

Spring 4-17-2013

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Sustain Interview Project

██████████ (GA) interviewed by ██████████ (G)

Interviewed on 4/9/13

G: Tell me how you're doing. We've got ██████████.

GA: Doing well. Its been an exciting year for me so far. And um, Im sinking into my classes and I'm passing my classes not with flying colors but Im passing and Im comfortable with how Im doing and thats exciting for me because this is the year that determines whether or not most engineers stick it out. So I'm stoked about that. Um, I keep finding the academics are--I keep putting them on the back shelf and I could be doing better but I think there are like more exciting things going on which catch me every time.

G: What's on the front shelf? What do you mean?

GA: Places where I can be and projects. So I'll take things like start-up a weekend and like waste the whole weekend and not do homework and stay up three nights in a row or whatever and do do something like that and have a blast but then come back and kinda get hit with some academics. But when I do that I can at least get C's so thats good for me as long as I'm having a good time with it. But hopefully I can learn to balance it a little bit better. I'm working on that right now--

G: Was that--Im sorry--Was that a typical work pattern for you from before?

GA: No. Its been a big adjustment for me. Ive usually done things, not last minute, but day or two before they're due which is kind of average. But now Ive gotten used to doing things in less uh--not--Sometimes I find myself cheating myself out of my academics, not literally cheating, but cheating myself out of my education experience to do the things I think are more exciting and they're usually in line with what I want to be studying so it works out for me, so that I don't feel as bad. If it were me cheating myself academically by just doing fraternity things then I would feel like I'm not being fair to myself or I'm not spending my education here well.

G: Yeah.

GA: But most of it lines up and is really exciting and its exactly what i want to be doing so I convince myself its ok. whether or not it is. But I think I can balance that more and I think I jump from being very academically focused to being very club-project focused and I'm trying to find the healthy medium and thats interesting because Sustain kind of falls in there as being a really cool path guiding me that way so in my freshman year when I could have really used that structure around project and in academics it was there to kind of support me and everyone was doing the same thing so I got to learn from how other people were doing it and that was really cool. That's been good scaffolding for me, as far as I can--I mean by no means has it been a seamless transition into this year when I wanted to do all the projects but not as much academics but still be a student but that was

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definitely was something that showed me it can be done simultaneously and even like support each other, and like yeah, be mutually beneficially--one to the other.

G: Keep talking.

GA: uuum.

G: Big picture question is what's happened to you since then. What's your take away from the Sustain experience?

GA: Um just quantitatively what's happened is kinda like I um, at the end of last year I decided that I was going to start a fraternity, so I started a fraternity, so I've been working with some guys to get that off the ground and this earlier this year I decided to start the Quality of Life Plus Club for medical design which is really cool.

G: Oh ok.

GA: Or which I think is really cool. And it is really cool and I was really excited to get that opportunity.

G: In engineering? That's where you're pointing, or no?

GA: Oh, oh, I was pointing to the labs over there.

G: Oh, ok.

GA: Where ever you see those QL letters.

G: Ok.

GA: I'm studying mechanically engineering. Um, and um, yeah so, and that was kind of depicting like a change of interest I've had this year mostly or over the summer too. And that is like for a long time when i was um, growing up i knew i kinda had a um--I felt I was i would do well as an engineer and I enjoyed that system of problem solving thought that was really cool and i always really respected like, my great grandfather who was like pretty cool, and I read up on him and I loved the idea of being an engineer but i was surprised a little bit how much i loved biology and I really enjoyed my science classes but I didn't excel as well but really loved them. But now I'm finding that I've kind of stumbled upon this whole market that is bio engineering and bio mechanical engineering bio technology and its actually huge and growing and one of the fastest in the field of engineering. And thats been really exciting for me. So I've been playing with that and trying to take leaps and strides in that direction as a mechanical engineer. Which is kinda weird but I think its going to work. And um thats what brought me over to the QL Plus Lab and work on my projects there. And um, so thats what kinda shifted in my interests as far as Sustain pertains to that shift I think what I said about learning like so its one thing

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to understand that other people do do projects and academics at the same time um, but its also a whole other thing to see those things mesh together and be successful and I dont want to say successful because I guess we didn't really have a measure of whats successful in Sustain. There isn't a way we qualified wether or not it was working so, I guess that's kind of some feedback, I don't know, if that um.--

G: What do you think we qaulified--I don't want to get you too off track--but you looked like you had a thought there about success.

GA: Um, yeah, I think everybody in sustain had a different measure of success I think, which was really in line what was trying to be built out of, oh, um, I keep forgetting the term, in terms of motivation. You're supposed to measure your own success, right? But I don't know, I guess, I didn't always--I didn't ever know if I was being successful or if the project should be showing of that. But I also picked up a lot of things in Sustain that I realized the projects didn't show. And they didn't show up until later, like this year. So there are some things that didn't shine through until-- like A lot of the communication tricks i picked up on that i didn't recognize as valuable as they were and didn't show up in my Sustain experience or projects but then they popped up later as naturally how I want to deal with things because this is how I approached it in Sustain. So those type of things do pop up often actually.

G: Huh.

GA: Um, and on that note I was sharing this--██████████ and I meet up and have weird, goofy philosophical conversations every once in awhile.

G: Fantastic.

GA: Um, and one thing we noticed kind of together that the people around us who continually pull through for club activities where we reach out and need somebody to support us or we need like the involvement of a group and the most efficient and immediate way are people who I gained from my sustain connections--and most often people inside sustain. Who were just like kick-ass to work with. Those are the majority of people who will pull through. And I see that in my friendship with Elliot and whenever we hang out we can always count on eachother. I also see that in how ██████████ recruited for Growing Grounds. I see that in how ██████████ and I started working together in QL Plus like she continually pulled through. So there are lots of examples that we continue to fall back on each other as friends but also in a professional manner which is very cool actually.

G: Yeah. yeah.

GA: It's very cool actually. So yeah thats been really cool to see. um, last night was a perfect example i sat down with my officers from QL Plus club and we were shooting out like a brainstorm process because we have to share with our team leads kind of examples

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GA: Um, yeah, so that's what's been effecting me in Sustain. I'm trying to think of what else.--

G: That's great stuff ██████████. its great to see you. Really. You look like a great older more grown up version of your self. A little more settled!

GA: You think so?

G: Yeah. something about your presence is nifty to see.

GA: Um, oh Im going to TA this quater for Sustain.

G: Are you?

GA: So everybody did last quaterer and I missed out because i thought I ws too busy but this quarter I'm taking a couple hours a week. I think it's only a 2-3 hour demand and then I'm going to try and connect with a couple groups i can help more individually where i can. Ive already had some good conversations like day two weve already been in some cool conversation which is kind of how sustain goes. Like these deeper level conversations, so that's cool.

G: And you're TAing right now, this quarter?

GA: Yeah, and the way I'm doing that is that it can be like really valuable to set like i mean theres like because we have the whole super senior program at Cal Poly theres less differentiation between classes but there still is i think it would be cool to intermingle and be more united as a campus. um yeah .so im trying to support that a little bit and also I love Sustain and want to give back to that a little bit. but im looking forward to in the TAing experience just being around Liz and Roger because it just so happens they can also be huge reasources to me while im working on QL Plus um, like Liz mostly on the IMA side cuz the two biggest things we are hitting-- poeple slow down when theyve never experienced something before they just sit there and ponder it for aling time and they wont be productive, but my belief is that they should just delve and just keep hitting road block after road block but have the support to overcome them. And then the other road block we hit is um, the same thing we had in Sustain where graded things and solid deadlines take priority over things that are your passions or things that you're intrinsically motivated to do. And I believe that almost everybody in the QL Plus club which is really cool because not even professors get the chance to have students who are only intrinsically motivated. So I'm pretty stoked that almost all the members are pretty intrinsically motivated.

G: And you're leading that?

GA: Yeah. um, I'll tell you a funny story about that.

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G: Yeah.

GA: Um, and so that's a huge opportunity to work with ██████████ a little bit because he has a pro on intrinsic motivation and how to put that to really thoughtful design. And also he's really good at setting up infrastructure--like this is what we want our outcome to be so how do we work backwards from that?

G: Yeah, yeah.

GA: So that's really cool. And um, they're both great resources for that. And so that's going to be a huge gift for me this quarter. And it just kind of lined up like that. I feel really lucky. um, and then the whole community thing, I think it would be really cool to have a community of freshman um people who are working on other projects, and it also does something for confidence when you can go in there and say, "well this is what I have to offer you guys that you may not be able to find in your own team like I'd love to help out, I feel comfortable here." Whereas in most of my other classes I am pushing my comfort level most of the time. But it's cool to retreat to that once in a while and be valuable, be like, oh I actually do understand what I'm picking up in these uncomfortable places in my life, I'm actually valuable, and I'm going to go back and be that much more productive in these parts of my life because I see it paying off so, you know that's really cool.

G: This is all good stuff.

GA: Sweet.

G: Keep talking, if you've got more to say, absolutely!

GA: Um.

G: You don't have to make anything up to take up time (laughing). But if you have other thoughts, there's nothing that's considered off topic. So that's why we try to stay with the open ended questions.

GA: Yeah. Another part where Sustain kinda impacted my life. I chose to live with ██████████ this year and ██████████, he's going through a major change this year, he's trying to switch his major, but um, and so he's back at home but I decided to live with him at the beginning of the year and so we were in an apartment and I'm with two of his friends which has worked out really well and I didn't really know them as friends before but it was really cool how I was just thrown in there and my relationship with them has only been as roommates so it's been really easy, but we've become friends after that but we're still roommates. So that's been a good perk. Knowing ██████████ through Sustain and that situation.

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G: Have you walked with him in his decision making at all?

GA: um--

G: Has he included you in any of that?

GA: Not so much. I wish he would more but our friendship is a little more, well, not as open as some as the other ones I've had in Sustain which is interesting. I'd think that in living with him would have let that open up more, but it's actually kind of closed it down a little more. But we're really close friends and we hang out all the time, but the topic isn't usually, like, um, I don't know, it's not life changing kind of thing.

G; yeah.

GA: um.

G: You said some things about fear. About some shifts in you around it and I think Im thinking about it in terms of what you said about that project management conversation with ██████████.

GA: yeah.

G: With ██████████. In that room. So you're looking at ██████████ and shes got this comfort to say what she thinks as opposed to the other--

GA: yeah.

G: Losing your fear to process in front of somebody. Do you have anything else to say about that or anything to add?

GA: Um. So I think that probably comes from in Sustain. Spending that much time with a group of people you can actually embrace the idea that no idea is a bad idea. And then um I think that when somebody did actually present--because I think there's actually value in that statement but there actually is such thing as a bad idea. --laughs.

G; (laughing) yeah, good job for catching that.

GA: Yeah. But when there was a bad idea we can be honest and joking with eachother and it can be pretty unweighted conversation and you could be mellow and you could let people know it was actually, becuase we heard so many good ideas from everybody before we trust that its fine for them to drop one bad idea every once in awhile, we'll let it slide.

G: (laughs) yeah, yeah. And that is important. Yeah, or profound. That's a game changer in terms of how you go forward, I can see that.

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GA: Yeah so, yeah. I think that works for the group so I don't know if we would have presented the same if we hadn't had the communication before, i'm curious.

G: You feel like that was between you, specific to your relationship with her.

GA: I don't know. I'd love to know though, because I'm trying to think how it would be with me. I'll throw out a lot of bad ideas pretty often, so I don't know if I'm a good judge of that.

G: That's interesting.

GA; But there is something there, I haven't really journaled or thought about that that much. um, I think the as far as how working with Sustain effected me in like in the discussion of fear would be like it um it took away some of my fear to just go ahead and just start something and trust that the way you're going about it is the best you have to offer and um maybe if somebody has something better to offer to be open to them taking the reign. Or maybe taking the reigns on a specific subject. But um, until that comes around theres no reason for you to wait. I think, um, yeah I definitely think there are people who are better qualified to run the QL Plus club than I am but I don't think they'll come around or they might be hesitant to jump on the opportunity when it comes around because I don't think I am as hesitant um yeah I think thats one of the big fears that Sustain was able to crush for me. Um I also was a little bit more, Ive been known to commit to something more kind of major like the way I committed to Sustain. In the first week I was like, I think that conversation went like, I think I just came to ■■■■ on the side and said " I really want to be like play a major role in this club or something." And then when ■■■■ asked me later in the week about it she was like, "So ■■■■ said you were interested in the club," and I was like, "Yeah, I really want to learn more about it," and she was like, "No, Pete said that you were pretty much you wanna, you wanna play an officer role or something or do something like major for the club." I was like, "Yeah I guess that's what I said."

(both laugh)

GA: And so like I guess that was kinda like part of me a little bit before but I think that um its a lot bigger thing, a lot more intimidation factors on a college campus so I think if Sustain was able to ease me into that and not fear being like uh, a self starter on campus, I think I definitely have that to offer. Um. Yeah. I don't know, I think there's a healthy amount of fear. But I think its less than most people think. Or most people live under. And so like even in TAing I see that everybody's already squashed down, they don't really care--all the students will have a conversation and they don't really care what the professors think about it and they don't really care what the other students think about it--they'll throw something out and um, also, uh, something that's kind of unknown to me that was unknown to me when I was growing up was really blatantly open conversation, and like that's something that ■■■■, ■■■■, ■■■■, ■■■■, you, every professor in Sustain was

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really gifted at. Its funny to say because you're just saying how you feel, but thats a lot harder than it sounds and also to word it in a way that's not harmful to other people. And there are slip ups on that--I really learned a lot about that too. When you're able to have that real conversation I think it drops fears in other conversations because you can actually understand your gut feeling on something.

G: Yeah.

GA: Um, yeah, I guess like, in your family is where you like, had most of those conversations. I didn't really have that which was kind of weird. And I'm realizing it more now. But Sustain was really valuable to like in the first meeting that I sat down--- across the street from what's it called--we just hung out and sat on the grass super hippy circle style (laughing) and ██████████ led that and ██████████ was there and there were a couple other TAs um like ██████████ and maybe ██████████ was there, I'm not sure but like, whenever there was tension it was brought up and it was awkward for me at first but I think that's really valuable. I think that sometimes Sustain professors say too much and get a little mushy--

G: Did you say mushy? (Laughing)

GA: Yeah. They have to like--I also understand that everyone has to like have their own needs known sometimes--

G: What do you mean by mushy?

GA: Like it still pushes a little further on the emotional side and maybe its normal for them because I was just brought up--

G: Have you brought any of that back to your family?

GA: A little bit actually, yeah.

G: What does that look like?

GA: Um, ok, my sister is pretty good at having those conversations, she like, like every kid had their little rebellion phase, but hers was like the longest and the most drawn out. Um and she, her apartment now, her boyfriend now is pretty good at those open conversations and i can tell that their family has had practice at it and everything. So like even if you like hang out with this guys for like ten or fifteen minutes you'll probably have a meaning conversation. Which is really cool. Um, so shes had practice with that and like so I guess talking with her kinda introduced me to that style of conversation in our family. And then um, thats kind of cool over break my sister and parents have been fighting on and off for like 3 years and thats like her super drawn out painful detachment process from our family and its probably mostly grounded in that she's um like shes never really left proximity wise, for school, for work, for anything, from my parent's house. So that's been kinda hard for her. And uh, we like, my sister and I had a conversation about

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it a little bit, um, and, then, um, separately my dad and sister had a conversation which was um, as my sister thought less understanding and less genuine. And then I had a conversation with my dad after that, separately, and like, I don't know what my role was in it really but afterwards they scheduled a conversation--they actually had a conversation together and like rally uh, at least my sister thought they genuinely connected and my dad was pretty happy about it. So I don't know, I think it might be a game changer in their relationship, but I don't know probably very little about it was due to me. If any. But I guess it has infiltrated my house a little bit.

G: Yeah.

GA: So, yeah, I didn't think about it that way. Um.

G: That's nifty.

GA: Um, I ended up showing the video that ██████████ showed about intrinsic motivation its not like--it never drops the words intrinsic motivation--but do you remember that little scratch where he's doodling on the wall? And yeah, so I ended up showing that to my officers yesterday and I was like pretty much we don't have money to give these students um, what we have to offer them is pretty limited. But they have a desire to like learn and give back to the community so we're just going to set up as much infrastructure to provide--to let them do that. And positive feedback mechanisms to let them know they're doing a good job at that. And so that was definitely a Sustain um, a Sustain influence there. Um. In my opinion, I would just--everybody has um influence from different parts of their lives--so my decision to show them that video would be like maybe if I had done some other type of club or if I'd chosen to be really involved in the fraternity or something it would have been something that the fraternity had shown me or something--it would have been a video about that--like about creating a partnership or something.

G: Uh huh.

GA: But no matter what I would be using the skills that I picked up from last year or something previous so that it kind of fits. But I think Sustain has been a really healthy non--I want to say its not forceful--theres been no forcing us to like, um--I don't feel like any of my opinions have been changed from own actual decision--Ive had a huge role in making those decisions when Ive changed my mind in Sustain and I think that's a really healthy way to start college. So I think like if you're going to have exposure to things that are going to be game changers in the way you approach future problems um, I think that Sustain was a pretty awesome introduction to that and really not like forceful--or like making decisions for you which is pretty valuable.

G: That's good stuff ██████████.

GA: Cool. Is that good?

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██████████ ██████████ (GA) interviewed by ██████████ ██████████ (G)

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G: Its not good, its fantastic!!