

Spring 4-13-2013

# Interview transcripts of 2012 SUSTAIN Cohort in 2013: ID 1228

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Sustain Interview Project

██████████ (K) interviewed by ██████████ (G)

Interviewed on 4/18/13

G: I'm here with ██████████.

K: Hi.

G: Hi. So tell me. What do you think happened to you in Sustain?

K: Um, like in Sustain? Like?

G: Yeah. As you look back you can think about how you think you grew if you do think you grew. What did you learn? What was it like to transition out? Any of those questions, just like whatever comes to your mind first is probably the best thing to share. How do you think about it?

K: I think Sustain helped me a lot. It kind of made me realize that it's actually a lot harder to push yourself to have integrity to like do stuff on your own without like really strict deadlines and all that homework that's always due on this date. It's more like on your own. You have to push yourself to do all that stuff by yourself. And it was really hard to do that. Because without those deadlines you're like, oh, I can wait awhile. And then by the time it comes along you're like, oh I should have done that much, much longer ago.

G: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

K: So that's something I learned. I'm the type of person that does that. Waits until you have to really have to do it. And that was really hard to transition out of. So--

G: Is it?

K: Yeah, so going into Sustain with that kind of mindset where you're like, oh, you don't really have to do it until when it's due. It was hard to change that in Sustain. But coming out of it, I feel like I'm a lot better at that now. Like I start things a little bit earlier and I'm getting stuff done.

G: Are you?

K: Yeah.

G: Why do you think that is?

K: Um, I think it's just that during Sustain it was a really big struggle. It was like something I really had to deal with. So having to encounter that so many times throughout Sustain, I got better at doing better. So, that was one good thing.

G: You practiced it, it sounds like.

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K: Yeah.

G: That makes sense.

K: Um, I think the part I like the best about Sustain is the projects. You know? Working on the, cause we had to do the water harvesting system.

G: Ok. Which group was that?

K: This was oak creek.

G: Oak creek, right.

K: I saw the design for this year too actually. That they were working on a kid playground. That looked like a lot of fun. So I hope they're doing well. I think the main part about Sustain that really got me was that, was oak creek actually. Because they were like so nice and open and felt like a family. So that really like pulled me in. I think that's one of the great things about Sustain. I don't know how the other groups worked but for me personally that was a really big thing. And. I don't know?

G: Tell me some more about what it was like to transition out of it in the fall?

K: In the fall you mean like coming back into the normal--

G: Yeah, let me. I'll just interject and clarify so that you don't feel any pressure around this. The interest in the questioning really is we want to know what happened to you. So there's no pressure in the, and we can strike all this in the thing, but because I didn't say this to you before, I've sensed from other students in conversation that there's this feeling like you want to make sure you say something positive about it, you know? About the program? And really our interest is to look at you and say, gosh what happened to you? And, um, because our hope is to replicate this you know program. So if we can sort of capture what some of the impacts are, so I don't know if that makes it better or worse for our conversation but--

K: Um. Could you kind of clarify what you mean by what happened to me, like--

G: Yeah. So do you see change in yourself that you would attribute to being a part of Sustain?

K: Yeah I think I do. I think I learned a lot from Sustain. And I think I learned that I really am that type of person that I really do need deadlines. And I really do need a set time so I can get stuff done. I think that's one of the things Sustain has done for me. Um, I really wished I could have stayed part of Sustain. But the thing is I just don't see myself

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in any of the positions you guys currently have. Like as a mentor or helping students. Because I don't feel like I'm ready to do that myself because I'm still learning a lot--

G: Yeah.

K: So it's harder for me to try and help someone when I'm not really sure if I'm able to.

G: Yeah.

K: I think that's one of the things a lot of people felt too. That they don't feel like they're ready.

G: Yeah, I have heard that. What kind of position would you imagine claiming now, or wanting now?

K: See, the problem is I have a good idea of what I probably can't do but I don't really know what I could do. I think that's one of the harder things is trying to figure out what you would be good for.

G: Well, if you flip it around and say, what would you want, for you? Like let's just say in a world where it's ok to be completely selfish and I know you well enough to know you don't actually think that. But let's pretend, like what's the dream? For how you'd stay connected.

K: I think I would just really like to stay connected to oak creek personally. Because I really like that community and I would like to still be a part of the projects and maybe like go out every now and then and see what's happening there.

G: Yeah. Do you feel welcome to do that?

K: I have actually for oak creek. I'm hoping we eventually go back and see them again.

G: Yeah.

K: But I hope I can get this quarter, I'm kind of busy.

G: Yeah. What are you busy with?

K: It's just a lot of school work. I think I kind of over loaded myself a little bit. Hopefully it goes well.

G: How many units?

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K: It's 16 but it's 5 classes.

G: Oh, wow.

K: And a lot of them are engineering classes. So it's a lot of math and science.

G: Wow. Are you getting any sleep?

K: I am getting sleep! I cannot live with out sleep. (■■■■ laughs) Yeah, I don't know how people can pull all nighters and be ok the next day. I can't do that.

G: I think I did it once in college and I'm still not over it. (both laugh)

K: Yeah, I did it once in high school and never again. Can't do it.

G: How was the experience for you on your team on oak creek commons? On your project team?

K: I liked my team. But I feel like we didn't click as well as we could have. I feel like it was for a lot of things. There were like people you didn't know and I'm the type of person that takes awhile to like really get comfortable with other people. So while I did like them it's not like we were best of buddies or like hanging out all the time.

G: Yeah.

K: It was more like, ok, this is our group, and we're going to get our project done, and it was nice! They are nice people but I just don't feel like there was an instant connection.

G: Yeah. Have you found that in other places here at Cal Poly?

K: I have. I have found that in other places.

G: Yeah? Where?

K: Um, HSA. It's a new club that we actually started--

G: Who started that?

K: Um, it was, he is a third year ethnic studies major. It is really interesting.

G: When did you, so you've been involved in that since?

K: Since the beginning of this year. Partially last year, but mostly the beginning of this year.

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G: And you said, we started that. Were you part of the starting of that?

K: Yeah! I am actually!

G: Really?! Tell me more about that.

K: Um, HSA? Well its a more geared toward Hmong students.

G: Ok.

K: So it's basically we like we, it's just a bunch of social events basically. So we'll get together, we'll hang out and have a lot of fun. I think that's what I really liked about it. It's just the fact that it feels like a family, you know?

G: Yeah. Is that something you could have imagined yourself doing a year ago? Helping start a club?

K: I don't think so. I think a year ago I would have been more, like last year I was hesitant about joining this particular group because I wasn't too sure how I'd like the people or if I would get a long with them. But I think going through Sustain probably helped that a little bit too. Like I'm more comfortable with just like rushing out there and being like, let's just do this. Why not?

G: Why not. That's excellent. Is there a large Hmong population of students here?

K: There's actually more than I thought.

G: Or a population?

K: Yeah, it's actually more than I thought. There's about so far I think we've found like 12 of us so far. I mean it's, I didn't think I would find any other Hmong students here so I was really surprised.

G: What's exciting about that for you? I can tell you're excited because you keep smiling.

K: Yeah, I am excited. Because we finally became an official club just last week. So. Still got the bubbly-ness about it. (██████████ laughs)

G: You had to have an advisor, right?

K. Yes we have two actually.

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G: Nice!

K: Yep, we're going to meeting them in May.

G: What's exciting about it?

K: I think it's just exciting because you find people you really connect with. Like you feel like they really understand you. Like, coming from like a similar background it's like they know what I'm going through--

G: Right.

K: So it kind of helps. So you feel like you're connected. And that's something that's hard to find when you're out by yourself.

G: Yes.

K: It's hard to find people you have a connection with. Who have a similar background.

G: Totally.

K: So that's nice. To find other people who are Hmong. They understand your family dynamics and all that stuff.

G: Right. That's exciting!

K: It's really exciting.

G: I'm really glad for you. Your face! You're just smiling. So big.

K: Yeah. I really like the people in HSA. So.

G: Yeah, that's exciting. And you're managing to do that with all these classes?

K: Yeah because most of our stuff is on the weekends. So my weekends are ok.

G: That's cool. Any other thoughts about um, I kind of a little bit keep asking the same question, but just to hear more. Everything you're saying is fantastic. I'm just interested in having you say as much as you'd like to as you look back on that experience.

K: Yeah, looking back on Sustain I feel like, sometimes I feel like you guys were a little too lenient on the students. Like you guys were like, ok, you didn't turn it in, it's ok, you can turn it in later. And it makes it easier for students to take advantage.

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G: Yes.

K: And I think that's something that students have to learn not to do and you guys need to kind of be a little stricter on. I think that's one of the things that made it really hard. Because, oh well, you know they pushed it back a little bit so I have some more time to think about it and to work on it. And that's something that just makes it easier to just like push back for students themselves.

G: I think you said an interesting thing to learn not to do. To learn to not take advantage of the teacher.

K: Yeah.

G: Or you know, maybe it's not the person or the teacher but the leniency. You know, how do you use it but not take advantage of it.

K: Yeah, it's hard to find that balance. Where it's like ok, I need to set this deadline but I don't want to be too strict about it. But then if you're too lenient then it just kind of gets out of hand.

G: Yeah.

K: And I think that's something that's really hard to do.

G: I'm just going to lean in and we can strike all this because now it's starting to turn into conversation and I may be talking too much but um, I really felt that tension as a teacher. You know that, but there really is a stand off question like, who's going to go first? Like if we're in this lock where we're fighting, stuff is only done the moment it's demanded, do you know what I mean?

K: Yeah.

G: Then how will the model ever change?

K: That's true.

G: And somebody's going to have to first. Somebody's going to have to be willing to let go of that model. It was excruciating! I wanted to barf all the time! Because it really feels that way. It really did feel like I'm a shmuck. Students are taking advantage of, you know. The difference is I know what's going to happen. But that is an interesting tension that you're noting there. You know that there's sort of this duel between student and teacher around this--

K: I think that's good to feel something like that too. They're like I don't want to take

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advantage of this teacher but--

G: But what? Finish that sentence.

K: But, I don't know it's just like you really don't want to take advantage of the teacher but sometimes you do need the extra time, sometimes you do put things off a little too late. And it's hard to shift yourself out of that--

G: Yeah.

K: To where you say, ok, they said it's due here but maybe I can turn it in a day late. But, I can't turn it in any later than that because it's not fair. It's just kind of a hard dynamic between the students too because they have to deal with that too.

G: Yeah. And really interesting when you're getting squeezed somewhere else in the quarter system. And so why wouldn't you use that time? You know and apply it to another class or--

K: Yeah. I don't know. I think time management is also really hard for me. Just trying to find time to do everything. And when to do everything. And how long something will approximately take you.

G: Yeah.

K: It reminds me a lot of dynamic and statics homework. It's a lot of physics. You think it's going to take you two hours and then it takes you the whole day.

G: Oh, man. What are the other things you like to do? What are the things you wish you could do more of?

K: I don't know. There's a lot of things I wish I could do. Like, yeah, I want to go skydiving someday.

G: Do you?!

K: Yeah, I do.

G: I don't want to do that.

K: Really?

G: No.

K: I like the adrenaline rush.

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G: You do?!

K: Yes. I love roller coasters, and--

G: ██████████ I'm getting to know you, I'm telling you. Roller coasters.

K: It's a lot of fun! Roller coasters are a lot of fun.

G: Have you always been this way? Really adventuresome?

K: Um, I don't know. I think it was only during high school where I really discovered that I really love roller coasters, I love things that go fast. I love going on go-carts and racing. (██████████ laughs). You know, it was, like before I was a pretty good kid.

G: (sarcastically) And then you started riding roller coasters!

K: And then I started riding roller coasters.

G: Metaphorically we hope not. No, I'm just kidding. That's cool.

K: Yeah. I feel like there's a lot of things I want to do. It's just like there's not always time or money to do all that. So that kind of gets pushed off.

G: Yeah. Is it mostly the adventure stuff that you're talking about?

K: It's mostly the adventure stuff. Like I still find time to do stuff that I personally like. Like drawing or like playing badminton. Like I play every Friday.

G: You do?

K: Yeah I do. Like at the Rec Center just like casually. Nothing intense. I went to the badminton team practices like once or twice and they were so good it was intimidating. I was like, never again.

G: (laughing) You fled!

K: I fled. That was all the way back in freshman year though.

G: All the way back, I know. Years ago.

K: It feels so long ago, it really does.

G: Does it?

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K: It feels like Sustain happened so long ago. When it really just happened last year.

G: I know.

K: It's really odd.

G: Why does it feel so long ago?

K: I don't know. I think it's just maybe my personal sense of time. Everything feels like it was so long ago. Like high school feels like it just ended but it happened three years ago. It's really weird.

G: Yeah. Tell me about, so I'm hearing about, I'm excited to hear about your relationships in HSA. And that's making me think to ask you what was it like relationally inside Sustain?

K: Sustain? Um, inside Sustain I didn't really find much of a connection. Maybe it was just personally I didn't really put myself very much so I didn't really connect very well with everybody there. Like I knew people and we still occasionally say hi and everything but it's not like I made very lasting relationships. And I think that was more of my personal thing instead of Sustain's personal thing. I think that was just something I wasn't really ready to do yet. To really put myself out there and get to know everybody there. I think if I probably did it again I would probably change that a little. Like really get to know people and hang out and really um work on building something together like a community.

G: Yeah!

K: And I think that would be something that I would be a lot better at now than I was last year. After hanging out with all these HSA people it's kind of pulled me out a little. So that would probably be a lot easier for me to do now.

G: Yeah. What do you feel like made it hard for you to do that in Sustain?

K: I don't know. Maybe it was just something about me. Like I'm not a very outgoing person, not all the time. So--

G: You are on the weekends with HSA. I can already tell, but go ahead--

K: Yes. (both laugh) But yeah, when I'm in class, you stay quiet and you listen to the teacher, and they lecture and that's what you do. You don't really like sit there and talk to your friend while your teacher is lecturing. That's just something I've always been brought up thinking. So when you're like in a classroom setting it's much more like ok,

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sit here, be quiet, and listen. And that's just something that I've kind of grown up doing. So it's what I'm used to.

G: Yeah.

K: So I think since Sustain is also kind of a classroom thing, that just naturally came out of me.

G: That makes sense.

K: Yeah. And I don't know. I didn't really find people there that I automatically clicked with. You know, like you have to find that connection. To be really able to build something up from it.

G: Yeah. Was it hard in that way?

K: Um, I think it was hard. Because when you're in a classroom of all these different people and they're all so interesting but you don't really know if you can mesh well with them, you know?

G: Yeah.

K: It's kind of that initial fear.

G: Yeah. Do you feel like there was something that would have helped you?

K: Um. I don't know. I'm not really sure if there would have been. I mean there is a possibility that there was something that would of. But there's nothing like really I can think of right off the top of my head right now.

G: I love hearing these things form you.

K: Yeah. I think that's something that could probably be improved on. Building more community in Sustain. I think it would help people feel more welcome. And more compelled to do better.

G: Did you, how welcome did you feel there?

K: I did feel really welcomed by the teachers and everybody there. I feel like it would have been ok if I would have said something if I had an objection to something. Everybody would have listened and they would have taken it into consideration.

G: Yeah. I think that was interesting insight that you offered up that you know because

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it's a classroom setting, you felt like you brought in this other training.

K: Yeah.

G: It sounds like it was hard for you to shake.

K: It is really hard to shake off because it is something you've been taught since you were little, you know?

G: Yeah. Yeah. Interesting. Anything else rattling around in your head?

K: Um, not really.

G: Ok. Here's a question that I floated to like one other person. And you can just pass on it if you want. Is there anything you're chicken to say? Or reticent is maybe the academic word?

K: Um, I don't know. I can't really think of anything that I'm scared to say right now. (both laugh)

G: I mean you'll ride a roller coaster why not talk to me?

K: It's true! (both laugh). I don't know I can't really think of anything off the top of my head that I'm scared to say. Maybe later on after this is done with I'll suddenly think, oh I should've said that.

G: Will you email it to me?

K: I will. If I do.

G: If you do I really want you to tell me.

K: I think I'll probably will if I do. Because usually after a conversation I start thinking oh wait why did I say this when I could have said that?!

G: Oh, then let's have a follow up.

K: Ok!

G: Ok!

K: I'm good with that.

G: K, let's do that. This was fantastic, thank you so much.

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██████████ (K) interviewed by ██████████ (G)

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[The email that ██████████ sent to ██████████ ██████████ on May 1, 2013]

Belated Follow-up: ██████████ May 1, 2013 5:51 PM

From: ██████████

To: ██████████

Hi ██████████!

I know this is rather late, but here it is anyway!

I've been "chewing" over our conversation for some time now and I'm still not really sure what I want to say. For me, Sustain was a good experience; perhaps not an amazing one, but a good one nonetheless. Why wasn't it amazing? I'm not sure. Maybe I wasn't ready to throw myself into something so new and uncertain. Or maybe it just wasn't the right fit for me.

One thing I am certain of is that my enthusiasm for Sustain did die out. I feel like it did for a lot of us. By the time that Spring Quarter rolled around, we were drained. After all that talk about how we wanted to learn and how we were going to approach it, we were worn out. We were tired of being asked the same question. We were frustrated that no matter how many times we talked about how to learn, we weren't any closer to the solution. It might also be something that is ingrained into our generation as well. We always want the newest, best gadget and quickly bore of what we consider "old".

Perhaps I was also a little disappointed that Sustain was not what I pictured it to be. I had this belief that I would be going out into the community and throwing myself into projects; not sitting in classrooms and plastering sticky notes onto walls. Although I did enjoy the conversations and topics that were brought up, it wasn't what I had hoped for.

Building community is important and I didn't really find that in Sustain. I know that there are people who did find that within Sustain, but I didn't. It's probably because I didn't put myself out there and try to build relationships within Sustain. However I did find that in the Hmong Student Association (the club that I mentioned before). I think I was able to open up easier, because it was a more

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casual environment. We weren't discussing academics and school. Instead we were playing games, eating food, and just "hanging out". I find that games, especially, help pull me out of my shell.

While I've written some negative stuff, I would like to note that I enjoyed Sustain. It was a wonderful experience and I'm glad that I was part of it. I know there are people who are glad to be done with it, but I don't feel that way. I think that if Sustain wasn't only a two quarter program, I would've stayed a part of it throughout my whole college career. It has its flaws, but it was worth it.

Anyway that's all I really have to say. I can't think of anything more that I haven't already said.

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On a side note: I just read your inquiry and I really enjoyed it! I feel like I've had a glimpse into the conflicting thoughts and worries of professors all over. I never once thought about the frustrations that teachers have, until now. It also made me question some of the things I've thought up 'til now. All-in-all, it was a wonderful read.

Wishing you the best!

--■■■■