

THEME: *Politics*

Evidence from interviews:

- “made a huge difference for the university is our President is on board” - K. Myers, Student Sustainability Communication Coordinator, Weber State
- “I know that you guys deal with that as well, some kind of push back because of political differences” - K. Myers, Student Sustainability Communication Coordinator, Weber State
- “He introduces our summit every year and he's been really great in that whole Republican perspective, just like how this is economically beneficial and good for our community” - K. Myers, Student Sustainability Communication Coordinator, Weber State
- “I just wanted to emphasize, I mean you really can't politicize it. You have to be careful of the rhetoric that you use. And make sure that your speaking kind of like with their adjectives. Because that's really going to change the way that they perceive your ideas” - K. Myers, Student Sustainability Communication Coordinator, Weber State
- “ So the rhetoric is important” - K. Myers, Student Sustainability Communication Coordinator, Weber State
- “they weren't really doing it so that we could decrease our overall carbon emissions. They were doing it because we proved to them that we could save money” - K. Myers, Student Sustainability Communication Coordinator, Weber State
- “I think with a lot of Republican or conservative mindsets, they're not willing to talk about greenhouse gas emissions or climate change, because they can't get over the first hurdle in their mind which is like how much is it going to cost to address that. So that's where I think the denial comes in a lot. But once you can prove to them that these are all good things economically anyways, they do take investment... but that's when they can start thinking about the benefits outside of money” - K. Myers, Student Sustainability Communication Coordinator, Weber State
- “We can't do that, we can't actually pursue a power purchase agreement which means that we either have to generate all of it on site behind the meter, solar on our rooftops, solar on our parking lots. That's really kind of our options honestly for large on site renewables. Or our utility provider has to be the one to green all the energy coming from the grid, which Northwestern Energy does not appear to have any plans to do” - Eva Rocke, Sustainability Director, UM
- “It's not going to happen in the next 5-10 years for this university. Um, barring significant federal legislative change and significant political change in our state. So I guess I am not inclined to set a goal of carbon neutrality right now” - Eva Rocke, Sustainability Director, UM
- “It wasn't accomplished and probably really wasn't feasibly accomplishable, because we haven't had an administration that really wants to make the financial investments that are going to be required for carbon neutrality” - Eva Rocke, Sustainability Director, UM
- “Lack of political will, it's not a high enough priority for decision makers to get something that ambitious and complicated done and expensive. We've had declining enrollment, every year since I've been here” - Eva Rocke, Sustainability Director, UM

- “UM is very wild about it but can't get a whole lot done because we have all these special interests breathing down our neck. MSU is very quiet about but can get a lot done behind the scenes because certain interests are going to let MSU do things that UM will never do” - P. McDonough, Program Coordinator of the Climate Change Studies Program, UM
- “And of course now our governor and legislature that's very again climate avoidant would be the polite term. Our president has so much pressure to not say things. And the faculty and staff senates have so much pressure to not say things. So it's frustrating to talk to them, you can see in their eyes that they really support what you're doing but they can't say it” - P. McDonough, Program Coordinator of the Climate Change Studies Program, UM
- “If you go to the President or whoever and say in order to make that happen we need to do this, is that well received? Like what kind of response do you get to that?” - Carol Dollard, CSU
- “So we have great support from the president but any time you ask for money they got to figure out where it's coming from.” - Carol Dollard, CSU
- “And that's just... right now, everybody's budgets are getting cut, so it's politically not a time when we can do that.” - Carol Dollard, CSU
- “Yeah. And that's fortunately at CSU I feel like the era where we're trying to worry about who “believes” in climate and doesn't. And it's like you don't have to believe in science for it to be real. It is not religion it's not a belief. So anyway. The science is real and there's a lot of people at CSU doing research in climate science. Everything from political scientists who are going to the... you know what the COPA meetings are related to the Global UN, like the Paris Accords and those kinds of things, she goes to those. So we have people involved from the political side, from the science side. We have a big atmospheric science department, so I feel like while I am sure there are climate deniers on campus, I feel like as an institution we are way past that. It's like I don't have to worry about... it used to be there was a time at the University where you had to worry about talking about climate because there would be people in the room whose eyes would roll. We are way beyond that and I am so happy. Because it's like now it's not is climate a thing, it's like how bad is it? There's still difference of opinions there although I think there's a lot of people that recognize the world is on fire and we need to do something about it. And so I think when we talk about aggressive goals, um, we've had the President say things publicly like go big or go home. You know so that was when we felt motivated to present her with okay you want us to go big or go home, this is the resources that we need to do that. So um, yeah, that's where we're at. And again we have a President, we've very blessed. She came to us, good Lord, let me think about it, has it been 2 years ago. Poor thing, all she knows is pandemic. She's just been here a few years. But she came to CSU. She sought out this job because of her interest and history in sustainability and she saw that we were doing some good stuff. And she wanted to be part of it. And she has said that publicly as well. So I am really excited that we have... support all the way up the chain.” - Carol Dollard, CSU
- “You know the faculty senate passing the resolution and there was a corresponding one. And the student government like USUSA and that really helped with bringing sustainability to the front of people's attention” - Alexi Lamm, USU

- “And having faculty senate and then USUSA ask the university to reexamine the issue brought resources and attention that I don't think we would've gotten otherwise.” - Alexi Lamm, USU
- “So this was driven actually by our faculty senate is who really pushed this initiative. We've been trying to be energy efficient as long as I've been at the university.” - Zac Cook, USU
- “He passed a resolution through the faculty senate which has been just a great thing for the university. It kind of coalesced all the efforts that were going on campus into one focus because prior to that I think a lot of people and organizations were kind of doing their own things and it wasn't this centralized effort.” - Zac Cook, USU
- “And I strongly feel like the support and involvement from our faculty senate really kind of pushed us over the hump so to speak. Because prior to that we had a carbon action plan. And it didn't feel like it had a lot of teeth and it didn't feel like it necessarily had support from the administration.” - Zac Cook, USU
- “So we had some projects that unfortunately didn't happen because administration, it wasn't on the forefront of their minds. And they weren't as focused or concerned about it. I feel like now that we've gone through this and we've had the support of the faculty senate and the support of the University's President we're getting attention to the projects that are going to be really impactful and we're getting support for those.” - Zac Cook, USU
- “I feel like in the past, and to be honest I think because our leadership, our VP, Associate VP of Utilities just retired this last December. But he'd been at the University 10 years and the first 8 years he I think felt like carbon reduction, wasn't worried about it, wasn't a big deal. And wasn't a big proponent of pushing that agenda, I guess if you want to call it that. I hate to use that phrase.” - Zac Cook, USU
- “And how he handled and worked with the leadership and facilities made a big impact in how... we've worked together. Because I see that situation could've gone two different ways. If the faculty and other university administration came to facilities and was like hey you guys are doing an awful job. You've got to do something different because we've got all these issues. And they gave us these unrealistic expectations and tried to tell us how to do our jobs, I think that we would've maybe facilities couldn't not been as strong of a partner in that process.” - Zac Cook, USU
- “It seems like when we explained what the end goal of some of the projects and things that we're trying to do people just seemed a lot more supportive and understanding and willing to work with us.” - Zac Cook, USU

“Evidence from plans:

- In 2007, President George Dennison became one of the first 100 charter signatories of the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment (ACUPCC), pledging the University to reduce and eventually neutralize its greenhouse gas emissions. - UM
- A public involvement process was designed and implemented through public meetings, internet social networking stakeholder meetings, media announcements, and an all-

campus survey. Ideas to reduce greenhouse gas emissions were collected and analyzed using the Clean Air-Cool Planet campus carbon calculator. Strategies were then prioritized and a timeline developed to establish emission reduction interim goals and a target date for carbon neutrality. A draft plan was made publically available for review and comments incorporated in the final plan in as much as possible. - UM

- “Because over 75% of the land in Utah is publicly owned, USU works closely with state and federal land management agencies to ensure sustainability of ecosystem functions in the face of climate change. The great majority of Utah’s land mass is composed of portions of the Colorado Plateau and the Great Basin (aka, Central Basin and Range, see Figure 3). As the state’s only Land Grant institution, it is USU’s responsibility to provide the sound science that can be used by federal, state, and local governmental agencies to ensure wise management of Utah’s natural resources.” (USU, 23).

Summary of clear subthemes:

- Internal Politics
 - Framing the Objective - Dollars and Cents
 - One theme that was easily identified across multiple interviews, had to do with how CAP’s are framed. In almost every institution it was clear there were stakeholders who stood against the development of a CAP for political or ideological reasons and while the influence these voices had ranged from insignificant to seriously problematic, appeasement almost always took the form of reframing the issue. Both Weber and USU in particular expressed frustration in dealing with stakeholders not interested in seeing a campus wide effort made to reduce GHG or a more broad turn towards sustainability, however, when the issue was framed not as political or ideological, but instead financial and economic, cooperation or at least compliance, generally followed. Furthermore, this reframing rarely posed much of a challenge as a turn towards energy and GHG savings have meant that institutions are saving money on utility and energy bills which thus provides significant financial incentive for skeptical stakeholders to at the very least turn a blind eye to the development and implementation of a CAP.
 - Executive Support
 - When the driving factor pushing a CAP into effect does not come from the president or some kind of executive committee within a University, or is at the very least fully and openly supported by such, it’s clear that CAP’s suffer significantly. This can be seen in institutions such as USU who, until the a recent change in

leadership, struggled to garner the support of their president and some high level faculty. The lack of executive support allowed for, if not having directly caused, a fractured, uncoordinated and ultimately quite ineffective effort at both developing and implementing a CAP at USU. However, once a change in leadership was made and a carbon reduction resolution, endorsed by the president, was passed through the faculty senate, the effort became coordinated, organized and much more effective. Furthermore, executive support appears to be critical to campus wide collaboration and organization as individuals and departments are assigned tasks and when properly overseen/managed, are much more consistent in accomplishing the outlined deliverables. In the absence of this, it's clear that efforts become fragmented, responsibilities not taken seriously and any efforts made at a CAP quite insignificant.

- External Politics
 - Finally, while not spoken about much, it's worth mentioning the role that the state-wide political climate plays in institutions ability to successfully develop a CAP. Many CAP's garner the support of those who lean to the political left and as such, institutions located in overwhelming conservative locations occasionally run into pressure and pushback from those who exist on the right side of the political aisle. It was clear however, that any pressure felt as a product of this, was easily overcome with the support of the institution's president. However, when it was clear that the president was themselves politically conservative or made themselves subject to external political pressure, the effectiveness of CAP's suffered significantly. In these cases, no useful solutions to this problem presented themselves save for a change in leadership.