

Cal Poly Sustainability Activities Newsletter Design

A Senior Project Presented to
The Faculty of the Communication Studies Department
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Bachelor of Arts

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Inspiration

Born and raised in California, I have been exposed to the amazing coast of the Pacific Ocean, the sheer beauty of the Sierra Nevada mountain range, the deserts and valleys in between. I am blessed to have experienced some of the finest examples of nature's most pristine landscapes and ecosystems in the world. I developed a deep connection with nature and the environment early in life from these experiences and will always hold them dear to my heart. As a kid, I loved nature and the environment so much that I chose trips to Yosemite for my 9th and 10th birthday instead of the typical bowling alley or laser tag parties that all my friends preferred. Twelve years later, I was nearing the end of my fourth year at Cal Poly. My final remaining core class, being Environmental Communication, piqued my interest of nature and the environment even further. This class not only exposed me to communication functions within the environmental context, but it also sparked a direction for my senior project. Following this course and throughout the summer, I continuously pondered ideas and searched for opportunities to expand my thoughts about the environment and how to apply those to a senior project.

Background

During this past summer, I attended the annual California Higher Education Sustainability Conference (CHESC) that was held at San Francisco State University. This conference opened my mind to many different possibilities and opportunities for students to make a difference in sustainability issues on their respective campus. Over the next two days, I attended seminars and listened to staff and students from other colleges and universities talk

about their various sustainable initiatives and practices. These included sustainability strategies such as farm-to-table efforts, water conservation endeavors, and how to develop a “sustainability-focused” mindset and attitude. Authors Kreidler, Perry, and Ault, explained in an article published in the *Journal of the Oxford Round Table* how events like these are such a crucial aspect of sustainable education, adding that, “If it is the role of colleges and universities to educate members of society, then they must be actively instrumental in the sustainability movement” (Kreidler, Perry, Ault). Schools attending CHESC embrace this mindset of being an instrumental factor in the campaign against climate change and do their part to actively educate members of society by providing various solutions to applicable problems. Clearly, there is a responsibility of higher education to inform its students of climate change and its consequences. By including the student population at these campus-based conferences, CHESC is developing the future leaders and problem solvers in regards to climate change issues and the environment.

I often found myself thinking, “Why doesn't Cal Poly do that?” or “Why isn't that at Cal Poly?” as these school representatives presented their current challenges and solutions at CHESC. Benitez, Barreto, and Vega from the *Journal of Waste Management* point out that “because colleges and universities have the moral and ethical obligation to act responsibly towards the environment, they would be expected to be leaders in the movement for environmental protection” (Barreto, Benitez, Vega). Cal Poly is a relatively progressive university, so it was surprising to me that more students weren't involved in sustainable initiatives considering our current global dilemma of climate change and its many consequences. Universities are at the forefront of the struggle against climate change in today's society. They foster the future leaders and lawmakers of our world, so it is understandable that the institutions

educating these people have a responsibility to demonstrate ways to pro-actively support and help with environmental protection and sustainable practice. It is time for all universities to implement this as a standard ideology for environmental and sustainable education.

In addition to the seminars, I met many individuals involved within the sustainability field and community, including Cal Poly's own, Eric Veium. As a conference presenter, I noticed and read over Eric's role as an energy and sustainability analyst at Cal Poly. I starting contemplating a possible senior project scenario that might benefit his campus program and more importantly, a way for me to get involved in a sustainability-oriented project that could support the campus' sustainability goals. After the conference, I mulled over ideas about how I could overlap a communication studies senior project with something sustainability-focused and oriented. Once back at Cal Poly, I met with Eric during the first week of classes and discussed how we could develop a project that could benefit his program and satisfy my goal to find a senior project topic. Eric mentioned the need for developing a sustainability newsletter for Cal Poly, but he did not have the time or personnel to create or implement this tool. I viewed this as a perfect opportunity to achieve my goal of simultaneously fulfilling the criteria for a senior project and increasing sustainability-awareness at Cal Poly.

Exigence

Originally, I found myself wanting to know more about the current communication practices at Cal Poly regarding sustainability. Being a communications studies major, I noticed certain practices and dissemination methods on campus that worked and had a large following. I wanted to observe how sustainability efforts were being conveyed at Cal Poly and if students

were responding. Additionally, I wanted to elaborate on this concept to see if a lack of campus awareness could be attributed to faulty communication. For example, water conservation efforts at Cal Poly have been implemented, although some students may not know why certain lawns are brown and some are green. The current communication medium being used to notify students of water conservation efforts for these lawns on campus may not be working to its full potential, so how could we modify this medium or practice to increase the awareness of water conservation efforts on campus? My initial idea was to address these problems by creating a bridge-like forum where students at Cal Poly could share ideas and solutions about the various sustainability challenges our campus faces. This forum would attempt to further connect individuals at Cal Poly and increase participation within clubs and organizations and their respective initiatives and activities. Moreover, this forum would attempt to address and evaluate the communication tendencies and preferences regarding sustainability activities at Cal Poly.

After thinking back to the seminars I attended at CHESC, it occurred to me that many students at Cal Poly may want to become more involved in certain initiatives, but may not know where to look for campus resources and information. Younger students who are eager to get involved and make a difference in their community sometimes go unnoticed and lose their motivation because they simply don't know how to participate. I constantly found myself in this category during my earlier years at Cal Poly and I knew there would be many more just like me. I analyzed this obstacle and saw both the supply and demand for more participants in these various initiatives and activities at Cal Poly. The only missing part of the equation was a system that connected and informed these eager students about the specific activities and initiatives put on by the various clubs and organizations on campus. Kreidler, Perry, and Ault elaborate more

on this point, testifying that, “with the education of students comes the increased importance for the institution to practice what is being taught” (Ault, Kreidler, Perry). Students are learning about these sustainable initiatives and strategies in their coursework so there has to be an opportunity for these students to apply their knowledge and learning to real life scenarios. “Learn by doing” has always been the motto of Cal Poly with a hands-on approach being a crucial aspect of its educational philosophy. A sustainability newsletter would complement this philosophy and provide students with more opportunities to practice "what is being taught" during their college experience.

Subjects

This study will influence a tentative sustainability activities newsletter design and is focused on gathering data about basic communication tendencies and practices regarding sustainability and social justice activity at Cal Poly. All participants of the study were asked to review and sign an informed consent form before further participation. Participants of the sustainability activities newsletter design did not receive any tangible incentives, however, participants will have the opportunity to gain an additional distribution medium for their respective club and/or organizations on campus for the related topics and issues. This will hopefully increase participation and overall knowledge of and about their respective club and/or organization.

At first, subjects were going to be strictly individuals involved directly in sustainability initiatives and activities at Cal Poly. However, after consulting with Eric and his supervisor Dennis Elliot, we decided that it would be more prudent to expand the scope of subjects to

include people involved in social justice initiatives and activities at Cal Poly as well. We decided to expand the scope based on the fact that we were originally going to survey individuals who were already involved; however, the intended goal of the newsletter was to *increase* participation, not just measure it. The expanded scope is attempting to reach students who are not already involved, yet may be interested. Because social justice and sustainability share many of the same principles and overlap in several contexts, especially on a college campus, we saw this as a fitting field to survey for receiving applicable feedback for the newsletter.

Subjects were then pre-selected based on associations to sustainability and social justice clubs and/or organizations because this study and tentative newsletter is attempting to connect students, faculty, and staff to the various initiatives and activities in each field at Cal Poly. This was done because I wanted feedback from individuals who were interested or already involved within these two fields so I could get an unbiased sample of communication tendencies within the sustainability and social justice sphere specifically, and not other departments or disciplines.

Method

After establishing the sample scope, I collected roughly 100 email addresses of different clubs, organizations, and individuals on campus that dealt with sustainability or social justice efforts directly. An email (See Appendix A) was sent to each address asking for their participation in a study concerning the tentative sustainability activities newsletter design by completing a survey about their various communication tendencies and practices. I requested that if the respondent wanted to participate, they would have to review the attached informed consent (See Appendix C) form and reply indicating their decision. In a span of one week, out of 100

emails sent, 7 replied and requested a link to the survey for completion. Seven responses was insufficient so I was forced to manipulate the survey deployment method. I chose snowball sampling as an additional online deployment strategy because I could post the survey to various Facebook pages, as well as have others refer people to the survey based on their similar affiliations. This strategy was much more successful for two main reasons. The first being the fact that at least 1,000 individuals saw my survey posted (See Appendix B) on these various Facebook pages. Even though the response rate of the snowball method (1.9%) was less than the direct email method (7%), I received almost three times as many responses (19). The second reason for why this approach was more successful was because I included the informed consent at the top of the survey. This allowed for a much easier path to complete the survey by respondents because they only had to be redirected to one web page instead of one for each the informed consent form and the survey. After waiting till the following Monday, I had a total of 26 responses which was still insufficient for statistical data. Because I had exhausted nearly all other online options for survey deployment, I implemented convenience surveying via canvassing to gain the remaining responses.

Over the course of 2 days, I made rounds to the UU offices which consisted of the Pride center, Cross Cultural center, SAFER, and Gender Equality center. Additionally, I visited faculty offices within the sustainable and social justice disciplines, such as Sustainable Environmental Design, Environmental Management/Protection, and Ethnic Studies. I saw the highest response rate from this method at 60%. I asked a total of 33 individuals to complete the survey and received surveys back from 20 of these individuals. The higher response rate may have been due to the pressure of face-to-face obligation. It is no secret that it is harder to deny someone in

person than through email. As I approached each individual with respect and sympathy to time constraints, I saw more inclination to participate in my survey. This interpersonal element was crucial for a higher response rate because I was able to utilize nonverbal communication and expressions to make the encounter more comfortable. I was not able to engage with nonverbal communication through email, and is a main factor as to why the response rate is significantly lower than in-person surveying.

Instrument

The survey itself was constructed on Google Forms, where I was able to customize my questions and modify the general format. The survey (See Appendix D) was 28 total questions, consisting of interval Likert scale measures, nominal categorical lists, and open ended feedback. The first section of the survey inquired about basic demographic information and was included to measure representation and response bias. These questions consisted of simple multiple choice lists and dichotomous questions about gender and ethnicity. An additional question was added that asked for consent to contact again for further feedback, which was followed by a space to enter contact information if desired. Note: This additional question was originally implemented to inform and establish subjects of a tentative focus group with the intention of gaining more feedback about the newsletter's content. This focus group was foregone due to time constraints of a short academic quarter.

The next section of the survey asked respondents about their campus affiliation(s). Respondents were asked to identify their campus standing, respective college, and associations (if any) to sustainable or social justice clubs or organizations at Cal Poly. These questions were

included to give the survey more insight as to which groups of students interact with which types of activities at Cal Poly. For example, I wanted to see if a correlation existed between certain colleges and their students' involvement on campus, so I created questions where I could access these numbers. Additionally, I wanted to locate where the lack of participation exists in these activities and initiatives and allocate more distribution and outreach means for those less-involved contexts. This feedback can be used to measure the effectiveness of outreach strategies and how they operate within certain contexts and groups at Cal Poly.

The following section sought to evaluate communication tendencies of respondents and identify a "preferred" mode of communication within certain contexts. These multiple choice questions intended to measure the most favorable mode of communication for seeking general, sustainable, or social justice information at Cal Poly. Each question provided a list of various platforms for information dissemination, as well as containing an "other" box so respondents could fill in platforms that weren't listed. Likert scale questions followed asking about their intent to subscribe to a newsletter regarding only sustainability information, only social justice information, or both. These Likert scale questions were consistent throughout the survey and contained 5 options, ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Each option was represented with a number on a scale 1 through 5 so I could calculate the frequency for each option, as well as an average score for each question. The feedback from this section will influence the ultimate platform or mode of communication for the sustainability newsletter.

The subsequent section of the survey was intended to measure how respondents felt about sustainability and social justice at Cal Poly. Five identical questions were asked about each sustainability and social justice. The questions consisted of one dichotomous question, which

calculated the general awareness of each field via Yes/No format, and four Likert scale questions. These Likert scale questions attempted to measure the current and future participation in various initiatives and activities for each field, as well as measure feelings about the current state of these initiatives and activities on campus for each field. These feelings were specific to the overall effectiveness and management of current sustainability and social justice activities on campus. They will also aim to measure the level of satisfaction of respondents by virtue of agreement or disagreement on meeting current expectations for sustainability and social justice initiatives and activities on campus.

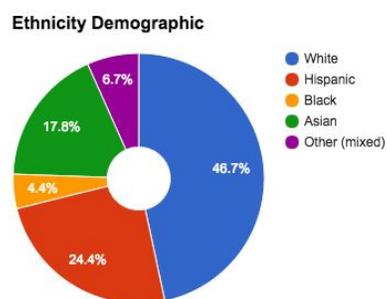
The final segment of the survey intended to measure the current involvement in sustainable or social justice related clubs and/or organizations at Cal Poly. To ensure the data was applicable to the objective of this section, I asked for responses from only individuals currently affiliated with these clubs and/or organizations on campus. Furthermore, I requested that respondents who identified as independent please skip the final segment because I wanted data relevant to only sustainable and social justice clubs and/or organizations, and not other disciplines. This section was made up of five questions: three Likert scale questions, one nominal categorical list, and a space for open-ended feedback. The Likert scale questions were intended to measure the level of respondent satisfaction regarding the number of members within their respective club and/or organization, the hosting effectiveness of their respective club and/or organization, and whether or not inclusion in newsletter would benefit their respective club and/or organization. The final question was a space for open-ended feedback where respondents were asked to share additional comments about the newsletter. This was intended to be the only qualitative data received from the survey.

Results

This study provided data to influence the development of the sustainability newsletter design for Cal Poly. By using Google Forms, the results of the survey were automatically and securely transferred to a spreadsheet where I was able to view the live responses. The data collected from the survey helped influence the general direction of the newsletter, including questions that inquired about basic communication tendencies and practices. The survey was broken down into four segments, each with its own objective and question format.

Demographics:

The opening section covered basic demographic information such as gender and ethnicity. The purpose of this section was to gain relative information about the respondents and make sure the numbers I was receiving were representative of Cal Poly and unbiased. I received responses from 21 males, 23 females, and 1 other. This indicates that there should not have been a gender bias due to the similar figures. The ethnicity demographic numbers I received were very comparable to the actual ethnicity demographic numbers here at Cal Poly and were translated



into discernable percentages. Of the 45 respondents, just under half identified as white with 21 total responses. The remaining 24 respondents consisted of 11 individuals of Hispanic descent, 8 of Asian descent, 2 of Black descent, and 3 claiming to be “mixed”.

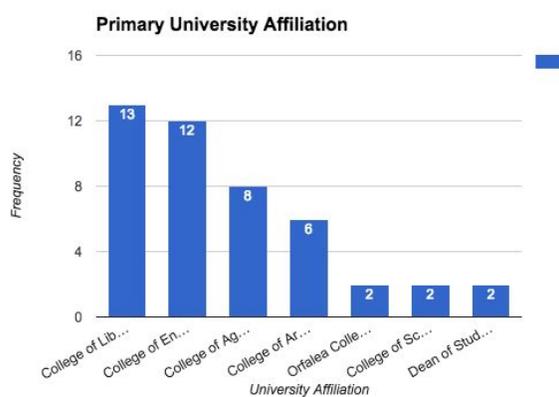
The final question of this section asked for consent to contact that individual again, which was originally supposed to allow for a follow-up focus group which was ultimately foregone. If the respondent agreed to this, they were asked to provide their Cal Poly email address in a following question. Of the 45 total respondents, 30 were be open to further questioning regarding the newsletter and provided their Cal Poly email address. These figures show that respondents were generally able and willing to participate further in my project because they identified with the initiatives and activities that the newsletter will be promoting.

Campus Affiliations:

The next section concerned various campus affiliations, including individual standing, associations to clubs/organizations, and primary university college. I found it as no surprise that respondents were resoundingly students, with only 4 respondents representing faculty and staff. The following question recorded campus involvement, specifically within clubs and organizations that directly concerned sustainability and social justice. I received 24 responses from individuals already affiliated with at least one club or organization within each said field. Their feedback will be directly applicable to this newsletter because it pertains to the intended promotions of the newsletter. Although the survey was intended to benefit clubs and organizations that concern sustainability or social justice, others who were not already involved were encouraged to participate as well. I received feedback from 21 individuals who were not already affiliated with a campus club or organization. Their feedback will be useful because it represents individuals who aren't already involved within sustainability or social justice, but who

may be interested. This is the audience my newsletter is attempting to reach so it can allow for a bridge between current initiatives at Cal Poly and uninformed students.

The primary university college question was meant to record which academic sphere the responses were coming from to ensure a relatively representative sample. Responses mostly came from individuals within the college of engineering and liberal arts, with secondary numbers coming from the college of agriculture, food, and environmental sciences and college of



architecture and environmental design.

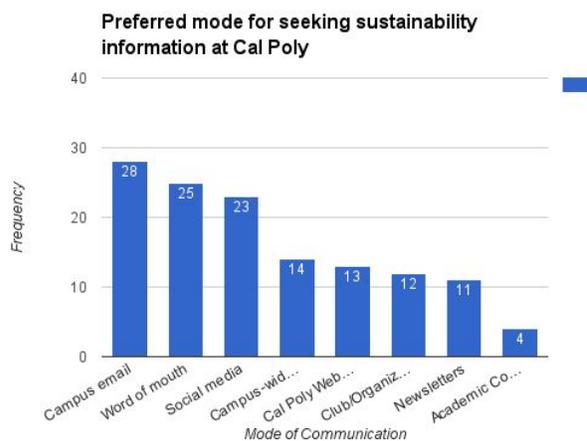
Although this may seem like a skewed figure, the responses align with the nature of the major, with most coming from fields that concern or involve sustainable and/or social justice related interests. That being

said, we can understand how individuals within the college of business and college of science and mathematics may not have been as inclined to give feedback regarding information that may not have been as interested in, relative to other colleges.

Communication Tendencies:

The ensuing section of the survey was intended to identify which platform would be the most effective for the sustainability newsletter at Cal Poly. The breakdown reflected which platform, or mode of communication, was best for seeking information regarding general, sustainability, or social justice related activities and initiatives at Cal Poly. Participants of the survey chose from a wide spectrum of common communication platforms, or modes, at Cal Poly

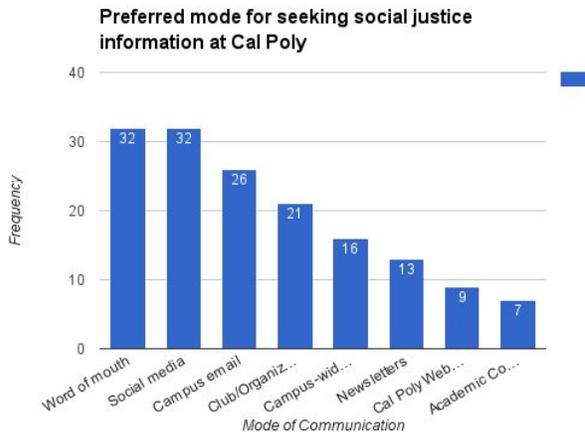
which included: the Cal Poly website, Club/Organization meetings, Campus-wide flyers, Campus emails, Academic coursework, Word of mouth, Newsletters, and Social media, as well as option to fill in your own preferred platform if not listed. When asked which mode(s) of communication respondents preferred when seeking *general* information at Cal Poly, they indicated that campus emails were overwhelmingly the most favorable platform (89%). Social media was a near second for seeking general information at Cal Poly, with about 67% of respondents reporting they prefer social media as well. These figures are realistic because general information can be sought on multiple types of avenues depending on the context; however, more specific information might be posted on certain avenues that are better tailored for that field. That being said, we can see how this may have been the case when seeking information regarding sustainability and social justice information at Cal Poly. When asked which mode(s) of communication respondents preferred when seeking information regarding



only sustainability, campus email was chosen as the most favorable mode of communication, with 28 individuals saying so. Word of mouth and social media closely followed, with 25 and 23 responses respectively. Juxtapose these responses with those of the social justice

preferred mode of communication and we can see some similarities between the two figures.

When asked which mode(s) of communication respondents preferred when seeking information regarding only social justice, two separate modes tied for the most favorable. Social media and



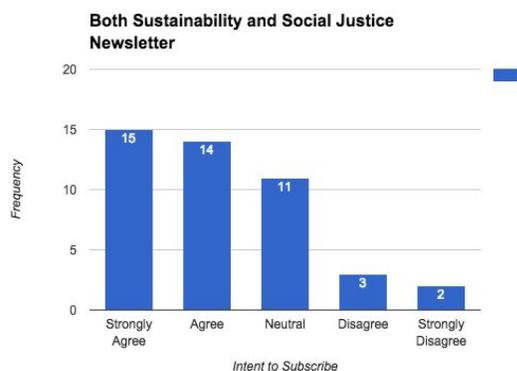
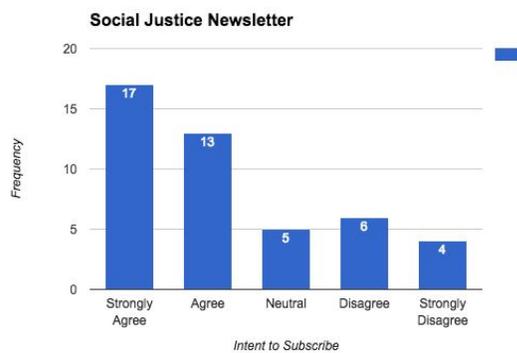
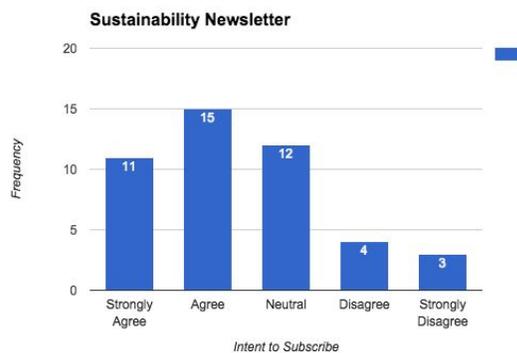
word of mouth both received 32 responses each, with campus email as a close second with 26 responses.

Although sustainability and social justice both fall under the larger umbrella of civil rights and activism,

they each cater to different audiences and therefore may operate differently through the same medium. This may explain why we see comparable numbers for campus emails, word of mouth, and social media within each field, but different order in preferences of communication mode. From here, I wanted to observe how effectively these modes of communication operate overall at Cal Poly and not just within one or two specific contexts. When asked which is the most effective overall mode(s) for information dissemination at Cal Poly, respondents claimed that campus email was the most effective, receiving 28 votes. The next most effective mode of communication was word of mouth with 20 votes, followed closely by Social media and the Cal Poly website, each with 17 votes. It is important to consider these results for overall effectiveness when deciding which platform to utilize for the sustainability activities newsletter.

The following three questions of the communication tendencies section attempted to measure the intent to subscribe to a newsletter containing information regarding either sustainability, social justice, or both. Responses were generally similar, with most fluctuation coming from the Strongly Agree and Strongly Disagree categories. The breakdown of the Strongly Agree and Agree categories demonstrate how respondents generally favored social justice. Total Agreement was calculated from the frequency of the Strongly Agree category

added by the frequency of the Agree category, providing a number for overall agreement, or



intent, to subscribe to each newsletter. The most support appeared for a social justice only newsletter, with 17 respondents strongly agreeing to subscribe, and 13 more simply agreeing, resulting in 30 total agreement responses. Similar support was indicated for a newsletter regarding both social justice and sustainability with 15 respondents strongly agreeing to subscribe and 14 more simply agreeing, resulting in 29 total agreement responses. Support was slightly less for a sustainability only newsletter with just 11 respondents strongly agreeing to subscribe and 15 more simply agreeing, resulting in 26 total agreement responses. Although the total agreement was more for a newsletter regarding only social justice and both social justice and

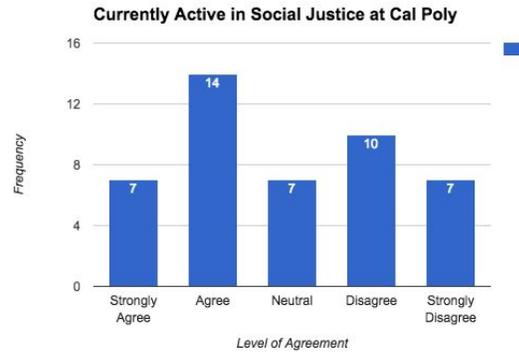
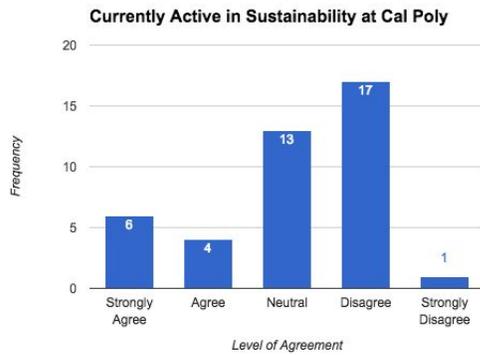
sustainability, the average number of agreement to subscribe was more comparable and included the numbers of the Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree categories. A sustainability only newsletter received an average score of 3.6 and a social justice only newsletter received an average score of 3.73. Although a newsletter regarding both social justice and sustainability

received less total agreement (29) than a social justice only newsletter (30), the average number of agreement to subscribe was higher, at 3.82. These averages complement the previous data by providing an additional perspective that included responses from individuals who weren't in agreement of a newsletter, which gave me a better sense of the combined attitude toward each field at Cal Poly.

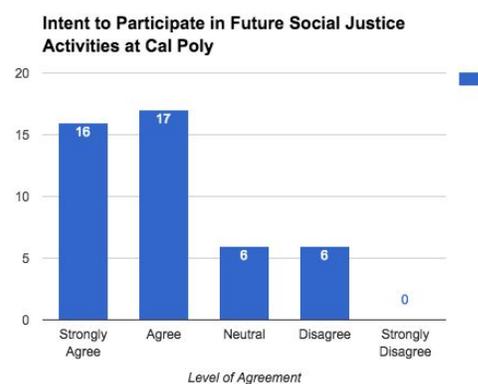
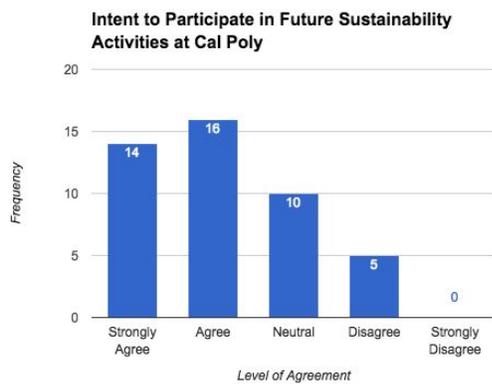
Sustainability/Social Justice Activity:

The following segment of the survey attempted to measure the general awareness, current and future participation, and the present views of respondents toward sustainability and social justice activities at Cal Poly via dichotomous and Likert scale questioning. General awareness of sustainability was calculated through Yes/No format, with 73% of respondents claiming they were aware of sustainability activities on campus. The general awareness of social justice was significantly higher, with 82% of respondents claiming they were aware of social justice activities on campus.

The next questions were Likert scale intervals and recorded the frequency of current and future participation in sustainability activities at Cal Poly. When asked if currently active in sustainability at Cal Poly, respondents indicated that they were generally less active, with six strongly agreeing and four more simply agreeing, resulting in 10 total agreement responses. The average agreement score for current sustainability activity was 2.68 which indicates that respondents were fairly indifferent. Compare these numbers to that of social justice activity

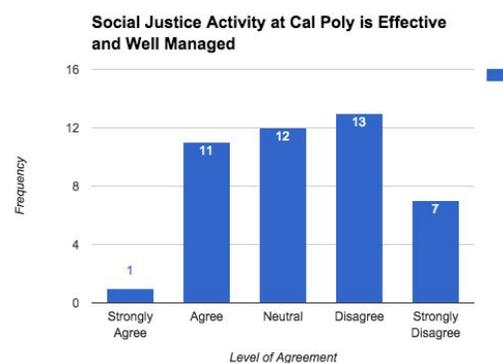
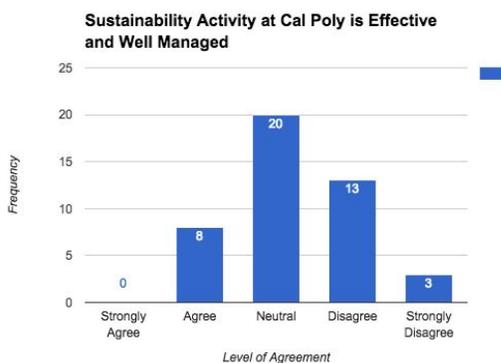


where respondents were generally more active, with seven strongly agreeing and 14 more simply agreeing, resulting in 21 total agreement responses. The average agreement score for social justice activity was 3.08 which shows us how social justice activity is slightly more prominent at Cal Poly currently. Future participation was measured similarly, via total agreement measurement and average agreement score. When asked if given the opportunity to participate in future sustainability activities, respondents indicated that they would with 14 strongly agreeing to and 16 more simply agreeing to, resulting in 30 total agreement responses. The average agreement score for future participation in sustainability activities was a 3.86 which shows us that despite lower numbers for current sustainability activity (2.68), respondents are still concerned about the wellbeing of our campus and environment. When asked if given the opportunity to participate in future social justice activities, respondents indicated that they would with 16 strongly agreeing to and 17 more simply agreeing to, resulting in 33 total agreement



responses. The average agreement score was 3.95, which was almost an entire point more than the average agreement score for current social justice activity (3.08). Clearly, if given the opportunity, future participation in both sustainability and social justice clubs and/or organizations will be higher.

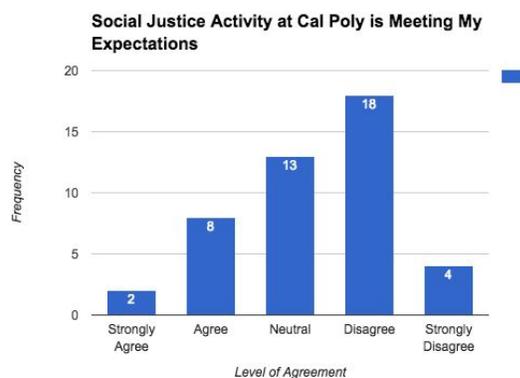
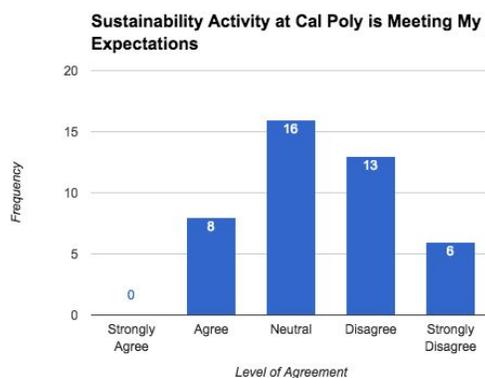
The following questions were Likert scale intervals as well and sought to measure the current feelings and attitudes toward the current state of these initiatives and activities on campus for each field. When asked if current sustainability activities at Cal Poly are effective and well managed, respondents indicated that these activities could be improved in these areas. No respondents strongly agreed and only eight simply agreed that sustainability initiatives and activities are effective and well managed, resulting in eight total agreement responses. The average agreement score was a 2.79, which shows how many people are neutral and may not



know the extent of effectiveness or management quality for sustainability activity at Cal Poly.

When asked if current social justice activities at Cal Poly are effective and well managed, respondents indicated that these activities could be improved in these areas as well. Only one respondent strongly agreed and 11 simply agreed that social justice initiatives and activities are effective and well managed, resulting in 12 total agreement responses. The average agreement score was a 2.68, which provides a different perspective for these numbers. Although the total

agreement responses were higher for social justice than sustainability (11 vs 8), the averages show how people agree that sustainability initiatives and activities are generally more effective and well managed than social justice initiatives and activities. The final question of this section aimed to measure the level of satisfaction of respondents by virtue of agreement or disagreement on meeting current expectations for sustainability and social justice initiatives and activities on campus. When asked if current sustainable activities at Cal Poly are meeting their expectations, respondents indicated that their general satisfaction was neutral. No respondents strongly agreed and only eight simply agreed that current sustainable activities were meeting their expectations, resulting in eight total agreement responses. The average agreement score was 2.6 and reflects the general satisfaction of respondents as relatively indifferent. Juxtapose these fairly neutral responses with those of the general satisfaction for expectations of social justice activity at Cal

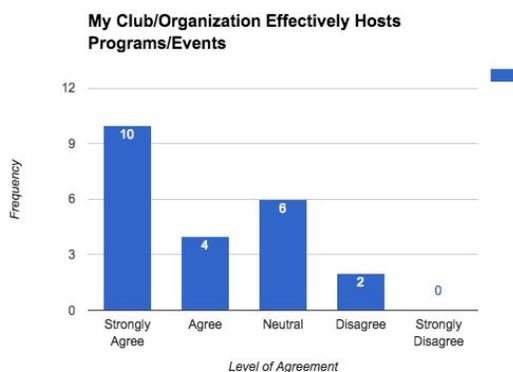
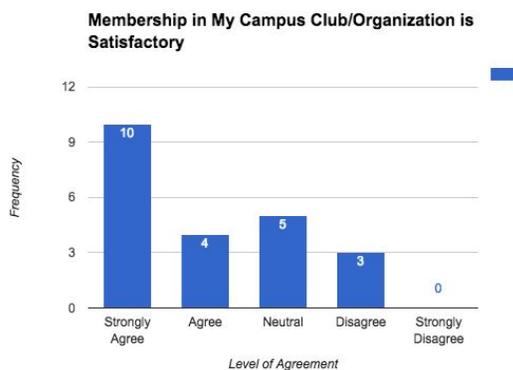


Poly and we can observe some similarities. When asked if current social justice activities at Cal Poly are meeting their expectations, respondents indicated that their general satisfaction was relatively indifferent as well. One respondent strongly agreed and 11 more simply agreed that current social justice activities were meeting their expectations, resulting in 12 total agreement responses. Although we can see more total agreement of satisfaction for social justice activities,

the amount of disagreement was higher also, which explains why the average agreement score was 2.68 and reflects similar overall neutrality.

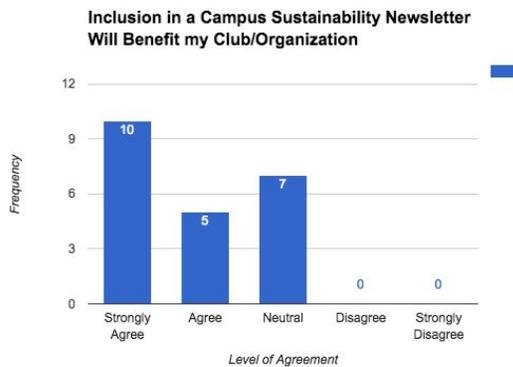
Club/Organization Membership

The final section of the survey concerned only respondents affiliated with sustainability or social justice at Cal Poly. Because of this, I saw reduced response numbers for this section and received only 22 responses. This feedback intended to measure the current state of involvement of their respective club and/or organization, the hosting effectiveness of programs and/or events, and the potential benefit of inclusion within a campus sustainability newsletter. The first series of questions were Likert scale intervals and sought to evaluate the current state of membership of the respondent's club and/or organization. When asked if membership in their respective campus



club and/or organization is satisfactory, respondents indicated that membership was mostly adequate with 10 strongly agreeing and four more simply agreeing that membership in their club and/or organization is satisfactory.

This resulted in 14 total agreement responses. The average agreement score was 3.95 and demonstrates how membership in sustainable and social justice clubs and/or organizations is perceived as fairly satisfactory overall. When asked if their respective club and/or



organization effectively hosts programs and/or events, respondents indicated that the hosting effectiveness is adequate as well. Ten strongly agreed and four more simply agreed that their respective club and/or organization effectively hosts programs and/or events, resulting in 14 total agreement responses. The average agreement score was 4, which provides some perspective about how these relatively progressive notions of sustainability and social justice may already be the leaders in current outreach via programs and events. However, given the fact that disagreement did exist, there is room for improvement. This concept of outreach improvement is evident in the next question, which asked respondents if the inclusion of their club and/or organization's activities in a campus sustainability activities newsletter would benefit that respective club and/or organization. Respondents showed a high level of agreement, with 10 strongly agreeing and five more simply agreeing that the inclusion of their club and/or organization's content in a campus sustainability activities newsletter would benefit that respective club and/or organization, resulting in 15 total agreement responses. The average agreement score was 4.13. It is important to note that because no respondents disagreed at any level, the average score was the highest of any survey question. This data reinforces the need for outreach improvement at Cal Poly.

The final task of the survey was optional and asked respondents to share additional comments of feedback regarding this tentative newsletter. These responses were the only qualitative data I received and provided further direction and critiques about the tentative

newsletter. Some of the directional feedback I received concerned the regularity of the tentative newsletter, with one respondent explaining how “consistency needs to be a thing” (respondent 1). Ultimately, regular intervals of release will be implemented for consistency. Another response spoke to the overall collaboration of the tentative newsletter, saying how “a newsletter would help share information between clubs for collaboration and enhance member involvement” (respondent 2). Clearly, others acknowledge the importance of more connectivity between related businesses and clubs on campus. In addition to these comments, I received critiques about the tentative newsletter also. One respondent brought up an interesting and very plausible issue, saying that “that the overlapping readership would be smaller than simply having two different newsletters” (respondent 3). This goes to show that although collaboration between sustainability and social justice initiatives does exist, it may not be as effective as addressing each issue as its own entity. Another response testified to this point, claiming that “If I had to sift through SJW stuff in a sustainability newsletter I would be much less inclined to read it” (respondent 4). This reinforces the issue that the effectiveness of combining these initiatives may reduce the overall readership for each. From these critiques, we received honest feedback about the effectiveness and overall goal of the tentative newsletter which will be strongly considered as the newsletter moves toward implementation.

Limitations

Although this project effectively measured many aspects of communication tendencies and preferences, there were limits for the interpretation of the data I collected. One main limitation was the fact that a larger and more representative sample of faculty and staff would

have been favorable, as I received only 4 responses from this demographic. I believe this is a very interesting finding; faculty and staff are often those campus influences that assist in sustaining initiatives because they remain on campus long after students have left. However, 41-4 still represents a comparable number to the actual ratio of students to faculty, being 20-1. In regards to future research, is there be a way that the newsletter could have more appeal to this underrepresented group in the sample? Despite the limitation, I believe this sample will serve as a sufficient start to the development of the sustainability newsletter because the ratio is not as skewed as it may appear.

Another limitation I faced with this project was the difference between averages and charts to demonstrate data. Averages are more comparable, however they may not capture the true shape of the data. Charts are able to show the reader outliers and the effects it may have on the average. Additionally, charts give us a better sense of the overall attitude toward that question by being able to see the individual numbers for each response on a Likert scale. Relative to the data I received, the comparison between the average agreement score and the total agreement responses provided the project with two comparable perspectives about the comprehensive feeling of that question. I saw enough influence between the two similar measures to establish the usefulness of the data, so each was used on applicable questions.

The last major limitation my project faced stemmed from the combination of sustainability and social justice activities and was further acknowledged in the open-ended feedback section. This limit addressed the overall difficulty of incorporating content for both sustainability and social justice activities and initiatives within a single newsletter. Although many respondents were in favor of the combined newsletter for collaboration purposes, there was

concern about the efficiency of the newsletter outreach. As previously mentioned, the critiques about this notion touched on the ideas of readership effectiveness and brought to light specific issues that the reader may face with a combined sustainability and social justice newsletter.

Conclusion

The data I collected during this project will influence the design and development of a tentative Cal Poly sustainability activities newsletter. The ethnicity and gender demographic numbers I received were a testament to the wholesome sample I achieved and are very comparable to the actual ethnicity demographic numbers here at Cal Poly. This indicates that there should not have been a gender or racial bias due to the similar figures on campus as a whole. Campus affiliations were wholistically represented with responses coming from every university college, as well as two from the Dean of Students. Although I saw more representation for certain colleges, the data made sense; the responses aligned with the nature of the major, with most coming from fields that concerned or involved sustainable and/or social justice related interests.

One of the main findings of this study was the data I collected in regards to the preferred and most effective mode for information dissemination at Cal Poly. Because many students may be forced to use certain modes of communication, such as Facebook pages or club/organization meetings to gain information regarding their respective club or organization, it is important to understand the effectiveness of that mode in its given context. It is also necessary to understand the effectiveness that mode has for overall information dissemination at Cal Poly. One can generally see how some platforms were preferred over others and which ones operate better in

certain contexts from the data. Ultimately, I observed and concluded that Campus email is overall the most preferred and effective mode of communication for information dissemination at Cal Poly. Emails are easily subscribed to and can be rapidly deployed those subscribers with any information. Clearly, the widespread and easy access to email at the touch of button gave it an immediate advantage over other platforms. I recommend that the tentative Cal Poly sustainability activities newsletter be deployed by Email.

Another major finding of this study was the feedback I received concerning the higher agreement to subscribe to a newsletter that concerned at least some social justice information rather than solely a newsletter for exclusively sustainability information. Additionally, there was a significant gap between current participation in sustainability and social justice activities from the intent to participate in related future activities. From this data, there is clearly a faction of respondents that are more concerned about social justice initiatives, as well as another faction of respondents being currently left out who would otherwise be involved. This may seem like an interesting statistic; however, after more thought about each concept, the results are actually more straightforward than they seem. Social justice endeavors have been a strong social phenomenon for almost half a century, since Civil Rights activism and large scale protesting began to rise in the 1960s. Compare this concept to that of climate change and sustainability awareness, which until recently was relatively unheard of on a large scale. Because our society has been exposed to social justice for a longer period of time, we can see how much more this issue is entrenched in our culture. Oppositely, climate change and sustainability awareness are a much newer discussion and people are still deciding whether they believe it or not. Everyday civil right struggles are a much more prominent issue to the individual than a slowly changing

environment with consequences we might never personally experience. This phenomenon may explain why we see a difference in the respondent's intent to subscribe to a sustainability information only newsletter versus a social justice information only newsletter. This phenomenon may also provide evidence that Cal Poly is in fact a progressive campus, yet the need to fill the existing void between current and future participation in sustainability and social justice activities is evident. A Cal Poly sustainability activities newsletter would help close this gap and increase participation within these initiatives and activities on campus.

The final and most significant finding of this study concerned the benefit of including one's respective club and/or organization's content in a Cal Poly sustainability activities newsletter. I believe this was the most significant and applicable data because not only did this question attempt to measure the usefulness of a newsletter, but there was absolutely no disagreement for inclusion from any respondent. Moreover, this was the only survey question overall that received all agreement or neutral responses. This indicates that a Cal Poly sustainability activities newsletter would not receive resistance and would be very beneficial and useful for most individuals involved. Ultimately, my study confirms the initial concern for more connectivity on campus and supports the need for a sustainability activities newsletter at Cal Poly.

Works Cited

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Appendices

Appendix A

Direct Email:

Hello!

My name is Alek Johnson and I am a graduating Communication Studies student who is conducting research that you have been specifically chosen to help with. The goal of this research is to learn more about sustainability and social justice activity at Cal Poly. **To help with the research, I am asking individuals who are associated and involved within these two fields to complete a brief survey.** The results will help influence Alek's senior project, the Sustainability Activities Newsletter Design.

Because of your credentials, I strongly encourage you to help me by completing this survey! **If you do wish to participate, please review the attached informed consent form and respond indicating your choice.** If yes, the survey will be forwarded for your completion.

I will look forward to your response! Thank you.

Alek Johnson
Communication Studies

alekj4682@gmail.com
ajohns72@calpoly.edu

Appendix B

Facebook Post:

Fellow Mustangs!

Would you like to see Cal Poly become the gold standard for Sustainability and Social Justice efforts amongst west coast universities?

If so, please help me with my senior project by completing a very brief survey concerned with Sustainability and Social Justice activities and initiatives at Cal Poly! I am looking for feedback from any person interested in contributing to a better campus environment and culture for current and future students. Whether you are involved within these two fields or not, we can all help move Cal Poly forward. Follow the link below to complete this survey and message me for any further questions. Thank you!!

Link To Survey

Appendix C

Informed Consent to participate in a research survey, “Cal Poly Sustainability Activities Newsletter Design”

Welcome to the Cal Poly sustainability activities newsletter design survey! This research is being conducted by Alek Johnson, a Communication Studies student, under supervision of Dr. Besel, and Eric Veium in Facility Services. It would be appreciated if you would help by answering the following questions about your campus affiliations and various communication tendencies and preferences.

The survey will involve answering approximately 20-30 questions and should take no more than 15 minutes to complete. You are not required to participate and can stop at any time. You can also choose to not answer any question. Should you need special assistance in order to complete this survey, please let Alek know and he will help accommodate you. There are no anticipated risks with your participation and your confidentiality will be protected. Your name and personal information will be collected and retained separately from the results of the survey. Additionally, they will not be used in any reports and results will be provided in aggregate. The potential benefits include helping to contribute to the understanding of campus participation and involvement in the sustainability discipline, and gaining an additional medium of communication for your respective campus clubs/organizations.

If you have any questions regarding the project itself, results, or want a copy of this form, contact Alek Johnson via email at ajohns72@calpoly.edu. If you have any concerns about how the study was conducted, you may contact Dr. Michael Black, Chair of the Cal Poly Human Subject Committee, at 8057562894, mblack@calpoly.edu, or Dr. Dean Wendt, Dean of Research, at 8057561508, dwendt@calpoly.edu. If you agree to participate in this research, please indicate your agreement by completing the survey below. If you wish, please print a copy of this consent form for your records, and thank you for your help.

Yes, I volunteer to survey.

No, exit survey.

Appendix D

Cal Poly Sustainability Activities Newsletter Design Survey

Personal Information

Mark your identifications.
(Mark only one oval.)

1. What is your gender?

Male

Female

Other

Do not wish to disclose

2. What is your ethnicity?

If other, please specify.

Black

Asian

White

Hispanic

Other:

3. May I contact you for additional questioning regarding this project?

Mark Answer.

Yes / No

4. If YES to previous question, please enter your Cal Poly email.

Campus Affiliation

Please identify your campus affiliation(s).

5. Mark the choice(s) that apply to you:

If other, please specify.

Student

Faculty

Staff

Administration

Other:

6. Are you currently affiliated with any campus club or organization concerned with sustainability or social justice efforts?

If yes, please specify in "other" box.

No

Other:

7. Mark your primary university affiliation.

Choose one. If other, please specify (AFD, ASI, Corporation, Housing, etc.):

College of Agriculture, Food, and Environmental Sciences

College of Architecture and Environmental Design

Orfalea College of Business

College of Engineering

College of Liberal Arts

College of Science and Mathematics

Other:

Communication Tendencies

Mark all that apply:

8. What is your preferred mode of communication to seek general information at Cal Poly?

Check all that apply.

Cal Poly website

Club/Organization meetings

Campuswide flyers

Campus emails

Academic coursework

Word of mouth

Newsletters

Social media

Other:

9. What is your preferred mode of communication to seek information regarding sustainability efforts at Cal Poly?

Check all that apply.

Cal Poly website

Club/Organization meetings

Campuswide flyers

Campus emails

Academic coursework

Word of mouth

Newsletters

Social media

Other:

10. What is your preferred mode of communication to seek information regarding social justice efforts at Cal Poly?

Check all that apply.

Cal Poly website
 Club/Organization meetings
 Campuswide flyers
 Campus emails
 Academic coursework
 Word of mouth
 Newsletters
 Social media
 Other:

11. In your experience at Cal Poly, what has been the most effective overall method of information dissemination?

Check all that apply.

Cal Poly website
 Club/Organization meetings
 Campuswide flyers
 Campus emails
 Academic coursework
 Word of mouth
 Newsletters
 Social media
 Other:

12. I would subscribe to a newsletter regarding sustainability only activities at Cal Poly.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

13. I would subscribe to a newsletter regarding social justice only activities at Cal Poly.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

14. I would subscribe to a newsletter regarding both social justice and sustainability activities at Cal Poly.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

Sustainability/Social Justice Activities

Mark your answer.

15. Are you aware of any sustainability activities at Cal Poly?

Yes / No

16. I am currently active in sustainability at Cal Poly.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

17. Given the opportunity, I would participate in future sustainability activities at Cal Poly.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

18. Current sustainability activities at Cal Poly are effective and well managed.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

19. Current sustainable activities at Cal Poly are meeting my expectations.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

20. Are you aware of any social justice activities at Cal Poly?

Mark only one oval.

Yes / No

21. I am currently active in social justice at Cal Poly.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

22. Given the opportunity, I would participate in future social justice activities at Cal Poly.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

23. Current social justice activities at Cal Poly are effective and wellmanaged.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

24. Current social justice activities at Cal Poly are meeting my expectations.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

Your Club/Organization (Please skip this section if independent)

***Please complete the next section if you are currently affiliated with a sustainability or social justice club or organization at cal poly.

25. Membership in my campus club/organization is satisfactory.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

26. My campus club/organization effectively hosts programs and/or events.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

27. Inclusion of my club/organization's activities in a Campus Sustainability Activities Newsletter will benefit my club/organization.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

28. My club/organization would be interested in sharing the following information with the Campus Sustainability Activities Newsletter.

If other, please specify.

Job/Volunteer opportunities

Meeting details

Event/Program announcements

News and updates

Other:

29. Please share additional comments of feedback regarding this tentative Newsletter.