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Sustain Interview Project

██████ ██████ (T) interviewed by ██████ ██████ (G)

Interviewed on 4/18/13

G: Okay I'm here with ██████ ██████. Taylor, tell me anything. I am going to take a piece of paper and write a note. Tell me anything, tell me anything. You look back now, how do you reflect or capture what's happened to you in Sustain. What's happened to you since.

T: This is off the record, like not marketing but this is honestly been the best experience I've ever had.

G: Hmm, really?!

T: It helped me grow so much like my the first quarter my freshman year I was tempted to go home because I grew up in a really really small town and like everything was scary to me and I was like I can't do this, and then I heard about Sustain and I was like you know what I'm just going to like try it and then after that like seriously everything fell into place.

G: Really?

T: It was awesome. Yeah, it was so awesome.

G: What fell into place?

T: Just like connecting with people. Like finding people that with like common interests that were working toward a common goal. And the fact that like classes became, I actually had relationships with my professors. And then my first quarter I didn't. And I didn't know how do that. I didn't know how to approach a professor and then I realized you guys are people! Like, there was this big divide like hierarchy, but then I realized you guys are just, you guys are doing research just like we are and then you're there to help us. And that's the big difference between what I've seen and what you've seen. Like when I go to UC schools and talk to professors and stuff like that and how TAs are the proctors of tests and all that stuff. So it's a big difference and I feel like how Poly in general does a good job of like making sure--all the professors that I've had are really good. And really good at wanting to help you and I didn't know that they were like that like walking into (mumbles) so, Sustain really helped with that. And also knowing things around campus like when we got the--I didn't really know there was a community service award and then when we got that I was like, oh this is so cool and I got to meet other groups on campus through that. That do really great things and like so many opportunities, I learned so much about the community and how to get involved around campus. Like things I'm really interested in and things I'd love to do but then don't have the time to do but in the future I'd possibly want to work for these companies or organizations. So. I really liked it.

G: I'm dying to know about the ROTC. You're wearing an ROTC uniform, what's the story? I don't know if it's connected but I'm interested in it.

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T: I grew up in the military and when I saw ██████, the last person I would think be in ROTC. Him saying that he loved it! I was like you are the exact opposite of what I thought anybody would be. So I was like you know what, I don't want to regret not doing it so I'm going to try it and if I hate it I don't have to stay in. I mean there's really no commitment.

G: Yeah.

T: So, I really like it. It's kind of like my Sustain now that I'm not in Sustain. I've moved from like the Sustain group and I was like I could like try to be a TA and keep in there but it won't be same like as the group projects and things like that and my group project kind of dissipated a little bit this year because my leader ██████ had a baby. So like, I mean we kind of, we wanted to keep going into this year and that was the original plan and if we got--

G: Which project was it?

T: Go SLO.

G: Oh, ok.

T: With Western Wildlife Society.

G: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

T: Yeah. So, um, it just kind of slipped a little bit but they have the--██████ is in charge of it.

G: Sprout Up.

T: Sprout Up, which is almost exactly like Go SLO. But a little bit different in the sense that we would give them like field trips along like lake Laguna and stuff like that--

G: Ok. It's educational.

T: Yeah. And, ROTC, right. Yeah, so, I joined and it was like nothing that I expected it to be like but I really like it and the core group of people I'm like starting to make friends in that too. Like it takes about two quarters for you to really get to know people like us too. And everyone's surprised too. They're like what? You? I would have never thought! But I grew up in this lifestyle, it's really all I know. And it's like I feel like I'm good at it. I know how to go about living in a military lifestyle. I don't know if I'd make a career, a 20 year career, but definitely for the leadership experience and my department head ██████. ██████, he like as soon as found out I was in ROTC I was like on a pedestal. He was like, what do you like? And I was like, I don't know (pretends she's crying) I'm just trying to make it through--(██████ laughs) He's like ok, are you involved

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in anything? I'm like, well I'm doing ROTC. And he's like, OH! That is the best thing like you're going, your resume is going to be on top. I guess his best friend who is like the head of the Forest Service was in the Army for like 20 years. And he's like, she's awesome, and like you could hook up with her and I was like, alright! Thank you. It just kind of validated it for me. It was a lot of like, even my parents were like, are you sure, like, are you really sure?--

G: About the ROTC, or the studies?

T: ROTC. Well studies too, they're like, environmental, are you are? YES, I'm sure. It doesn't matter if I get paid \$20,000 to do what I love it won't be work it will be like what I love to do. So that is my philosophy. And engineering I'd be like hating my life all the time.

G: Were you in engineering before? Major? Or did you switch?

T: Environmental Engineer.

G: Oh, ok. I got it I got it.

T: So I turned to environmental management. I was like--

G: Oh, you did. When did you make that shift?--

T: Literally, I did it like before, like I applied as a EE and then I switched it even before because my mom worked for US Fresno, she knows the people here--

G: Shabang!

T: Yeah, so she, I got that.

G: So you really entered as a, yeah, ok. Cool.

T: That was my original plan and then I was like looking at the curriculum and I was like, nope.

G: Yeah. Yeah.

T: I'm intelligent in different ways I'm just not--

G: You're crazy intelligent! You're crazy intelligent.

T: I'm not a linear engineer, like I can't think that way. It's not how my brain works.

G: Yeah. What else did you learn about yourself? Or how else would you characterize

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that experience or, Sustain?

T: Sustain? I love bees. (both laugh) See, didn't know that about myself. I didn't! I walked into like--

G: I LOVE BEES.

T: I was like, Alright, well, I don't know what I'm going to write about, it took me the longest time to figure out what I was going to write my paper on. And then I started researching bees and fell in love with them and this time last year, knew nothing. Absolutely nothing about bees. So that's what's astounding to me is like Sustain helped me realize that honestly I think my career path could go that way down the line. Like entomology and like studying why bees are dying off and I don't know (laughs) I don't know how to explain it I just have this like passion for bees now that I never had before. Like three years ago I would have laughed at you. I would have been like you're crazy. Bees sting people. (██████ laughs) Yeah. Because I was a lifeguard, I know. That's like the number one like injury, yeah, not swimming injuries, its the dang bees getting--

G: I love it. I love it. That's very cool.

T: Yeah, so I learned that and organization and like grants. I didn't know how you go about researching grants and how many are out there but there's pretty much a grant for everything. So that was kind of cool going through that process. And just like the structure and how the group should work. And what you need to do in order to like get yourself out there. Like it's one thing like your core group knows about you but then the rest of the community doesn't know about you and like how you go about doing that through media and like marketing and things like that. There's lots of things I didn't know. Like I didn't know what Prezi was before Sustain. And now Prezi is like the best thing ever. It's great!

G: Yeah, yeah. What was the hardest thing about Sustain for you?

T: Um, letting myself go, letting myself like not learn in the structure that we grew up in. Like letting myself think in a different way and that was really hard. I don't think I completely let go of it ever. Like I was like, where's my textbook. Where, like, syllabus?

G: Nervous, yeah.

T: Like grades? I don't know what I'm doing. And like finding my motivation through just learning. Just being able to learn and grow and want to teach myself. That was hard. It was fun but it was hard. And like going back to regular classes this year like I'm like I don't like this. So it was really hard for me to transition out of Sustain again too.

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G: Yeah.

T: With my first quarter back I was like, falling asleep, like, whoa, what just happened?! (laughs)

G: I'm hearing that one from a lot of people actually.

T: Yeah it was really hard to transition back and not be like wow it's so much better on the other side. Like I know what the other side is like, why can't everybody be like that, but. My major does like foster like there's a ton of field work so it does foster like that being able to go out and learn through the environment and stuff like that--

G: Right.

T: So, I mean I'm kind of like in a hybrid state for some of my classes.

G: Yeah. Hmm, I think you've already told me what the biggest surprise of your experience was, I think I'm going to guess it was bees, right? (both laugh)

T: I think everyone was surprised too, they were like, oh great Taylor's the crazy bee girl now. (both laugh)

G: Have you done anything with it or read further, or?

T: Um, It's a funny story. I went to my fair in my local area. It's like a alfalfa festival.

G: Ok, an alfalfa festival--

T: I see a bee setup and I start talking to the bee keeper about bees and I'm talking about (mumbles) and he's like, oh you know about bees? And my poor roommates were with me and they were visiting (██████ laughs hard) and we were going to a concert like two hours later. Two hours later.

G: You talked to the bee guy for two hours?

T: Yeah. He gives me his card and is like, hey if you ever want to come and--they have a like a bee collaboration where they discuss bee issues. I'm like, you are so awesome! I wish I could go! But it was like I had work at the same time and so that happened and then just recently there's like another town that's close to me has a bee farm and I started talking to the owner of that. They sell like creams and lip balms and stuff like that. It's called To Hatch a Bee. I was like, that's so awesome, because it's like the town is Tehachapi.

G: Right, right.

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T: I was like, would there be any chance that I could like work with you and stuff like that? Well she wants me to take the bee class at Cal Poly before I do that because I'll have that foundation and I'll know how to like operate and stuff like that. But I realized it's impossible to get into that class.

G: Why?!

T: There's so many people who want to take it.

G: Have you considered, ok this is off the record, have you considered taking your project?

T: My senior project?

G: No, taking your inquiry project to that professor and saying--

T: You know I should. I know his name, I know he's ██████████.

G: Just take it to him and say, I started this and I'd like to take the class to continue.

T: Oh, interesting--

G: (in a funny voice) I'm part of future entomologists of America! F.E.A.

T: Yeah, I've actually met him before and he's really cool. And I've gone to the aviary. Yeah, I'm on it. I love it so much.

G: See. I know. So how else do you think you're, here's another question off of bees, although you know it's always good to talk about bees. Um, I think I heard a little bit from you about this, is there anything you feel like transferred from your Sustain experience over into your now, you said, I heard you say ROTC is your new Sustain community.

T: Yes, in that sense in then like last quarter I just kept on with my inquiry project and I like basically for my teacher, ██████████, I just kept going, she didn't know that I had all this knowledge about bees prior to, it's really hard to summarize like what you already know and then add on to that, so I just basically, I forgot what the--

G: What was the class?

T: Conflict Management.

G: Oh, ok.

T: Yeah so there was, the EU has this whole, European Union--

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G: Yeah, yeah.

T: Has a cautionary principle, and so--

G: I remember reading about this--

T: They're saying yeah, they're saying that they're going to revoke two or three of the main pesticides and so there's this huge battle between basically um, bear and bee keepers. And so EU's like we're going to enforce the cautionary principle and we're just not going to let it happen. And then of course like the pesticide companies are saying you're going to kill jobs, people's lives are at stake and all this stuff when really like three methods and there's other ways to like reduce, I mean there's so many different like clauses in it where it's like you're reducing it but not to an effect. And they're like, well you're not going to see an effect in three years anyway and they're like yeah you're right because we've already made it this disaster. So it's really interesting seeing that the European Unions actually taking steps where the US is like, sucks, like, you have way too much money in these pesticide companies and basically they conduct all their research because they're the most powerful. It's basically Bear and Monsanto and that's like their biggest, these pesticides are their biggest market. So they're not going to be like, yeah we'll just like stop using them because that's like the moneymaker. And so they're saying that there's now like the whole sub lethal thing still, they're like, there's nothing that's actually killing them, sorry. They're like, you can't take it off the market. So it's just this huge battle and everyone is trying to find answers and they can't and it makes me so mad. You just get so mad inside because it's so obvious and bee keepers are like, it's so obvious to us because we've been working with these bees for 15 plus years, or some of them, and they're like it's so obvious to see the environment around degrading and the bees are degrading as well. It's so obvious to them but they can't prove it. So they can't do anything. And it just makes me so mad! Because of that struggle, they're like, we can't prove anything! But we know! It's heartbreaking--

G: Yeah.

T: And I'm glad the European Union is like going about doing it but they haven't really done anything yet. They've postponed the conversation. And then they postpone the conversation. And it's happened like 4 or 5 times now.

G: So what's the, tell me about this conflict management class.

T: Um, literally conflict management. Literally. It was, we read a book called Getting Past No. And it's how to go about where everyone wins. Like how to create a situation where--

G: Cal Poly class?

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T: Yeah. I think everyone should have to take it across the board. It is really good.

G: So what's the um, what's the connection between the Sustain experience and that? I'm curious.

T: Ok, the connection was basically I've got to keep going like with my project through that and seeing like how we dealt with conflicts in our groups and like we could have better done it. Like looking back I'm like, ooooooh. We could have done this. Or we could have, we did really really well with collaborating. Sustain does that so well.

G: In your community project team?

T: Yeah. And like collaborating and like bouncing ideas off each other or even as a group as a whole. When we came together just bouncing ideas off each other like oh, this is what we can do better. Or no, we shouldn't do this because it's not working. And like really good about being vocal and that's basically what they're talking about, this open honesty policy where in conflict management when you're going against somebody you're not going to spill all the beans like you're going to keep what you're, um, what's the word I'm looking for? You're investments. What you're supporting. You're going to say, oh yes you're going to buy this house for 500,000 dollars but really you have this premise in the back in your mind, you're like yeah but I also want this and this and this. So if I can get that, and the other side is saying, well we want to sell it for, you know? So its basically how to like, give enough information so that the person trusts you and stuff like that but the whole point of it like environmental conflicts and stuff like that was basically saying you should try, everyone should try to be as open and honest as possible and Sustain does that--I mean we were probably the most honest with each other towards the end. We were like, you know what? This is how I feel and if you don't like it, like, I'm sorry. You just have to throw that out on the table. Like, other places don't have that. And I think that's special. That we could foster that right off the bat. Because I was super honest but now I like, I see this in ROTC where I don't share, like you cant, there's like a stigma where you can't really share, it's the military, you just don't. And I notice that and so I see where it's different and stuff like that but how Sustain is more like different in the ways that they went about thinking and conflict management. Because there was problems between groups. Of course there is. Not everyone agrees, not everyone's on the same schedule. Like all these different external factors come into play but it was really cool to see through conflict management how you go about doing it. How you should. And how people actually do it. So that was interesting.

G: And you had this interesting--you had context for that. Yeah. Any other carryovers in your experience you can see in yourself?

T: Just in general?

G: Yeah.

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T: Huh, you know, I'm probably going to look back at this in 5 years and be like that really helped shape how I think and how I view like the world and things like that and how I view learning structures and like I want to see that reinforced when I have children. I want my kids to do Sustain and to learn like Sustain learns. So, I don't know. I feel like I'll know more when I look back. Like it's been a year, but, and you can look back now, but, I don't think anyone really appreciates the value it had until you're like out, or in these organizations and we're like working for some of the groups and things like that and actually in the workforce. And then you can be like, oh, ok.

G: Yeah. How did you handle, you said you did the transition back into the traditional model and it was--

T: Rough.

G: Rough was the word you said. How did get back on track over there? Or did you? Tell me more about that.

T: I don't really, I was just like, even the first day of school, like I was like, hmm, this kinda stinks. But in conflict management we had labs where we'd go through like these situations and things like that and then in Philosophy my professor was an ex-Army guy so we had this connection automatically that, I don't know, I went to his office hours all the time to understand what was going on. So there's ways to go about the model that's enforced like actually learn through talking and things like that. I always go to work shops, like supplemental workshops, like that's just like for classes for like Biology where you have a huge lecture and what's hilarious is that everyone in Sustain was in the class too so we'd have like Sustain study parties which was awesome. So, that worked out--

G: In the fall you mean, this fall?

T: yeah.

G: Oh, that's fun.

T: And even now in Spring, ■■■■, ■■■■ and I are in Ecology. Oh, ■■■■, ■■■■ is in that class too. We're all like, yeah, actually we're studying today!

G: (laughs) That's fun.

T: We know how like the Sustain experience and now that we're all friends and stuff like that we all take the same classes. We're like, hey, let's keep it going.

G: That's very fun.

T: Yeah. It's awesome. I think that's, like that helped me out a lot too in like knowing that everyone's going through the same situation. Like it wasn't really easy for

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anyone. You just kind of like fall back into what was already known. It was just hard.

G: Yeah. Yeah. I'll just throw out a random. Anyone you wish you would've known?

T: Before Sustain? I actually liked not knowing anything about it. I think that helped me a lot. Because like I might have been more skeptical. Like I think we did really good with the freshman this year but it was like almost information overload for them. When we'd have our roundtables and stuff like that, we're like, oh, it's so awesome, we were just throwing information at them. And then in the first--it was like well this is what we're trying to do and there's like less information. But it was like almost like half debating. You're like, I want to know more about that. But with the freshman we did this year like, I mean we did a really good job with recruitment but I feel like a lot of people were like, oh, that's like so environmental, that's not for me. And that wasn't the point. Like I don't think that was the point. I think the point was to bring everybody together. So a lot of environmental you see shuffle into Sustain so I was like, hmmm I don't know it that was, I think less information would have been more in this situation. But I think knowing less was better for me.

G: Interesting.

T: Yeah, because I really didn't know anything. What I really would have known is, I can't really say what I would want to know--

G: Yeah. How have you described the experience to other people? I've been asking and people are you know--

T: It's so--

G: The language people come up with is so interesting.

T: It's so hard. Describing it to my parents, they're like, ok so these classes transfer? Like they're so concerned about grades and stuff like that I was like, no, no, it's like, its so different. Like a different kind of learning and then you get to learn from each other and not from textbooks, from supplemental things. And they're like, uh, huh. And that was so hard to describe but it was the best experience. And they're so supportive because they saw like the change, literally like every week I'd be like, mom I don't want to do this anymore just let me come home and it got to the point where my dad was like, you don't want to be at home so suck it up, and then hung up! And I was just like, what?!

G: It sucks to have a military dad! (laughs)

T: And he just like said, you're stronger than this. And I was like, oh, you're right. And then I kinda got over it when I started getting involved. That was what it was. I got involved. Sustain gave me that involvement that I needed. I had a tie to campus now. I was like IN Cal Poly now. I wasn't just a student. I wasn't just going through the

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motions. I was involved in something. That was the difference.

G: Hmmm. So you said noticing the difference--the difference your parents noticed was just you wanting to be here and not wanting to be here.

T: Yeah. Like I wouldn't call them for weeks because I was too busy doing projects and stuff like that. And they were like, are you ok?! You are a completely different person now. Should we be concerned? Or? So it was kind of funny. But I was like, no, I'm just so busy! I have to do this and this for a project. And they were like, alright!

G: How did they think you were different?

T: Just like happy. I was happy to be here. I finally settled in. I had friends. I was doing stuff. So that was the difference and my first quarter I would always resort to like calling them or something instead of doing stuff like at school. So I think that's what they saw.

G: Yeah. That's great. Anything else on your mind? That's all great stuff.

T: Uuuuum. For some reason Roger comes to mind. Just like his personality, I don't know why. But when I think about Sustain I like miss ██████████ a little bit. And ██████████. I really miss ██████████. And you. Even though you're not teaching like in he program this year but just like the relationships I have now, I miss that kind of. And being able to keep up on relationships now that you don't have to see each other everyday whether you want to or not.

G: I know, I know, right.

T: So, I kinda miss seeing everybody.

G: Yeah. Me too.