

Interviewer1: Can you just tell us about your role at your institution?

PM: Sure, yeah I am the Program Coordinator of the Climate Change Studies Program.

So that is an academic minor for undergrads. So I teach a lot of the climate change classes and advise all the students in the program and work with them on projects and internships and capstones and things.

I1: What is your connection to the development or implementation of the campus climate action plan?

PM: I have no direct connection to it, partly because it was developed I think in 2009 and you know long before I was here. It's Eva Rock's office the Office of Sustainability that actually is tasked with carrying that out. But I am indirectly involved in that a lot of my my students get involved with the process of you know right now trying to get the University to write a new plan. And sort of every year they're trying to work on the various initiatives that were outlined in the plan or have been added since then. Mostly as a mentor to people doing the work.

I2: What does that student engagement look like I guess?

PM: Most directly it's students that go from climate change studies to intern with Eva. Like this year the STARS report is the big item, I think that's every few years she has to do that. And other years it's working on recycling projects or um... we used to have green ambassadors, I forget what they were called, in the dorms that my students were involved in. Other times it's just you know as parts of their capstone projects or practicum or most usually a project that they're doing for a class. They pick up one of the sustainability goals and try to work on that independently from the main office.

I2: Do you think the student engagement makes a difference in like the success of the University carrying out the climate action plan?

PM: Yeah I wonder about that all the time because I think it can go both ways and I've seen it go both ways where students being actively engaged sort of reinvigorates the staff that were trying to work on that. **And especially when you're as under-staffed as we are right now, having students get actively involved kind of can breathe some fresh air into those projects. So just in the past year I've had students work on like zero waste initiatives for all of our dining facilities and native gardens to replace some of the less used lawns, think like that.** But I can see it going the other way occasionally too where staff or faculty or administrators feel like oh we're doing everything we need to. Look how involved the students are. Like we don't really need to work on it.

I think it's more the former than the later but you'd have to actually do what you're doing which is study it.

I2: So you said students sort of you know look at the plan and develop like projects and stuff around that. But do you think like that student voices and values are well represented in the plan itself?

PM: Um, the plan as of 2009 is really ambitious. Of course so ambitious we never even got close to engaging it. So I think the... the students ambition is reflective, or the student's ambition as of 2009 is reflected in that. Um, what I don't think is reflected is the tangible goals. **You know I guess they set tangible goals of zero carbon, no waste things like that. But no sort of mid-term goals of this is how we'll get the commitment we're making in terms of we are going to put this much money towards it and we're going to put this many staff, like FTE hours towards addressing this.** And we're going to implement this indirect curriculum

and into our trainings and all this stuff. I think those sort of you know necessary steps don't... the fact that they're not in the plan does not reflect that fact that students want those things that are on a shorter time scale and are happening all the time, not 10 years down the line. So the ambition is there, the practical day to day is not there.

I2: What do you think would be different if your school didn't have a climate action plan?

PM: We wouldn't feel as guilty about not meeting it. I am not sure, that's a good question because I think the plan in some cases has provided good cover for staff and administrators that want to do something and they can justify it to say look we have this whole plan.

On the other hand I think a lot of things would have happened anyway. But probably not as much. So a good example of this, our Rec Center and Athletics have been super gung-ho on the sustainability piece. Like they're trying to lower all their energy usage. They're trying to like change out all their facilities to be efficient. And I think the plan gave them a lot of cover and a lot of help in doing that. But there are other departments that don't even know the plan is there. Like you could go ask the Dean does UM have a climate action plan and they'd say I have no idea.

I2: Wow.

PM: It got picked up by the people who were going to pick it up anyway. And maybe that gave them a little extra momentum. But the university itself didn't make a big deal out of it, so there are whole areas of campus that don't know it exists, don't think about.

I2: Do you think they should know that it exists? All the people that don't?

PM: Yeah. I mean I guess I don't blame them for not knowing just because there's a bazillion things you have to know on a campus that's as... I don't want to say diverse but MSU is much more cohesive of a campus. This school, and this school and this school, UM is all over the

map which is great for some things and not great for you know keeping everyone on the same page about this stuff. So I think that's more of a top administration level shortcoming, at least when it was adopted and supposed to be implemented. Centralized leadership is what I am saying you need to get a climate action plan really off the ground.

I2: Do you think there's good support from your administration and leadership you know with the plan, funding, implementation, all of that?

PM: Um, that's a great question. Support via funding at UM is sort of everyone's anxiety so I don't think anything is well funded right now at UM. I think the support is there, yeah the support is there in a lot of ways. The challenge comes from being a climate aware campus in a very climate unaware, or I should say climate avoidant state.

I2: Right.

PM: So you've got, I am sure you all experience this but even just look at the difference between how UM does climate change and how MSU does. 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. So I think if UM was its own bubble we'd be pretty far down the road of climate action. But because we've got OCHI and MUS and the Board of Regents and Good Lord, the UM Foundation, all these interests that are pretty well stacked with certain interests. 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.

I2: Yeah.

**10:33**

PM: So you know the classic Montana.

I2: Yeah we've kind of run into the same issues as well. Our climate action plan is not public in any way and that's something that we're like should it be, should it not be, should we put more pressure but it's also an interesting point that you guys were very loud about it but still haven't been able to get much done.

PM: Yeah. I think there are pros and cons to both of those of course. Like MSU has a greater chance to just do things without anyone noticing. But at the same time the conversation isn't happening at that upper level. Whereas at UM the conversation is always happening, the awareness is there but we just can't get anything done. Or we can't get as much done as we say we would like to. In the long run we're going to need both approaches probably. But it'd be nice if either one really like had some results.

I2: I am just looking at our list of questions here.

PM: You're good. I am good with long pauses so...

I2: Yeah I feel like we hit most of them, (I1) I don't know if you have any more?

I1: Yeah I am just trying to think. We talked a little bit about like student support for like climate action on campus and stuff. Are there any like really big student movements, I don't know if that's the right word, but clubs or something that are like really working towards getting UM's campus a little more sustainable or climate friendly?

PM: Yeah there's a long history of them. Usually have two or three at one time. Right now we've got one, the Climate Response Club and that grew out of a mixture of things. One was climate action now which I think MSU had a version of in the past. And also the Sunrise

Movement of Missoula. And our reinvestment campaign. So those things sort of got quiet and then the Climate Response Club kind of grew out of the ashes of that. And that happens every few years, like everything kind of dies down and a new thing grows up out of it. And they've taken a different approach than past years. They're more focused on sort of doing, like getting the behind the scenes stuff done, sort of the not sexy stuff. And like trying to get UM to celebrate the small successes and recognize them and be more open about them. And they have a much more I think up to date sense of diversity and intersectionality with other clubs. So they've teamed up with like the Pacific Islanders Club and the Black Student Union and other groups to really talk about climate action as more than carbon. It's a whole lot of things.

I2: Right.

PM: And they've had a lot of success with that which is great. They've also introduced mental health into the picture. So they have sort of like twice a semester these kind of support groups, but they call them mindset sessions where they get together. Anyone can show up and talk about climate grief and depression. It turns out there's a lot of that among the student. And that's been really cool to see. And then they try to do projects here and there, like promote solar on this building, get recycling in this building, do compost over here, get small stuff that they can see just to get some momentum going.

So that's who we've got. They recently in the past month have met up with MSU's campus climate coalition, that's the CCC I mentioned. And I think that's a brand new group.

**15:40**

I2: Yeah I am in that group.

PM: I thought you looked familiar or your name looked familiar. You all would be the first to

have that inter-campus conversation. But that's the group at the moment.

I1: I think that was it for me.

I2: Yeah.

PM: Is this for a class that you're doing this?

I2: It's like research but we're getting independent study credit for it so kind of.

PM: Cool, nice good for you! I'd love to see the final report if you end up doing that.

I2: Yeah.

I1: Well thanks for taking the time out of your day to meet with us.

PM: Sure thing, and if you have other questions let me know!

I2: Thanks.

I1: Thank you!

PM: Take care.

I1: Bye.

**16:57**