

Spring 4-18-2013

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Sustain Interview Project

■■■■ (E) interviewed by ■■■■ ■■■■ (G)

Interviewed on 4/11/13

E: So what did I think of Sustain?

G: Okay. So just scoot in so I can get ya. Yeah. Yeah. Any thoughts about Sustain?

E: Alright. Well, um, Sustain. Well I, Well I thought it was a pretty good alternative learning environment where you didn't just have to sit in lecture and uh and uh find some way to find some way to pass the time while keeping the notes. I find that I find that now that I now that I'm out of Sustain back to my other non-Sustain courses, sometimes I sometimes I start doodling again, which um I, which I, which I guess might be due, might be due to that there's only one guy talking and it's the professor in front of the room.

G: Did you used to doodle?

E: Yeah, that happened a lot in high school. Um.

G: Okay. [laughing]

E: Although I don't save any records of those. Just so the, sometimes those uh teachers did notebook checks and those are some evidences that I've wanted to erase.

G: I see. I see.

E: So, um..

G: But you're back to doodling, huh?

E: Well, in my other classes.

G: Yeah

E: Um and I think it's good that um that uhh I'm in Music 229 that professor is trying to keep some parts of Sustain alive in there, such as we're not having such centralized project formatting that uh we're free to uh explore what might be the best case for uh our individual needs. And I think uh Sustain has a way of teaching you how to apply uh what you learned to uh something in the uh uh two things that outside into the outside world. Not sure there is so much. We didn't go too much into applications in my other classes, although maybe thanks to Sustain I can infer what these applications are. Are there any other points that you think I should cover?

G: Well, you know, I think, um, so you've begun by answering the question, what, you know, what you think of Sustain. And our even greater interest is 'what's happened to you?'

E: Okay, well, I sort started answering that.

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G: You're doing a great job.

E: All right.

G: You can't do it wrong.

E: Okay, all right, that's good. There's no technically wrong answers in Sustain.

G: I know, right?

E: except $1 + 1$ should equal two.

G: I'll give you that.

E: Um. Uh I'm trying to see how I can apply what I learned to um into something I can use in the future. Uh. Uh. I've been seeing that in my math and physics classes some, some guesses are kind of harder than than others. But um I would but for those, but for incoming freshman who get this messages, this does not have to be this doesn't have to be as much for as much for the specific projects that you're gonna get engaged with, but I'd recommend looking into Sustain if you if you want some way to relate uh ev to relate the classes that you have together with um other aspects of your with other aspects of your life, even if you're not into uh any of the outside things stand for, like like the community projects or the or sustainability itself. Um.

G: How was your experience with your community project?

E: Um...we I see that we used uh I see that we when we got off when we sort of got off the ground in the in spring quarter we uh we we used a lot of our uh project planning skills and uh and maybe unknowingly used our economics knowledge of uh trying to see trying to get a map of who wants to participate and how much we can do to supply it and I think we I think we were able to act accordingly with our data and uh I'm not so sure if I took those two classes elsewhere that we would have gotten the same effect.

G: mmmhhmm. How was Sustain socially for you, ■■■■?

E: Well, in regular lectures we don't...okay, except for except for except for one professor who makes us work in groups, um, all of our other lectures it simply is the professor is talking at us. He can make us laugh, but eventually he's the only one talking. There isn't much room for social interaction. I found quite a drop from that after I left high school.

G: mmmhhmm.

E: And in Sustain, in our weekly non-specific Sustain meetings and uh in through our classes, we certainly go interact with uh students got to interact with students a lot more

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and this will be a I think that maybe this will maybe be good for those who who feel hurt inside after being devoid of social interaction.

G: It—so do I hear you saying that it did feel different to you?

E: Yes

G: So, in terms of the interest of our interview time—and I don't know that you do—but I want to make clear that you don't need to feel any pressure to say...you don't have to worry about the other kids coming later if you don't want—because our interest really is in just you.

E: Okay—how much interview time we got?

G: We got ages—

E: Okay—

G: I don't know what your schedule is—

E: But whoops—

[Something shifts on the table]

G: That's okay—

E: Um, just got until—

G: We have plenty of time—

E: I've got an office hour at 12 to get to

G: Absolutely—we'll get you out of here by then.

E: Okay. All right.

G: But do you want to say anything else about your own growth or your own development or how you think you changed or—you know, I was starting to ask you questions about socially what was that like--

E: Yeah

G: --for you?

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E: Yeah

G: Positive? Negative? Difficult? You know—any...any any descriptors about what that was like.

E: Oh, well, I think that now that I'm out of that I'm not officially a Sustain freshman anymore, I kind of miss the learning environment. And the otherwise boring classes would uh turned out to be more enjoyable just maybe due to the way that Sustain was taught. Um. But now that I'm back into..that's probably why I signed up for music, although I have no real cultural knowledge of the 60's. May have, I could probably figure out the technological implications and the historical background—bombs in Vietnam, bombs in Korea, it, I think that maybe there's more room and more room room for us to to uh tinker around with the information that we're that we're getting in classes.

G: Did you say tinker around?

E: Yeah—tinker around

G: That's a nice phrase.

E: Sort of like

G: Yeah

E: A physic, us scientists kind of do that with our labs and uh maybe it's because of less of less structure we're gonna be less officially structured material that uh that uh we won't get so frustrated trying to trying to fit into the constraints that they've that maybe the grading need the grading world otherwise make us have to follow. Um, and I and I think that even though it's it's still early in the quarter and we haven't found out what officially going on yet that um that uh I I still find that uh I still find that maybe that I can enjoy my general eds that are offered by Sustain to just maybe just maybe due to how it's taught. I know that our that our freshman were the first time in Cal Poly and we had to mess around with the parameters there but I think that uh for for what it's worth and the amount of classes and professors we had to work with um I I think we did a pretty [chuckling] I think we did a pretty good job.

G: You guys? Absolutely—yeah, you really did. Do you see any change in yourself that you would attribute to being part of the program?

E: Well, I try to look for ways to apply my knowledge, not just being just hypothetical, theoretical information cause I know in my major specifically

G: What's your major?

E: Physics.

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E: And I minor in Math

G: Okay

E: Uh, those are the two areas where those are the two areas where you're gonna learn a lot of theoretical of theoretical scenarios uh especially in math you take the limits of non-real numbers and infinity, it looks kind of awkward and in physics where we can't exactly take measurements of very very small things, it seems that uh those are some examples of uh theoretical sciences that maybe it could just be fact knowledge or maybe that's just what's required to get you your degree, but uh I, but um... uh but I but one of the things I tried to see is—is there a—is there a use for what I, uh, what I'm learning. I might not write down the use, but some things like integrating over a surface can—it, it seems kind of boring to the average, average uh, student taking calculus, but I sorta see how this would be a good measuring tool that you would have in the future—that's one example.

G: Oh—okay.

E: Don't know if anyone else notices it but that may be due to the...to the, maybe that's just because classes are devoid of social interaction outside of us talking to professor in office hours.

G: How's that felt for you?

E: In class or office hours?

G: To have that shift from the social interaction of the Sustain classroom to the, to the model now that doesn't so much feel that way

Well, uh, well I know from last quarter that some classes, they really were boing, um, may not be the material, may not be due to the material, but everyone just sits still and—everyone sits still looking in the same direction. Not too much room for discussion and testing your knowledge outside of the midterms, which, that is a pain, so, no one looks forward to that, so I think that—I've noticed it in my grades as well because if I don't have much—if I don't have much uh opportunities to utilize what I learn in, in let's say projects or with others, or with other students who may be experiencing similar or uh probably more often than not, completely opposite issues, I think that it's affected dhow—I think now that I've jumped out of Sustain it's, it might be negatively impacting my learning quite a bit. Um. Cause I know that maybe you cannot offer a Sustain type classes in those upper division courses—is the microphone still going?

G: It sure is—you're doing a great job.

E: Um.

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G: Tell me what you mean by ‘negatively impacting your learning’

E: Cause I notice that, that uh once I got more out of a more interactive and uh interactive sort of integrated learning style where you get to put together, put together what you learned in other aspects of your life—maybe it’s just because I’m an interactive learner that I can’t just. And I can’t just go information one way, which is presenter to listener, um, I I noticed my GPA has dropped ever since—after my, after my first, after my first year—I went from Dean’s list to, ok, now I gotta start, now I gotta start uh bugging my professors a lot more.

G: What do you mean by bugging your professors more?

E: Um. Cause... I--I—cause uh some—cause I think that uh I know—I know back in—in Sustain when I—economics was one of those classes which does not exactly come naturally, I think that I, uh, I think even without any curve and if the grade was just participation in classes, I still ended up with a B+ in the class, cause we also had a paper where we can say how we applied our knowledge, that’s interactive learning style, compared to my physics and math classes which were and the rest of my general eds which was, uh, which was professor lecture at us—where was I going? Ok. And um, maybe I just maybe I just didn’t get the information as readily after each lecture.

G: So when you said ‘bugging the professors’ you meant asking them for help, for more help?

E: Yeah, and even then I’m not sure if I understand it after, if I understand after office hours. I get by and ... hopefully if my GPA trends follow anything like they were in high school—I hope my GPA shoots up somewhere around, around my junior year—hopefully sooner.

G: You saw this same pattern in high school?

E: Hopefully it will [cough] the same pattern. I got a 4.0 my junior year and above that my senior year. That’s cause we got extra points for our AP classes.

G: Right.

E: But but uh. Yeah, maybe it’s just uh wrong type of communication that we’re having between professors and students that’s uh messing up with my learning style. Cause it—we’re—it’s turning out that we’re going cause the professor says, ‘okay, well here’s an example or read the book’—which is still in term just one-way flow of information

G: Yeah.

E: I’m—I’m not sure if that annoys you personally or

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G: Oh, gosh no.

E: One way flow of information?

G: No, not at all.

E: Hmm.

G: No...why are you asking that about me?

E: I don't—maybe, maybe it's just my learning style or maybe this is pervasive everywhere.

G: Are you asking because I also teach in the, in the university classroom--is that what you mean?

E: Yeah and you were, and you're a Sustain professor

G: Yeah

E: And you still are.

G: No I—no, I love to hear your insight, actually. You're saying really interesting things about your own learning style.

E: Okay.

G: And really what I hear is that you're talking about whether your learning—it's not, it's not messing anything up, as I hear it, that you notice that your learning style matched, matched the learning model of Sustain.

E: Yeah

G: And the interactivity of that really helped you.

E: So you want me to expand on that?

G: You sure can—yeah.

E: In middle school and high school, uh this is—uh, the, uh teachers there were sharing this information to see what kind of help students needs, and they broke the learning model into uh audio learners, visual learners, and hands-on learners. Uh. The audio learners, they said they learn best by hearing the information. The um the visual learners like, they like the diagrams and uh maybe they could read text as well, I forget if text was a category

G: Mmmhmmm

E: And hands-on learners have to do, have to do something, maybe take down the notes. But I find, and we, we actually took a test to see, um, we actually took a test to see what type of learners we were, and I—according to them, I scored higher in the visual and interactive, slightly higher in the visual, but um, if, as I noticed in, as I noticed in through my um through my high school and college uh I actually find that I learn better when I was taking down the notes and finding and doing some examples regardless if they were audio or visual and uh hands on so I'd say maybe the model that I was presented a few years ago was flawed. Maybe there are those who are, uh. And maybe I'd suggest two different categories, which is the interactive model, which Sustain tries its best to do and the, and the traditional classroom lecture model, which is the one-way flow of information. I find that I don't do too hot in the one-way flow of information. I liked it when my teachers in high school did examples. And I got to take down the notes and mess round with the wording.

G: I think that's really interesting and very insightful. Yeah—makes a lot of sense, what you're saying to me.

E: Yeah. So. Maybe, maybe, cause uh, maybe there's, maybe other students who—in Sustain who felt the difference between the lecture method and the interactive method uh felt the difference. I'm not sure—I'm not sure if this applies to people like me who are good with the interactive model or there are some there are some in Sustain who might give a different answer who are who maybe they do better than I do in the lecture model. I don't know.

G: Yeah. I'm hearing a really varied response—but I am hearing people um experience a difference, you know, from leaving—that the model shifted, and what it's like for them

E: Yeah

G: With the shift, for sure. What else could I ask you? Anything else on your mind about it?

E: Mmm.

G: You've shared great stuff.

E: Well, I certainly. I certainly hope for something like Sustain to expand across the campuses—who knows, maybe there are those who need this, who need this second uh type of, second learning model that I, I think it's good that you've brought in your classes and your in the general eds—I still have some general eds to take, though. Um, if it happens to, if Sustain happens to uh to uh acquire some of those classes, I'll certainly see if I can get a permission number.

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G: I just had a thought—you said to me before we started, before we sort of pushed ‘record’ here that you, this last quarter took 5 lectures and 3 labs. How many units is that?

E: That is, probably, around 20. Uh.

G: Is that a typical load for you?

E: That is not a typical load cause I hear that 12 units just for campuses in general is um is a full-time student and 16 units is probably where Cal Poly wants us to be, and 20 units overkill.

G: What made you decide to do it?

E: That was an interesting story because I tried to get into an upper-level math course and I was son the waitlist. So that was not the one with the lab--

G: --Okay.

E: So I had four lectures and 3 labs. I though, ‘well, um, it’s beginning of the quarter, and I showed up to that math classes and it was—I was deciding between math and biology, biology was my back-up class. So, I was waiting for my math professor to give me, to announce the permission numbers, and I said, well, I’ll just show up. I’ll keep my schedule as it is. I’m probably not gonna get in, and then once he announced—then when the final announcement came, I found out I got into the class. Since I was ready, since this was the beginning of the quarter and I did not realize the kind of things my physics lab class was going to do to me, I thought, let’s, let’s carry it out and see how this turns out. Then I find, then I find that I rarely go home, especially on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays where I go to class at, where my my my day could be from 8 am to 6 pm, and biking across the hill on poly canyon and walking, walking the, walking across campus every time, I think that’s contributed to the reasons that I dropped by the time I got back home and maybe it might have been the type of material I was learning, uh, um, I know that I know that my proofs class did a lot of funny things. My electronics class maybe I just didn’t get electronics and and just in the spirit of Sustain, I find in my lecture component I got, I got a C in lecture and I got a B in lab, which averages out to be a C+, wished for a B, but, so, more interactive learning style kind of, kind of uh, kind of uh maybe that contributed to that, uh, to that difference in grades, even though my, even though I think my, um, my lab professor grades kinda hard. I walked out with a B, in in lab, so

G: So you differentiate your GPA in there for yourself between the interactive and the traditional models.

E: Yeah.

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G: That's interesting.

E: and it might have been that I compared that lab to, I compared that lab to my chemistry lab and my bio lab. I think that uh even though my physics lab was more physically, uh, had a greater toll on my, on the, had a greater toll on me physically, I that uh--

G: Do you mean because you were there so long? So many hours?

E: Uh, well this one actually, the labs were designed that you—they did allow some room after class if you didn't finish the lab, which implies there's some labs you're not gonna finish

G: Yeah yeah yeah

E: There were labs I didn't finish.

G: I see.

E: But I think that maybe that, because I—there was also some communication back and forth after my physics lab than my, than my other two labs that I, I'd stay—stay awake even though it's the end of the week—it's approaching the end of the week—it's approaching 6 pm—It gotta get my work done.

G: Yeah. So you were saying—I'm so sorry I cut you off—you were saying even though the physics lab was more physically demanding than the chemistry and the biology, you were gonna say something else—do you remember what it was?

E: Yeah, I think—I think maybe, I think maybe I just had, I just had more energy in my physics lab because of how exposed I was to the interactive learning model Sustain offered.

G: I see.

E: And, and uh—what was the original question? What—oh yeah—what happened to my schedule? So—it was physically—it was phys—I, uh, physically it messed me up, but I hear it's not as bad as an architect's uh class load. Because, well, proofs did weird things. Physics, I—physics was not uh electronics probably was not my thing and um at the later half of my math class we got into we got to do some funny integrals and chemistry was boring and biology I had some catch up work to do because I missed a lab and that screwed me over for I think a lab and an exam, so that wasn't exactly good for my grade. Um. Might have been able to get an A in lab had I not missed that, missed that day but that's because I dropped.

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G: So, I'm curious, ■■■■—what do you see for yourself when you look out ahead in your life?

E: Um—like where do I intend to go in life?

G: Oh, I don't know: just what do you see? I'm just curious about you.

E: Um. I see wherever I intend to go that uh, that uh, maybe due to who I am, I want to be the one in control. I see myself wherever I'm doing in my—I I feel like I want to be the one controlling my learning environment and the flow of information. Uh, like I don't do really good with—I'm not really too good with memorizing facts and regurgitating them on a test. Uh, I see myself maybe working in a lab somewhere, but when I say that I mean I have a specific I I maybe have a specific project in mind and I'm not called to do my employer's bidding by collecting the data for him and he will—

G: I see

E: --send it to whoever reads that--

G: I see

E: --I I see myself actually doing that uh my the reason I majored in physics is because I want to do something in the nuclear engineering is which I find is kind of hard for me to find a physics related job or internship because I'm doing the bidding of some employer whose directing—

G: —Interesting

E: --how to apply your physics knowledge instead of me, the learner, um, uh, uh knowing, figuring out what may be best applied and us creating, directing the industry and possibly creating another one. But that may be—that may be just me right now. I don't know—I don't speak for others.

G: No—it's very clear from you though. It's interesting stuff. I'm glad to hear about it. Can I ask you one more question—I'm sure you need to go soon: what do you mean by creating another industry?

E: Well, the nuclear, well, well, the nuclear engineering industry so far it seems like place—create another power plant and hook it up to the power grid, see what happens. I see that maybe there should be another way to do something about the, about the byproducts of their business practices, because I think we got the fission stuff, we got the fission thing down good enough, but I think we can do better with cleaning up the mess, or maybe recycling some of the byproducts. I did a project on this in high school—what can we do with the byproducts of, uh, of nuclear fission because uh—two are, two came naturally to mind, which were just helium ions and electrons, well if you're emitting

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electrons we'll just hook it up as a capacitor: free electricity! And uh hydrogen ions um I think people use those for things like smoke detectors, so—and but the on—but the one thing I think I'm gon—I think I might want to ask some hi—upper division physics professors about is: what do we do with those gamma rays? Do we use those to maybe add energy to something or do we—is there another way to, to uh put those in places there is not called the environment. It doesn't do really good things to the environment, nor does it do good to our bodies.

G: Yeah

E: --so that's something to look into.

G: I'm shaking my head because your brain is just beautiful to hear about.

E: Might just because we're in two different fields. I'm sure if you started talking some upper division whatever you specialize in—

G: Some—[laughing]

E: My head might explode too.

G: Some upper division whatever—exactly—no, well thanks so much for your time. I really enjoyed hearing how you are and what you learned and, yeah, I'm excited for you, yeah.

(You did a great job.)