

Interviewer1: Thank you for taking the time to meet with us. First and foremost I know this can be a busy time of year and obviously dealing with technology and everything is always a bit of a hassle so we're definitely grateful. I think we'll just dive right into it. So you're obviously a student at Weber State. And I guess maybe the best place to start would be for you just to tell us a little bit about your role as a student who is involved in the campus climate action plan at Weber?

KM: So this is my senior year at Weber State so I've been here about 4 years and almost 4 years in this position. So I got hired on as the **student sustainability communications coordinator for the Sustainability Practices and Research Center**. It's a long title to put on a resume. So initially I wasn't all too familiar with what Weber State was doing sustainability wise. I was mainly going to their school for their geology and geo science programs. And once I figured out that they had a Sustainability Center and were hiring, I was really interested. And then once I was hired on, figure out that just how much they were doing. And it's kind of... and I know that you talked to Jen Bodine about the facilities side of everything. And so it happened in this backwards way where you don't usually hear about where kind of the **faculty and staff were the ones that really pushed the climate plan before the student body was really aware of it**. **So it kind of came from the top down, and that's how I think things happened so fast on the facilities side, which is really great**. So I was just really shocked that Weber State was doing all this stuff. And like none of my friends or people that had already been there for a couple of years, knew about it and knew about how impressive all of this was.

So that was kind of my goal as the communications coordinator was to kind of like relay all of

these impressive things that were happening. And why we should be supporting them. And just how much room there is to grow on the student side. Not to say that there wasn't a club. There is a club but yeah I just wanted more connection between educating student body on like this really is something that's important to Weber State. So that's how I kind of started.

And so we started from I guess and I am just rambling about my experience so far, so let me know if there's something specific that you want to hear about. But I started with basically just a Facebook page and a Mailchimp newsletter that would go out sometimes. So with my addition we were able to add an Instagram page, a Twitter and then another Facebook page for Intermountain Sustainability Summit. Which is also something that I'll talk about in just a sec. So just trying to grow that student connection. And I think we've been doing a pretty good at that. With the help of kind of like the addition of the sustainability club on campus. The environmental ambassadors, they expanded to have a garden club. And a food recovery network club as well as the citizen and climate lobby club.

So with their addition and their individual pages we tagged each other on a bunch of stuff and just kind of have that back and forth. So I think, where should I go now?

4:55

II: That's great, thank you for sharing. I think at this point maybe I am curious what exactly.... And I think I am pretty familiar having talked to Jen Bodine last week, but maybe you could just run us through really quick just some basics about the climate action plan at Weber State? When was it developed? When was it implemented? And maybe a few words to the state it's currently in that would be very helpful.

KM: I'll do my best from memory. From what I understand the climate action plan was proposed in about 2005 and really starting to be implemented in 2007, 2008. And it entails,

there's 4 kind of pillars. One is – I don't think these are in the right order – but it includes retrofitting buildings. So putting LEDs in, making sure everything is insulated properly. And that everything is running as efficiently without making major mechanical changes. Electrification so electrifying our fleet on campus, electrifying buildings, this also includes... I guess the next one which is the addition of renewable energy to our campus.

So we've been utilizing solar as well as I think something that is great for Utah and the Intermountain region in general. I am not sure but I think you up at Montana might be able to utilize this as well. We utilize geothermal energy to heat and cool two of our buildings. So that's been saving us a lot of money. And then 4th is... I can't remember! I can't remember the 4th one but it's something really cool!

I2: No worries, that's a lot to remember.

KM: Yeah exactly. So geothermal was implemented while I was at school I think last year. And it powers I think 80% of the heating and cooling in our social science building, which is a new big building. So that's really impressive. We added a solar covered parking lot because I am sure you guys are familiar with snow can be really irritating when it just dumps right on your cars. So they figure out that was something that was aesthetically pleasing to students and functional, like you would want to park under solar cover as well as providing energy. It's in the shape of a W too. So it's like Weber... Go Weber... And people really like it.

I1: Very cool!

KM: Plus they also made it accessible so it's not in the fancy expensive parking lot, it's in the general student parking lot. So that was something really cool that got implemented. We also have an outside table area that has a cover with solar panels that you can sit outside during the day and you can plug your phone in outside or vape. Some people like to vape there, like

charge their vapes. So that was unexpected but...

I2: A use...

KM: Exactly, you're still using it so good! **And then we've been able to add more solar chargers for vehicles. And I think you can also park there for free if you have an electric vehicle while you're charging.** So those things are really great. So I've been seeing like they just keep doing more and more stuff. **And I think the most impressive thing is how they can pay for it. Which is through our green revolving fund.** I think Jen touched on this probably where basically all of the money that we save from these energy projects goes to more energy projects. **So we pay for ourselves, the energy and sustainability office they have four interns because they have the money for that.**

So it's just kind of a testament that sustainability and energy efficiency is such a money grabber.

We can save so much money just by implementing these projects. And I see that as a student. **On the community side, like outside of facilities management, they're doing a lot of great stuff. They're saving us a lot of money. They're decreasing our carbon emissions. But at the sustainability center where I work we also do a lot of community outreach that I've seen as really affecting the student body as well as the outside community. Which includes some of our community programs.** There is that... people get really excited about... they just will follow our newsletter just to watch for these community programs which is basically like **free stuff.**

So the first one... that kind of started where is the... **light bulb exchange program.** So we have a grant with the University, we kind of have moved towards **partnering with Lowes for a couple of these projects.** And I don't know the ins and outs of how exactly we got them on board. **But basically we have a sign up of say we purchase 1000 LED light bulbs. And people**

can trade in their old light bulbs. Like trade in 10 of their old light bulbs and get 10 LEDs for free. And then Lowes recycles those.

I1: Wow that's great.

12:03

KM: So we've been able to target like low income communities and minority communities to be able to make sure they're getting in on this deal. Because it really does save people money. I think it was like it will save you \$150/year approximately depending on how much energy you use. So that can really have a large effect on a low income household. So people got really excited about that.

And then because of the success of that program we were able to implement the lawnmower exchange program. Which is kind of the same idea where people bring in their old gas mowers and get a new electric mower. So that was also partnered with Lowes. And now the Utah DEQ has taken that project on themselves. So we don't really host it any more which is kind of nice because it's a lot of work. They saw how much the community like wanted this. We opened. We'll say okay we have this many mowers and we're going to open for you to sign up at noon on June 5th. And then it will be done an hour later, like gone.

I2: That's awesome, that's so cool!

KM: So it's just little things like that, like light bulbs and mowers where you can get people really excited about decreasing their overall energy usage. And greenhouse gas emissions. People are obsessed with lawns here which is not great because we are literally in a huge drought. But people are really excited about their lawns.

I think another major thing, we have so many great people on board with this. But something that's made a huge difference for the university is our President is on board. And

we didn't expect it. When the new president was coming in which was 2 years ago, the one before him was kind of like okay you can do your thing but I am not going to speak for or against it. Do what you will as long you're saving money. So we were like okay we can do that, we can deal with that.

And it's like as much as you would expect in Utah. We are definitely a conservative state. I know that you guys deal with that as well, some kind of **push back because of political differences.** But this new, and this new president does have connections with the Utah legislature. So we were concerned at first but then apparently he got one of our electric mowers before. He really loved it. He was talking with his friends about it. **He introduces our summit every year and he's been really great in that whole Republican perspective, just like how this an economically beneficial and good for our community.**

I2: That's awesome. That's definitely something we struggle with here, so it's really encouraging to hear that you know a school that's very similar to us was able to overcome such a big hurdle.

I1: I think that's part of what we found too in some of the literature we've looked at is that engaging community stakeholders is the key to the success of these plans. Because if it's just coming from administration and faculty than it can be hard to get people on board. Which as you mentioned when you live in a more conservative place can be even harder. I love the story with Lowes. I think we could really take a page out of your book there. That's fantastic!

KM: **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.** So like on our social media even though it's a pain and we go back and forth sometimes about the things

that we advocate for or kind of speak about. We do step on, we do tiptoe sometimes. And that has exceptions but like if there is a bill that is related to sustainability or energy in my city that Weber State is in, we want to push to a renewable energy goal. We're having a lot of push back. Like we just kind of chose to say here's what time the city council meeting is. Here's where you can go to learn more about it. We don't try and say you should vote for this bill or you should vote for this person.

It's kind of tricky, we're trying to trick them into thinking that we are on their side because we are. Because we all.. there are definitely huge differences in... political ideologies and things that can be problematic that you want to speak out against. **But in the end like we both claim to want a healthy community, economic viability.** And you just really have to prove energy independence is independence from China! Those things that they're like super concerned about like you can speak to it and let them know this is energy independence. This is American materials. Like all of those things. So the **rhetoric is important**

I1: Yeah I think that's... that's very true!

I2: Yeah like one of my classes, I had this year it's almost like... we touched a little bit on debating but when you're speaking to someone about an issue, it's kind of like you were saying you have to learn how to speak their language. And that's a persuasive tool. I don't know how you'd put that but that's super encouraging and awesome to hear. We'll definitely have to keep that in our back pocket as a little weapon!

KM: Definitely, it's kind of tricky sometime!

19:51

I1: So I was wondering if we could circle back to the revolving loan fund for just a second. I think it's quite possible the person I was interviewing Jen, understood this better than I did.

So you were able to raise capital initially to put into this fund. And then... I mean how is it, maybe if you could just explain it to me layman's terms if you don't mind? I am having a hard time understanding how you guys are reinvesting the money you're saving and not actually saving... just go ahead!

KM: So initially we borrowed \$5M from basically ourselves for the university. That included interest and we said we're going to pay this back with interest. And we're going to pay it back quickly, because we knew that there was a lot of low hanging fruit. Like LED lighting and insulating buildings, automatic lighting systems that shut off when someone is leaving the room. Those things save a lot of energy and save a lot of money, especially like buildings that don't get used very often. Like a facilities management boiler room or something like that.

And so once they got the low hanging fruit they paid off that loan super fast. Like they proved to the University that this was a really great investment. That this was saving the university money. So then they made an agreement with the University and state where... any future projects that they saved money with could be reinvested into future projects. So that's why we call it a revolving green fund because the more projects that we do and are meant to also save money because we're saving energy gives us money for our next project.

II: Gotcha.

KM: So the whole legal process of how that kind of went down, I can't really speak to because I wasn't there. But basically once they proved that this was economically really beneficial for the university. And that we could only go forward with these projects if the whole... if a side intention had be we had to make more money off of it. So there was that extra... 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.

So once we got that, once we got that in the door, then they could... 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.

I2: May I also ask do you know how large your green revolving fund is? Do you guys have a cap of how much you can spend each year? Or is it... just however much you save?

KM: I don't think it has a cap honestly. So far we've saved about \$13.6M since 2008. Yeah it's been really great. And we've been utilizing those funds, so I don't think we have a cap.

I2: That's super cool and unique. I don't know about you Dominic, but everyone that I've interviewed, always has a cap. They can only spend like \$500,000 or like \$1M so that's so cool and unique to hear about.

24:55

KM: Honestly it's just something where it's kind of made our university, it's added those landmark features. Like geothermal at a university or solar covered parking lot. Or some xeriscaping that's going on. They really added to the promotional points of Weber State..

I1: I remember Jen said was... I asked her if you guys were at all limited financially, because sort of to Nicole's point that tends to be one of the biggest barriers that institutions understandably face is acquiring capital to invest in these projects. Which Jen was telling me

what tends to be the limiting factor for you guys is keeping campus running. She's like we have the money to overhaul the whole institution basically, but we would have to shut it down and cancel classes.

KM: They really are kind of the rock stars. They really are rock stars. I think we have some of the smartest energy and facilities managers. Did she talk to you about our heating and cooling systems outside of geothermal?

I1: Yeah she did.

KM: I think that's something that has... like I've been able to organize tours with our facilities manager. And facilities managers from other businesses and universities in the state and all they want to talk about is our heating and cooling systems. (Laughs) Like it's a pretty nerdy conversation. But in those kinds of innovations, he has a video on youtube. I can drop something in the chat, but maybe I'll email it to you guys. But he has a presentation on Youtube that talks a little bit more about these kind of... all of Jen's key points.

I think he's just... there are certain people that have been really ingenuitive and that includes Jen and Justin our energy manager and my bosses who just like... went, they were willing to be the guinea pigs and it's worked out pretty well. So we're totally good with other people stealing our ideas. **We're not hiding any of this tech.** So I am sure that they would, if you were able to make a relationship with your facilities manager we could take them on a Zoom tour and help explain how we've been able to do this and specifics on the engineering side.

I1: That'd be great. I guess a couple more questions, pivoting just a little bit, that we wanted to get your take on is specifically the role that students, yourself very much included have played at Weber State. And yeah I guess... you've shared with us what your role is pretty well. But I am curious to know what other positions and roles students play, I guess at this point in

facilitating the continued implementation of your climate action plan? And why you think it's important – if you do?

KM: Oh definitely. It's very important. I think there's only so much you can do on the facilities side before people start to be like that's weird, you should stop doing that. Like if you don't have that community support. So students specifically have been really important in kind of the engagement of the community and creating partnerships between other campus organizations. So like we call the 3, all the different clubs that we have, the environmental ambassadors, food recovery network which does... So environmental ambassadors is kind of like a classic sustainability club. They're kind of the overseers and then food recovery network deals with the campus food pantry. Organizes food drives and recovers food from campus that's not used and takes it to homeless shelters and packages it up for students to be able to eat the next day or something like that.

The community garden which has a community garden at the dorms on campus. And then organizes kind of like if you help, take some of the food we grow and deals with composting as well. And then citizens climate lobby chapter which is really recent. So they haven't done, been able to do as much yet but we're really excited for their continued advocacy.

But for example these sustainable clubs organized, we call it a pop up thrift shop, which is people would donate clothes, books or home goods and we put it all in our university ball room. And then people could walk in and walk out with whatever they wanted. And so we partnered with the women's center on that. And anything that didn't get taken we donated to the women's center or their program to give to women in need.

For the... WSUSA on campus which is the student officers for the whole campus, they were able

to be a part of our summit this year and last year. And they helped make... they have a diversity and inclusion chair. So that student because he was familiar with the sustainable clubs was able to make the connection so we could have a section on Native water rights, Navajo water rights in Utah. And then we were able to support their Native symposium later one.

So I think students have just been really important in making those connections between campus organizations to help let them know that this is applicable to like everything in our lives. On the academic side we're starting do courses that are designated as sustainable courses. So students can talk to their instructor and be like I think you should incorporate examples about sustainability in your statistics class or physics class. To just really hone in on how broad that is. And they do great stuff in the community with trail digs and waste management, teaching people how to recycle and how to fix stuff.

Commented [MS1]: I'd say implementation too

We had an... Our collaboration with honors college has been really strong as well. And there's been a lot of crossover there. They do honors courses where they have special topics. And they did, they called it radical repair class. So you got taught how to fix your Christmas lights or fix your bike, or like just kind of be able to repair things and reuse them. So those are all the really fun parts of sustainability that people really want to be involved in. That students have been able to make it a very normal thing, like a very fun thing.

I am trying to think if there's anything major that I am missing with students, because they really have been so fun to be with. So there's sustainable club, sustainability courses. We also try and make it really... I guess that's more us again. Sorry sometimes I act less like a student than I am! But also something that students... I am cheating because I am looking on the website! (laughs) The community garden club, they just released a little booklet on how

to sustainable kitchen and garden. And it's just like nobody asked them to do that, but he did it anyways. And it just really, they have such great initiative. I think it was really important for... like it wasn't always... It used to be just (?) ambassadors, but once we said we're going to make these different clubs and we want you to be a president, that's when people started... when you gave them that responsibility they just really took it and ran with it. It was really great to see!

36:16

I2: I guess one question I have regarding students is I think you mentioned it a little bit before with your position being a communications kind of position. What did you find was the best way to reach the student body and communicate about sustainability or climate action plan stuff going on on campus?

KM: So that was interesting because we had to create kind of 3 different tones for each of our sustainability pages. So Facebook is still very professional and informative. While like our Instagram page is a little bit more informal. We repost advocacy things like Fridays for Future or things from the (?) like things we really couldn't send out in our newsletter. But we feel like we have a little bit more freedom because older people aren't on there. And they don't know so they can't get too upset! So just like being able to see where I can have a little bit of leeway and speaking more in a student voice was important to identify. I am not good at twitter at all, because you have to be so short and punchy. I am definitely better at Instagram. Twitter, I still treat it more like Facebook because I just don't know. But we get engagement on Instagram utilizing stories. Creating highlights is something I really liked doing, because I think it just... I don't know how effective that is with students but I think it shows all of the stuff that we do on an annual basis. I am pulling it up right now.

We just had our **Intermountain Sustainability Summit** last week, which also really engages students because it's a huge networking opportunity. Like you meet, we have an eagle expo hall where there's a bunch of businesses who are interested in sustainability. As well as a bunch of sessions speakers from the region. So like you could potentially make a connection with somebody that's speaking there and be offered a position or learn more about whatever you want.

And then cool campus speakers which is always fun that we **open to the public. So anyone on Weber State campus can go see that for free. So people like free things!** And like... internships. People like when I post internships for like available jobs. Or we did start doing some IGTVs. I haven't done a TikTok. I am not on TikTok. I don't know how to do it. I am so scared and I am glad since I am graduating this year I don't even have to worry about it. If my boss wants it in the future that's like someone else's problem.

But also reposting... I think the biggest thing is making connections. So other organizations, what are some other universities in Montana besides you guys? Is it just you guys?

II: No, there's UM. There's one in Great Falls. There's MSU-Billings.

40:27

KM: **Yeah so they have a sustainability center Instagram, find them and follow them and repost their thing. And then they'll like repost your thing. So that I think is the most effective for our reach.** Like for the summit, we had a session speaker that was our first session that was completely in Spanish. The organization that they were from we made sure when we were posting about it, follow them and then tag them and then post it. And then they reposted it and then we got a bunch of follows from people that were like still on Weber State campus,

like students but there were involved in the Hispanic community or the Latinx community. So when you connect with these outside organizations, like students that are involved in lots of really great things they can see that.

II: Gotcha.

KM: (garbled?) And (Campa?) that's what I use for, if I want to create a post that's not just a picture then I'll use Campa which is free.

Commented [MS2]: Think

II: I am embarrassed to say I don't really know much about how our social media is managed at MSU.

KM: You guys aren't employees aren't you.

II: No, I'm not.

KM: Just a project, that's really great. I think that's really impressive.

I: I think the last couple questions I would love to run by you have to do with STARS which I am sure you're familiar with. And just ask the degree to which STARS has been an influence on your plan? How it was written and designed? And in terms of what activities are being prioritized and continue to be prioritized. And whether or not you would say, what STARS weighs and prioritizes generally aligns with what needed to happen on your campus if that makes sense?

KM: Yeah definitely. STARS is huge. STARS is huge to us. We try to go to the AASHE conference every year and that's always really fun. You guys should try and get someone to pay for you to go. It's a great time. But STARS the process of... is... super time consuming for us. Um, we almost have to completely abandon our community programs every 3 years to be able to do STARS.

So we go pretty in depth on it. I primarily was over reporting on kind of student, like the

sustainability designated courses and faculty that were involved in sustainable courses. But that was such a small part compared to like what the other intern and my boss were doing. I just got off on it kind of easy because I had monthly newsletters to make so I got kind of lucky. But STARS is really important for keeping track of where we started and where we're going in making our goals. We want to be realistic with our goals. Right now I think we're STARS silver, yeah I think we're STARS silver. So the big debate this year was are we going for I think the next one is gold and then there's green I think is how it works, or platinum. One of those.

And we were trying to decide if we should go for the next one, or the top one. They haven't finished exactly on what they decided to do because we do want to set those realistic goals. But basically STARS if we say we want to be gold certified in STARS then we know what we have to do and we can tell the university this is what we would have to do in order to get there. Can you support us in this? So that really helps kind of like... have a clear direction.

You can also see the major areas that you're lacking. Like we were doing really well in facilities. But we weren't doing well in like we don't have enough sustainability courses. And we don't have enough... we didn't have enough individual departments or offices doing tiny trashes. Or recycling their ink cartridges and things like that. So that's where the green department program came in, was like to help us get to the next certification of STARS.

But STARS as I understand it can be... even if you don't think that you can reach the next certification the next year that doesn't mean that you can't still improve of course because gold is arbitrary. It's about the progress and the efforts that you're making. But it really does help you see where you need to improve on points if you wanted to continue through the

certification process. So I think it'd be really great for us, even if it is really stressful. And I think more universities should and are going to utilize as making sustainability plans is going to become more popular. I think this is a really good one to go off of.

47:33

I1: Gotcha. Well Nicole unless you have anything else, I think that's all we have. I would just say thank you again for all your time and insight. Weber State has turned out to be... so we ended up going with 4, 5 maybe...

I2: I think 4.

I1: Sort of colleges and universities to look at that had similar indicators as MSU and Weber has been across the board very impressive. I think the revolving green fund like you said is... amazing to say the least and certainly something we could learn from tremendously. So yeah thank you for your time.

I2: Thank you so much! We appreciate it!

KM: Of course. Thanks so much. I hope that that was helpful. I am super glad that people are taking notice of Weber State and all its doing. Because I can brag about it so much because it's not me. It's so many people have been just like being really innovative. And I really hope we can help you guys out. So let me know if you need anything else. And if you have troublesome people that we can really get the experts in on and prove to them that this is something that you guys need and that it's super great for you!

I2: That would be awesome. Thank you again, we so appreciate it.

KM: Great.

I1: Thank you!

KM: Sweet, see you! Bye.

11: Take care!

49:27