they'll do it cause I've noticed that a couple of students, like a very small handful, really enjoy it this year, but, I don't know about the, I don't know if the rest are just doing it for like the classes, just to get the GE's and stuff, but I know a lot of us from last year really, really loved it. Yeah

H: How do you think, if you can answer this—how do you think you changed through it? Or—what do you think—really kind of the better question is, ‘What happened to you, do you think, in all that?’

M: Uhhhh.

H: So, there's the question, ‘What did you think of the program?’ but then—What happened to you?

M: I feel like maybe like I learned to work in groups more? And like be more, like, in track more with the professor as well. Because first quarter, you know, you're a freshman in college. You have no idea what you're doing. You're—you like—I had the feeling like

[coughing]

H: I'm sorry.

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M: It's okay.

--I had the feeling like, 'It's probably gonna feel like highschool, where it's like, 'Oh, I can just get by, do minimum work and just get by.'" And I saw first quarter that it was nothing like that. And in Sustain, it's like, the, like it helped me—it also helped me a lot with like, like my learning, like, um learned my learning style, like the way that I learn. And it's help me, like I said to work in groups. Because like in high school, it's like yeah, you kinda, you work in groups, but it's like mainly just a lot like, just you, kinda thing? And then like you don't really, like you could in track to get along with the teachers back in high school. It's harder to do that here. One, there's a professor that has 200 students, and out of those 200 students, he'll remember like 10 of the names from the whole class, you know? And so, like, it helped me like reach out to our professors more. Like last quarter, this quarter, I would go, I would reach out to them, go to office hours more. And just like ask them questions, when I didn't do that at all like my fall quarter freshman year.

H: That's really interesting.

M: I feel like it helped me a lot with that.... Mmmmmmm....I don't know. I'm not too sure what, like what, like I know like that's the main main thing.

H: How's it been to be back in what you and I think of as "non-Sustain" classes.

M: Well, fall quarter was kind of weird because I was looking at the door, waiting to see all the faces that I knew, just to sit down and be sitting together, um, and then I guess I just slowly started to adapt back to the regular Cal Poly schedule

H: Airquotes

M: Yeah, so, I mean, it's, it felt very weird, um, especially not seeing like, not doing like, seeing the professor like ██████████ or ██████████ teaching the class or having you or ██████████ or whatnot. Um. But, yeah it just felt very weird. But now third quarter, I'm used to it. It's like, aaaaaa. And I know for one of the classes they invited us to take like the music 229 class they invited us to take it with them. I was gonna take it but due to schedule conflict I couldn't, but I'm taking the 9 am not the 8 am one, so when I was in class, when I was walking to class, ██████████ and ██████████ were coming out and they were talking to me about the class and they were telling me, 'Oh, there's this project, we should all do it together—and we should get together and collaborate. I mean—I would totally, I mean I'm in the 9-10 class, but I'd totally work with you guys.'" So, it's um, at least it's nice to know that there's still that connection.

H: Totally. Totally.

M: Yeah.

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H: That's such good stuff. Is there anything, so, really the hope of the conversation is, I just want to hear everything you have to say about it. I don't have an, um—it's super tempting to press pause because honestly we don't have to accomplish anything—I just want to hear! So I'm trying to think, which thing of everything you said do I want to hear more about?

M: I don't know. I—It's just like, speaking about like, It's so exciting because I like it. It's just so hard to explain, too, like to other people, like what it is.

H: How's that been?

M: Oh—it's so hard.

H: What do you say? That's really funny. "It's this thing!"

M: It's like—uhhhhhh—"It's Sustain! It's Sustain!" Like I would talk to my roommates, like this year, especially because I still like go to the meetings and stuff

H: Yeah

M: And when I would tell them "Oh, I'm gonna go to the Sustain meeting," and they're like, "What that?" and I'm like "ummmmm...it's . . . it's . . ." and I would just sit there trying to think of something like mmmmmm. Like, "It's this group of students?"[laughing] and it's just everytime I try to explain it to them, I say something a little differently and I'm like, wait—no no no—it's not that, it's this . . ." Yeah. I think that's yeah it was one of the hardest things to do.

I remember last year when I would try to explain it to my parents. I couldn't. I just couldn't. I just would be like, "it's just, just understand that it's something great. It's something good. It's something good."

H: Funny.

M: Yeah. That's how it was. But I think the only bad thing about Sustain was... the classes, like the—especially like first quarter, like how it's only once a week, two hour long, like Econ class.

Mmmhmmm

M: Or just the, I know the physics class struggled a lot like twice a week, one hour each. And they would have so much stuff to put in such little amount of time, but I think they do that differently this year, didn't they? Yeah. Cause, I mean, I'm taking physics right now, and if I would've taken it in Sustain I would've been totally lost with the just one hour two times a week block. I wouldn't understand a thing. Yeah, but. I think that's the only bad part about it—or was, at least.

H: Yeah

M: Yeah

H: Do you think about—I don't even know if it's possible to do this, but—what it would be like for you now if you hadn't done Sustain. Like you had done all three quarters last year.

M: Just regular?

H: Kinda how you started out...

M: I feel like I'd still be struggling with like the whole professor thing.

H: Yeah—that's a really high impact thing you've recognized there

M: Yeah—like, I feel like I would still be struggling with that, and then, I feel like I still wouldn't be able to get the hang of college, kind of? Like, I would kind of know what I was doing, but not entirely, like I wouldn't be so, um, like—I don't know how to say it, um, I wouldn't be so, um... I wouldn't know how, like, how to put everything, like... I just lost my track of thought. Like it's just, like, I feel like college to me, would kinda, I feel like it'd still be like high school almost? Like, I could just do minimal work and breeze on by maybe because I, in sustain we put a lot more work, especially for the projects, and so that helped me put a lot more work into school, too, so.

H: That was a carry-over there for you?

M: Yeah. And if I wouldn't have done Sustain, I for sure wouldn't have made like the, the connections I have made, like all the friends, with the professors.

M: Yeah

M: And especially like with the community partners and stuff, yeah so, it'd be totally different. I don't know. I think Sustain really like helped me enjoy my college experience.... I don't know.

H: Is there anything that you wish had been in place for you transitioning into this year? I'm interested in that question for people.

M: I don't know... maybe? I don't... I feel like—yeah—I think 'maybe' is the right answer because I don't know if it's a yes or a no because like, like I said the fall quarter, um, I was getting used to sustain and going into the classes I was expecting all these students to come in but, you know, no one would, no one that I knew would come in, and maybe just having like a... like a just, like a few more, like maybe just one more sustain

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class or something. Or maybe like freshman year could be like all sustain classes, like all sustain students in those classes, and then slowly your sophomore year could be the integrated classes or something. I don't know.

H: Mmm hmmm. You don't have to solve it—

M: --Yeah, I know

H: --I was just curious if you have ideas about it.

M: No, like, I've never really thought about that till right now, like, maybe, yeah, maybe something like that would be okay. Because like it's a big shift from Sustain to regular classes. So...

H: Yeah

M: Because like--

H: How's it different? It's okay if some of this gets repeated

M: Umm...

H: You're doing great—I like hearing what you have to say.

M: Um, it's like, well, the professors don't in track with you as much. Like, they see like, they're there for to help you out, but they're not like in sustain where it's like "oh, umm..." like they don't go up to you like, "Hey, how you doing? Is everything okay?" It's like, just like, "I'm here to teach...and you're here to learn," and stuff like that...

H: Yeah

M: I don't know...

H: Did your parents notice anything different in you? Through it or because of it you think?

M: Yeah—actually, I feel like they did. Because for, for Winter, um, I feel like for winter and spring quarter last year, I was... because I would talk to them about like our project. I was with the wildlife society

Oh yeah

M: I would talk to them about our project, and they, I feel like they would see like how excited I would get, "oh we're doing like these nature walks with the students and it's so cool because I'm working with, actually, working with a wildlife biologist, which is what

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I want to do in the future and stuff”. And maybe like, maybe they did, I’ve never really thought about it, like...

H: Did you know that you wanted to do wildlife biology before your project? Was that how you chose your project?

M: No—not really. I didn’t know. I was, I was...my fall quarter, I was still debating about, um, between going into like law and policy and ...

H: Ohhhhhh. Wow!

M: --and doing like, um, wildlife biology, and like I came in, I came to Cal Poly with the mindset of ‘oh, I’m going into law and policy, um like environmental law and whatnot. And then after doing sustain and after hearing what ████████ did and after like doing that whole process like, and hearing how she gets to work with animals and then me learning more what wildlife biology was, I like started wanting to do that more. And so, yeah, that’s that actually one thing my mom keeps telling me because she always, she always tell me, “Why don’t you go into environmental law like you wanted to? Why are you gonna go into wildlife biology? You’re gonna deal with all these like dangerous animals, and they’re gonna eat you or something...”

[laughing]

M: I’m like, Mom, I’m gonna be okay—it’s okay.

G: Funny.

M: Yeah. I’m like, ‘Mom, it’s okay, I’m gonna be fine.’ And my Dad would just sit and laugh, like ‘oh goodness,’ yeah. But I, I actually thought I was gonna do environmental law for a while, until, until a little bit like towards, more towards, the end of my fall quarter, and then I was still debating about it, like, the beginning of sustain kinda. . . . I think that, yeah, I think it did help me with finding the actual concentration I wanted to do...

H: You look bright and confident, and like you’re thriving.

M: [laughing]

H: you do.

M: thanks, thanks. It’s just like, I feel like it’s, it’s, I feel like it’s like this, though, with every sustain professor that you talk to and you meet and it’s like “oh—how are you?” you know—how are you doing? How are your classes? How are this quarter?” And I feel like it’s ilke that with all the sustain students. As well. I don’t know if you notice that

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with ██████████ or what, like, but whenever we talk or like just say hello, we're always just so happy to see each other. It's always like that.

H: Yeah. Yeah

M: But...

H: I see an increase in confidence in you for sure from how you were a year ago.

M: No—definitely, I, yeah, totally last year, I was a little bit more shy, but now I'm just like “Ahhh”

H: That's exciting.

M: I'm excited. Hopefully, next year for sustain there's more students. ...But I mean, the students right now, I don't know if they're being that...if they're I don't know what it is that they're not... into. Cause...I was talking to ██████████ about it, like, 'oh, it's so sad to see that all these students are not wanting to do sustain anymore.' And she's like 'I know, last year no one would have thought of doing that, everyone one like liked it. And yeah—okay—we might have not gone to all the check-ins and checkouts, but still, like we were really, we really enjoyed it. Like . . . um...I don't know how it is that sustain students are now like not into it, because I like I said with the check ins and check outs I've gone to, like they're 15-20 students out of like the whole 50. Like there's like very, very small amount of students that go . . . although when we had the ice cream party everyone was there, so . . .

H: Ice cream.

M: Ice cream . . .it's ice cream. I mean—who doesn't want to go for free ice cream? Especially when it's like a hot day—I think it was really hot, so, of course, everyone would want to.

H: Well, but it is interesting—you're still noticing something really interesting in that, that when people ditched out last year we never had a room only of 15 or 20 people for a check-in or checkout—not that I remember. Do you?

M: Mmm mmm.

H: I mean, it would be like maybe a smattering of people here and there. . . I wonder if you all even thought that it was something you could quit.

[laughing]

M: No—probably we said, “we're stuck in this cult. We'll like be here forever.”

[laughing]

H: Yeah.

M: Yeah...I mean maybe that was our mindset. Maybe we thought we couldn't get out of it at all. . . or maybe we just didn't want to....one or the other.

H: Yeah.

M: I don't know.

H: That's cool. Do you have any other thoughts—these are all great—do you have any other thoughts about what the impact has been or—you know, again, really the spirit of all these questions is just like, “how are you?” and “what do you think happened to you?” you know—if you could look back over your shoulder...what do you think happened?

M: I feel like I know what I want to do now. Like, it's like, now I'm...I'm like now I'm planning ahead, where how it had just been like, “what am I gonna do tomorrow?” and that's it. And now it's like “okay, like, I'm saying like ‘next summer, I want to do this...’” I want to do this for next quarter or over next year these are my plan and I want to have this accomplished by a certain amount of time. And I feel like that also helped out with the projects, because you know how in the projects we had like set deadlines? And we had to like be done—ok what do we want by a certain time?

H: Which projects do you mean—do you mean like the community projects?

M: Yeah—as in like community projects. Like, what do we want set by a certain, um, like this certain date. And so I feel like I got used to that, and I'm in that mindset—like, ‘ok, by this day I wanna hae this done, and by the next day, I wanna have maybe that done, and if not I'll do it this day with, I don't know.

H: Yeaahhhh. And you go to participate in that.

M: Oh yeah.

H: Like it was yours to do—it wasn't somebody else saying to you, ‘this is when it'll be done.’ That's really interesting.

M: Yeah. I feel like. . . I feel a lot more prepared, that's for sure.

H: Mmmmmmm.

M: With things coming. Yeah.

H: Fantastic... thank you for taking all this time with me.

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