Tania Anders hosts A SUSTAINABLE CAMPUS:

 The Climate Action Plan with Chisa Uyeki & James Stone

00:00:00 **Chisa**

And the other piece of it that I think is so important about the Climate Action Plan, is that it is established as a priority for the entire campus taking action on climate.

00:00:09 **Chisa**

The importance of that is so deep because it really is pervasive. It impacts our planning, it impacts purchasing, it impacts building, which we have a huge building program happening right now on campus. And all of those are happening with sustainability and the impact on the climate being considered in every step that's being taken.

00:00:35 **Christina**

Hi, I'm Christina Barsi.

00:00:37 **Sun**

And I'm Sun Ezzell, and you're listening to the Magic Mountie Podcast.

00:00:40 **Christina**

Our mission is to find ways to keep your ear to the ground, so to speak - by bringing to you the activities and events you may not have time to attend, the resources on campus you might want to know more about, the interesting things your colleagues are creating, and the many ways we can continue to better help and guide our students.

00:00:57 **Sun**

We bring to you the voices of Mt. SAC, from the classroom to completion.

00:01:01 **Speaker 1**

And I know I'm going to achieve my goals, and I know people here are going to help me to do it.

00:01:05 **Speaker 2**

She is a sociology major and she's transferring to Cal Poly Pomona! Psychology major, English major...

00:01:12 **Sun**

From transforming part-time into full - time-

00:01:15 **Speaker 1**

I really liked the time that we spent with Julie about how to write a CV and a cover letter.

00:01:22 **Christina**

Or just finding time to soak in the campus.

00:01:23 **Speaker 1**

To think of the natural environment around us as a library.

00:01:27 **Christina**

We want to keep you informed and connected to all things Mt. SAC. But most importantly, we want to keep you connected with each other. I'm Christina Barsi, Mt . SAC alumni, and producer of this podcast.

00:01:38 **Sun**

And I'm Sun Ezzell, Learning Assistance Faculty and Professional Learning Academy Coordinator.

00:01:44 **Christina**

And this is the Magic Mountie Podcast.

00:01:45 **Christina**

Hi, welcome back. This is Christina, and we have our second installment of our new miniseries led by Tania Anders - all about the topic of sustainability on campus.

00:01:58 **Christina**

And in today's episode, we learn all about the CAP, which is the Climate Action Plan, with Chisa Uyeki and James Stone. I think Chisa said it best when she said so much has been accomplished towards sustainability efforts at Mt. SAC. But at the same time, there is still so much more to be done. Here's Tania, to get us started.

00:02:22 **Tania**

Welcome to the Magic Mountie Podcast miniseries focused on Mt. San Antonio College and sustainability. My name is Tania Anders. I'm our Campus's current Sustainability Coordinator.

00:02:32 **Tania**

Today, I'm joined by Chisa Uyeki and James Stone, two of the authors of Mt. SAC's Climate Action Plan or the CAP as it is generally referred to.

00:02:42 **Tania**

Hi, Chisa and James.

00:02:44 **James**

Hello.

00:02:44 **Chisa**

Hi, good morning.

00:02:46 **Tania**

Thank you so much for joining me today. Could you please be so kind and briefly introduce yourselves to our listeners? What is your professional background and your role at Mt. SAC?

00:02:56 **James**

Okay. I have a PhD in political science from the University of Kentucky. I was hired at Mt. SAC in the fall of 2008, and I teach political theory classes and environmental politics, as well as American government classes at Mt. SAC.

00:03:15 **Tania**

Thank you, and Chisa.

00:03:17 **Chisa**

Hi, I'm Chisa Uyeki and I'm a librarian, a part of the library faculty at Mt. SAC, and I'm also right now president of our Academic Senate.

00:03:26 **Tania**

Wonderful. So, since this is a miniseries on sustainability, I'm curious what got you interested and involved with sustainability in general, and then specifically, at Mt. SAC?

00:03:39 **Chisa**

So, I have, in my professional time, I've always approached my work from a social justice perspective and that has evolved and meant different things at different times. I actually, my undergrad is in women's studies, so I was strongly focused on feminism. And in my focus in my master's in library and information studies was on critical race and multiculturalism in libraries and library services.

00:04:10 **Chisa**

So, that sort of is the perspective that I began with and in approaching, looking at the climate crisis and environmentalism really from a place of equity and social justice, and the importance of a livable planet for all of us. And there are other little pieces when I was ... I have a very early memory of being at a "no nukes" rally that I had somehow gotten myself to, with a friend on a bus when I was in grade school.

00:04:43 **Chisa**

So, it's been a long time, something that I've been concerned with and I've been vegetarian since I was 16. And for me, that really was a lot about the environmental impact of the meat industry. So, it's sort of been throughout my life, a concern.

00:05:01 **Chisa**

And then one of the things that I think all of us who teach at Mt. SAC, we are teaching because we care about the future and because we care about our communities. And so, for me, environmentalism really took a front seat in my work and in my focus because of that, because of a concern for our future.

00:05:24 **Chisa**

And I've been very lucky to be able to work with people like James, like Cameron, like Chris Briggs through the process of developing the Climate Action Plan. And for me, it's been as much a learning experience as anything else.

00:05:40 **Tania**

Thank you so much for sharing that. It's really beautiful how that's been a thread in your, in your life. What about you, James? What got you interested in sustainability?

00:05:50 **James**

A lot of similarities to what Chisa said. I can remember the Warren County toxic waste disaster in North Carolina, where I grew up happened in the late 1970s. And so, that really launched the environmental justice movement because Warren County is the poorest County with the highest percentage of African-American residents of any County in North Carolina.

00:06:16 **James**

And so, the decision was made by a democratic governor at the time, James Hunt to site this waste dump that would contain PCBs and dioxin and other toxins there, even though any objective scientific analysis of where the dump was planned to be, would reveal that it was not the best site in terms of contaminating groundwater and things like that.

00:06:41 **James**

You know, that captivated my interest early on and contextualized environmentalism in a kind of a social justice framework. And then later on, I also went to an anti-nuclear rally in Washington, DC. And then we organized one for my campus at East Carolina University and formed an organization that dealt with a variety of issues of which the environment was one.

00:07:06 **James**

I voted for Barry Commoner in 1980, he was the environmental candidate of the Citizens Party. And then later in Chapel Hill, North Carolin, I got involved with the Green Party. My friend Dan Colden was kind of the spark plug for that in Chapel Hill. And so, in graduate school, it was just kind of a natural migration of interest to take classes, having to do with environmental theory and to stay involved in environmental issues there, along with other social justice issues.

00:07:37 **James**

At Mt. SAC specifically, I guess the triggering event for me was going to an ASHI conference. My first ASHI conference was in 2010 in Denver, Colorado. And I was just really excited by it. I came back telling my colleagues in the department, it was Woodstock for environmentalists because there was just so much information. It was just all about what I believed in, which is using higher education as kind of the Vanguard to push the larger society in the direction of more sustainability through teaching and research.

00:08:18 **James**

And just in other ways, the college’s investments, partnerships with the community in all kinds of ways - using the university colleges, higher education to leverage that transition into sustainability. And also, environmental justice, I would say from the very beginning, was a significant concern that I had.

00:08:41 **James**

So, I came back from that and there was a great foundation already at Mt. SAC because we had EAGLE. So, the Environmental Action Group for Livable Earth as you know is our main student environmental group on campus.

00:08:57 **James**

And you know, Craig Peterson and Karyn Kakiba-Russell had done such a terrific job of mentoring that group. And I went to their semester-end meeting in the fall. They had 35 people there, and that was just when I tuned in. So, still going strong. And I think that that is just a testament to the great work that they've done with mentoring the student members of EAGLE.

00:09:21 **James**

And so, I asked them, do they want to cooperate or work together in creating a sustainability committee, and they did. And so, that got up and running. And later on, we asked President Scroggins, I asked him at an open forum with faculty in 2012, would he sign the ACUPCC, and he said he would. And so, then that led to the need for a climate commitment and implementation committee.

00:09:48 **James**

And so, I sent out an email and asked folks if they would be interested in joining that. And Chisa, and Chris, and Cameron were the earliest responders. We also had student members and others from the administration, Jeanne Marie Velickovic, who were early on members.

00:10:06 **James**

But it was really Chisa and Chris in particular, and also Cameron, who did the first greenhouse gas inventory that was ever done at Mt. SAC, who really played the key role, enabling us to complete the Climate Action Plan.

00:10:22 **Chisa**

I wanted to just back up for a minute, and for people to know, ACUPCC is the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment. And that's what the climate commitment that we are now part of was called. After we all got the acronym down, they changed their name. So, now, it is climate commitment and we're particularly part of the carbon commitment through Second Nature.

00:10:45 **Chisa**

So, that's an organization that is - is who we report to around the climate commitment. So, we've made a commitment, we've joined other colleges and universities in making that commitment. And we have to state in a Climate Action Plan, what our goals are, and how we plan to meet them.

00:11:05 **Chisa**

And as James mentioned, part of that was to put ... there had to be some campus institutionalization that happened. And of course, that's true to make any plan come to fruition, but that also, was a requirement of the ACUPCC (now Second Nature) that we have some sort of institutionalized group working on this. So, that's where the Climate Commitment Implementation Committee was born out of that.

00:11:32 **Chisa**

That group has now changed their name to the Climate Commitment and Environmental Justice Committee. And so, that work is also continuing. Then that group as what was then CCIC, worked together to develop the Climate Action Plan, which would be then how we are going to get ourselves to net zero. And what other activities we were going to take to meet the climate commitment.

00:12:01 **Tania**

Thank you so much, guys. Yeah, James, go ahead.

00:12:04 **James**

Well, there was one other thing that I wanted to add to build on what Chisa said, which was so important, the information she just added. And that is that the way that we created the CAP was unique compared to a lot of other schools. We really put in a lot of effort to develop a consensus and a democratic process that would really include all stakeholders on campus, especially the student body.

00:12:36 **James**

So, from the very beginning, you see, there's been this partnership between faculty and students to create the CAP and also a viable sustainability community at Mt. SAC. And so, when we developed the CAP, we organized these CAP conferences, bringing together people from facilities, from purchasing, from student government, from different departments on campus - all of these different stakeholders from the grounds crew and so on, to kind of get everybody's input in terms of what they would like to see in the CAP.

00:13:11 **James**

And we had two of those conferences. We also had an Eco-Charrette, which the HMC architects put together. And then Chisa was the main spark log for what was probably the most important consensus-building activity that we did, which was the focus groups that were organized with individual stakeholders.

00:13:32 **James**

So, she did a terrific job in putting that together. And that was really the last step that enabled us to complete the Climate Action Plan, and then to get it approved by the president's advisory committee and report it to the board of trustees.

00:13:51 **Tania**

Thank you so much for that background. I have only been at Mt. SAC for five years and of course, I'm very involved with sustainability now. And so, for me, it is so interesting to see the history here and that what we're currently doing is still very much built on that. Our committee has representation from all of those groups that you mentioned.

00:14:14 **Tania**

We have facilities, we have students, we have grounds, we have faculty all represented in the Climate Commitment Environmental Justice Committee. So, we can understand now how that came about. The CAP or Climate Action Plan - we'll add a link to the podcast so that everybody can find it there, but you can certainly just find it also by looking it up on the Mt. SAC website.

00:14:38 **Tania**

But it is a very, very impressive document. And so, I'm curious now because that's years and years of work already, that you're sharing here, that it took to get to the point where we are and to have that Climate Action Plan. So, what guided you in the development of the actual document itself then? Because it is quite comprehensive.

00:15:01 **Chisa**

So, we took a lot of time doing background research, really looking at how other colleges and universities had approached their Climate Action Plans, what were included in them. There are some things that you have to address through the climate commitment. And so, we used that as our starting framework and then grew from there.

00:15:21 **Chisa**

There are a few things in terms of thinking about how to actually make it successful, to able to be implemented. And that's really where the collaborative approach came in, because we knew that we could write whatever we wanted about and say, how we think electricity should be handled. But unless the folks who run the plant agreed with it and thought it would be feasible, then it would never happen.

00:15:44 **Chisa**

So, really looking at what is actually possible and reminding ourselves, I think, that change is incremental. And so, really laying out a number of phases to be able to go through, which was something we came to actually at the end. We started with where we want to go and then thought about, okay, well, how could we possibly get there?

00:16:07 **Chisa**

But part of it was also approaching it - and certainly, other places had done this. And so, we were able to learn from them but as an institution of higher education. And some of that was the perspective that Dr. Scroggins brought to it of really looking at, as an institution of higher education, that we have a responsibility to contribute to the betterment of our environment and developing solutions, implementing solutions. And so, that's sort of a thread that I think you'll see throughout the Climate Action Plan.

00:16:40 **Chisa**

Another real benefit that we had was that the campus was ... we had started the Climate Action Plan already, but then the campus went into a process of developing an educational and facilities master plan. And we really paralleled our process with them. And so, we benefited in the Climate Action Plan from having access to the data and the studies and the work that they were doing that had to do with ... that was really more in the facilities side of the master plan, but had to do with the campus, campus development, things like the traffic survey.

00:17:16 **Chisa**

We would not have probably been able to fully fund a traffic survey and parking survey for the campus for the Climate Action Plan, but they were doing it for the facilities master plan. So, we were able to get access to all of that information and data and work with those same consultants on the Climate Action Plan. So, that was something that we definitely benefited from and understandably, a lot of other colleges, those pieces may not always align the same way.

00:17:46 **Chisa**

But especially for our first Climate Action Plan, I think that that was really important for us to have that - that very technical background, that deep understanding of where we were as a campus and where we wanted to go and how we might be able to get there.

00:18:01 **Chisa**

I think another thing was also in sort of our approach that we tried (and some of it had to do with who was involved) - but we tried to be as collaborative as possible. So, there are many opportunities for conflict or challenges in terms of trying to move a very broad, very challenging agenda forward.

00:18:22 **Chisa**

And so, it was an area where you know, in meetings, say with facilities that they've got bottom lines they've got to look at, they've got deadlines they've got to meet. And doing things in the most sustainable way is not always the easiest. So, really working together to figure out how do we reach the goals that we share together and articulate how we're going to do that in the Climate Action Plan.

00:18:49 **Chisa**

And part of that is really why it took so long. It was a long process to development, but it was because we had to build those relationships, come to those understanding. We had to learn about what their requirements were, what was possible, what wasn't, and then put that all together.

00:19:05 **Chisa**

The other piece and where I think James and Chris and I spent a lot of our time, were on the pieces around James provided a very strong background having to do with the policy context of sustainability planning and what was going on nationally, internationally, and particularly in the state of California. And therefore, why it made sense for us to be moving forward in this way.

00:19:29 **Chisa**

And Chris and I really worked on the institutionalization and on the curriculum component, and on the pieces that were faculty-driven. And so, that was all part of it and really building blocks to what came together and is now, like I think it's over 200 pages, which certainly wasn't where we thought we were headed when we got started.

00:19:57 **Tania**

Well, it's a beautiful document. And I think it really shows that it is a collaboration that involved people from different backgrounds and disciplines. Like I know Cameron for example, from chemistry, he probably had a lot of great things to contribute just for the greenhouse gas inventory. And Chisa, you already mentioned, James, with his background in political sciences, so how that contributed a good chunk also. So, James, I want to turn it over to you.

00:20:26 **James**

Well, Chisa mentioned some really important things. She kind of also mentioned again, the collaborative process of developing the CAP. And I think in that connection, it's worth mentioning that M t. SAC has won awards, including the California Higher Education Sustainability Conference Award and a Board of Governors Award. The CHESC Award was actually for the collaborative way that we went about developing the CAP and starting to implement it.

00:20:59 **James**

And we've recently won an award from San Diego Green Building Council as well. So, that collaborative aspect of the way that we went about creating the CAP is not a common way that most schools develop this kind of document. I mean, you would think that it would be the only way that schools would go about it, but it's not, in fact, the way that most schools have gone about it. So, we are fairly unique in that sense.

00:21:29 **James**

Chisa also mentioned looking to other schools for best practices. That's been a central component of our approach from the beginning. We brought a couple of speakers as part of our Earth Day lecture series, Melinda or Mimi Riley from Butte College and Genevieve Bertone from Santa Monica College to talk to us about the way they develop their Climate Action Plan.

00:21:53 **James**

And as some of your listeners may know, Butte College produces over a hundred percent of the electricity that it needs for its campus from its massive solar panel array. And so, they have actually installed solar that provides more than 40% of all of their energy requirements at the school. They also have a number of EV charging stations on campus.

00:22:22 **James**

And Santa Monica College is a great model in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transportation. They have so many different ways for students to get to and from campus and to get around campus with bicycles. So, everything from public transportation with buses and trains to Uber and Lyft, and you know other ways they can get to and from as well. And there's a ride-share app that they make available to their students also.

00:22:56 **Tania**

You bring up an important point here. Nobody has to reinvent the wheel. And so, I was curious about that, where you looked for inspiration also. So, that is really nice to hear that we have other campuses in the region, very close by that we can look to and learn from.

00:23:14 **Tania**

I want to turn our attention a little bit to the document itself now, our Climate Action Plan. And what are some key topics that are addressed in the Climate Action Plan? You guys already mentioned that it's now almost 200-page document. And so, maybe you could share a little bit more - Chisa already kind of indicated earlier that there's some aspects that have to do with instruction and more faculty side, but then there's also of course, the greenhouse gas inventory.

00:23:41 **Tania**

But so, maybe you can share a few of the key topics people can look forward to as they explore the Climate Action Plan. James, you want to get us started?

00:23:53 **James**

I would just simply reply that there are four key components that Second Nature required be included. Well, "required" is a strong word. They strongly suggested that they be included in a Climate Action Plan that a school develops.

00:24:09 **James**

So, the first was what's your plan for reducing greenhouse gas emissions? And so, that's the first and longest part of our Climate Action Plan. And that was authored basically in partnership with facilities by HMC architects. The second part as Chisa said, is the incorporation of sustainability into the curriculum across the curriculum.

00:24:32 **James**

So, the objective is what you're working on and doing such great job with since you're already offering professional development training in this area (Tania, you, and Jennifer) is helping faculty to develop sustainability into the design of their courses and helping as many faculty and as many disciplines as possible to do that, so that every Mt SAC student will encounter sustainability as part of their education, part of their educational experience at Mt. SAC.

00:25:06 **James**

So, that's really what Chisa and Chris Briggs worked on and did so much research, looking at other schools to pull that part of the CAP together. Then there is a component that is about research, so incorporating sustainability into the research agenda of the college.

00:25:23 **James**

So, there are some things about that in the CAP, and we can develop that more fully going forward. And then the final section deals with basically forming partnerships with members of the community, whether that's city government, County government, businesses in the community, civic organizations in the community, or other institutions to do education on climate change and sustainability, or projects that are about sustainability and climate change.

00:25:59 **James**

Whether it's greenhouse gas reduction or adapting to climate change, it's just going to inevitably happen regardless of what we do from this point forward. And Mt. SAC has already done some work in that area.

00:26:13 **James**

I mean, there was a student Renee Jimenez at Mt. SAC, not too long ago who organized a park cleanup with 11 different parks in the city of Walnut. There was a prize at the horticulture club on campus; one for installing drought-tolerant gardens at elementary schools in surrounding communities. So, this is another area that is potentially very fruitful for Mt. SAC.

00:26:40 **Tania**

Thank you so much for sharing that. And it is a big endeavor. So, we are doing what we can, but we're also really looking forward to having a sustainability director on our campus at some point, so that this person can basically oversee all of those efforts. Because it is a lot for us to do as faculty where we have so many other obligations with our students as well.

00:27:07 **Chisa**

I think one of the things that I'm thinking about as we're talking about the Climate Action Plan and sort of reflecting on the work, is there's this two feelings I have at the same time. One is that we've done so much and accomplished so very much. And then the other at the exact same time is we have so much further to go.

00:27:27 **Chisa**

And I think in this work, that that's a constant push and pull and a constant balance. But I don't want us to be so focused on what we still need to do that we forget to celebrate what we have accomplished. And so, as you mentioned, that we have heard that the hiring of a sustainability director has been approved, and that that process is going to go forward.

00:27:49 **Chisa**

That you as our sustainable coordinator, that that position has been created, that the funds have been set aside, so there's a position, an ongoing position for a faculty member to be coordinating those components of the Climate Action Plan implementation in and of itself is a great success. Especially when we think back to the time of early on when we were just trying to get the commitment signed.

00:28:17 **Chisa**

And the other piece of it that I think is so important about the Climate Action Plan is that it is established as a priority for the entire campus taking action on climate. And I think that that really, the importance of that is so deep because it really is pervasive. It impacts our planning, it impacts purchasing, it impacts building, which we have a huge building program happening right now on campus.

00:28:44 **Chisa**

I think there are over 200 projects happening - really, really some of them quite large, and all of those are happening with sustainability and the impact on the climate being considered in every step that's being taken there.

00:28:59 **Chisa**

So, I think that the writing of the plan is very important, having a sense of where we're going and how we're going to get there is very important. But then another important piece is just this commitment of the college as an institution to working towards climate action and zero carbon emissions.

00:29:18 **Chisa**

And that really is significant, especially for an institution of our size that has the impact that we have. So, then the exciting thing is thinking about spreading that. And one of the great ways that we spread our knowledge and information is in our courses.

00:29:35 **Chisa**

So, the work that you're doing right now to develop a framework for faculty who want to integrate sustainability into their courses, and then will have the leaf designated courses, and students will be able to identify, "If I want to further my knowledge on these areas and topics, how do I do that?"

00:29:54 **Chisa**

So, I think balancing ... we're doing so much, we're doing a lot of great work. We've already accomplished a lot and then continuing to commit to working towards our goals.

00:30:09 **Tania**

And it must be so gratifying for you two, who have been on this campus for so long and have been instrumental, basically, the starting point for sustainability on our campus and getting all these things pushed through, culminating in our Climate Action Plan, who really finally then became, I guess, a document in 2018. So, it's not that long ago that we've had that.

00:30:34 **Tania**

So, I'm really very humbled by the amazing work you both have done. James, do you have any closing remarks for our listeners?

00:30:43 **James**

Well, I guess, I would just kind of build on what Chisa said about realizing how much there is to be done. Because what we're hearing from the scientific community is that there is warming baked into the cake now with the number of greenhouse gas emissions that we already have. I was looking at an article online this morning saying that it will take us over two degrees Celsius by the end of this century.

00:31:10 **James**

So, we will exceed the more conservative targets to the ITCC. But the good news is they say that if we undertake a massive mobilization, that we can avoid the worst of climate change and basically, keep our economies and our civilizations intact.

00:31:33 **James**

So, that really brings into view the hope that we have now with the new Biden administration. I mean, in California, we've been fortunate to have good legislation related to climate like AB 32, and SB 350, and SB 100 that commits California to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, 80% below 1990 levels by 2050, and getting a hundred percent of our energy from renewable sources of energy by 2045, for instance.

00:32:07 **James**

But now California, with the new government in Washington, and Biden's big commitments that he's made on investments in climate change and green economy has the wind at its back a little bit. And so, there's really a reason to feel hopeful and even enthusiastic about the future where sustainability and climate change are concerned.

00:32:33 **Tania**

Thank you so much. Thank you again, both Chisa and James - it was such a pleasure to talk with you.

00:32:38 **Chisa**

Thank you, Tania.

00:32:43 **Christina**

Thank you for listening to the Magic Mountie Podcast. Remember to subscribe on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you like to get your podcasts, so you can listen in the car, in your office, or however you like to listen.

00:32:56 **Christina**

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