**Pillars of Sustainability: People, Prosperity, and Planet**

**Episode 172**

00:00:00 **Eera**

Here, you see a shot of the campus and certainly there's so many buildings, so much asphalt, so much paving, but quite a bountiful resource of trees. And these trees do so much for us as so many of you know. We've been doing a tree inventory over the past couple of years. Currently, we're at about 2,514 trees.

00:00:16 **Eera**

We aim to get to 4,000 by 2030, it's entirely possible. These trees are going to provide us with shade certainly and visual relief, but also, carbon storage, pollution removal, avoided run-off, and dollars saved because they actually save us money in terms of energy efficiency.

00:00:31 **Eera**

This is an amazing resource that we have right here on our campus. Something that we can do to promote our urban forest and really promote climate action just through the promotion of trees.

00:00:44 **Christina**

Hi, I'm Christina Barsi.

00:00:46 **Sun**

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

00:00:50 **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.

00:01:07 **Sun**

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

00:01:11 **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.

00:01:15 **Speaker 2**

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

00:01:21 **Sun**

From transforming part-time into full-time-

00:01:24 **Speaker 1**

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

00:01:31 **Christina**

Or just finding time to soak in the campus.

00:01:33 **Speaker 1**

Think of the natural environment around us as a library.

00:01:36 **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.

00:01:48 **Sun**

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

00:01:53 **Christina**

And this is the Magic Mountie Podcast.

00:02:01 **Sun**

Welcome back. This is your host, Sun Ezell. In today's episode, we bring you some highlights from Mt. SAC's 2023 Spring FLEX Day opening session.

00:02:08 **Sun**

The theme of this year's spring FLEX Day is the college's strategical number five, to embed environmental, social, and economic sustainability into the work and decision-making processes of all areas of campus. Thanks for joining us to learn more about the three pillars of sustainability: people, prosperity, and planet.

00:02:32 **Tania**

Good morning, and welcome to Spring FLEX Day. My name is Tania Anders as Senate Co-vice President, Professor of Geosciences, Sustainability Coordinator, and your host for this morning's event. We are excited that you are here today to join us as we learn together.

00:02:49 **Tania**

We will begin this morning by expressing our gratitude and appreciation for the land on which we reside and work. The Tongva are the indigenous people of California from the Los Angeles Basin and Southern Channel Islands.

00:03:02 **Tania**

Mt. SAC is geographically situated on the traditional lands of the Tongva peoples. We acknowledge their communities, their elders, both past and present, as well as future generations. We strive to honor the land and the people who have stewarded this land, and resisted colonization throughout the generations.

00:03:19 **Tania**

Before we start our program, I would like to thank the individuals of my team who put so much time and energy into making FLEX Day happen.

00:03:28 **Tania**

Thank you to the FLEX Day Planning Committee whose members include Shiloh Blacksher, Elizabeth Sanchez, Kelly Rivera, and Lisa Rodriguez. Thank you to my co-senate leaders, Roger Willis and Sara Mestas. Thank you to POD, especially Elda Blount, who is simply amazing, and the event services team, Cindy Parks, Mike Nichols, and Paul Walker who are all working in the background for you right now.

00:03:54 **Tania**

You are all such talented individuals and such a pleasure to work with. Let's give them a virtual round of applause everyone. I know you only have the chat, but today, would just not be possible without all of their help.

00:04:08 **Tania**

I would also like to thank all the presenters of the breakout sessions who will be sharing their expertise with you. Thank you, all of you made today possible.

00:04:18 **Tania**

Our next presenter, the Dean of ACCESS and Wellness, Malia Flood, will share with us how her team supports both the people and prosperity aspects of sustainability on our campus, and how you can do your share to help our ACCESS students. Malia, the stage is yours.

00:04:37 **Malia**

Good morning everyone. My name is Malia Flood and I serve as the Dean of ACCESS and Wellness. And thank you very much to the FLEX team for giving ACCESS a few minutes today.

00:04:47 **Malia**

So, what is ACCESS? ACCESS is Accessibility Resource Centers for Students commonly known as ACCESS. And we're the program Mount Mt. SAC that provides services and authorized accommodations for students with disabilities and medical conditions.

00:05:01 **Malia**

ACCESS services are voluntary and confidential, and we're really here as a partnership between the students instructional faculty, and ACCESS to ensure accessibility at Mt. SAC. So, the theme of people and prosperity really resonates with what we all do together.

00:05:20 **Malia**

So, people, it is a partnership, and each has their own responsibilities. So, the student is responsible for applying to ACCESS, providing us with disability documentation, meeting with their ACCESS counselor, and then providing you, the faculty with their authorized accommodations.

00:05:38 **Malia**

Instructional faculty, responsibilities are to provide those accommodations in the classroom, and then to reach out to ACCESS if you have any questions, concerns, need, answers about how to provide any accommodations. And then the ACCESS faculty and staff, we're here to support this process, to be the bridge between the student and the instructional faculty in creating that accessibility in the classroom. So, it's an interactive process that takes us all.

00:06:03 **Malia**

And then prosperity, so the prosperity is we're all in the same business. Our common purpose is student success. So, really quickly, some helpful tips - have a syllabus statement that notify students of ACCESS and ask students to inform you if they have any disability-related accommodation needs.

00:06:23 **Malia**

Over the years in working with students, I've had students tell me that it really makes a difference when the instructor reads the syllabus statement out loud. It helps to create that welcoming environment and the student say, "Okay, I can talk to this professor" because it's not always easy for students to disclose and ask for accommodations.

00:06:40 **Malia**

When the student comes up to you, asks for their academic accommodation plan for the current semester. If they don't have one or they try to talk to you about disability accommodations without an AAP or with some other kind of documentation, refer them to ACCESS so that we can make sure that they get the proper services and we've really connected them with what they need.

00:07:00 **Malia**

A lot of students have a note taker as an accommodation, whether it's a student with a mobility challenge, learning disability, ADHD. So, when you can assist with note taker recruitment - I know and I was teaching, I would kind of look at that front row, you can see the students that are taking good notes, and help with that recruitment, let students know that they are paid by ACCESS to take notes and they would come and apply to us to serve as a note taker.

00:07:27 **Malia**

Ensure that all videos and clips are captioned. And again, if you have any questions about how a particular accommodation might work in your classroom or if you have to do it this way, can we do it this way? That's what we're here for, is to work with you to answer any of those questions.

00:07:41 **Malia**

So, a couple things we want to let you know, ACCESS, we do offer English and math support classes. So, some of them are linked to English and math classes, and some are prep classes. So, if you know a student that's struggling with an English and math, this might be a good resource for them.

00:07:58 **Malia**

We do offer learning disability assessments. So, if you have a student in your class that you're concerned with academically or something just doesn't seem right, they're engaged in class and they know the material but they fail the test, anything like that, you get a feeling as an instructor - call us and we can help you walk through the process or refer the student to us and we can provide a learning disability assessment to see if they qualify for our services.

00:08:25 **Malia**

Again, we have accessible technology center that provides alternate media. So, any students that need braille or enlargement or anything like that in your class, we're here to help you with that. We have a puzzle project for students on the autism spectrum, and we have our wonderful deaf and heard of hearing center that provides resources and also a community for our deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

00:08:45 **Malia**

And so, just to add, I want to include a slide about framing disability. In the past, disability was really thought of through a medical model where we have to identify what is wrong with the individual, and then what can we do to fix it, and ACCESS we're seeing more as cure, charity, accommodation. And I think now the move is really towards a social justice model along with all other equity groups.

00:09:11 **Malia**

So, looking at how the environment might be the disabling factor for a person with a disability. So, for example, a film that's not captioned is disabling for the person who is deaf. It's not their deafness that's disabling them.

00:09:26 **Malia**

So, again, as a college community, as we continue to move towards a social justice model to look at our environment and how we can create an environment that is welcoming and accessible to all students, including students with disability. So, looking at ACCESS through a systemic framework.

00:09:44 **Malia**

And with that, I thank you for your time and I wish everyone a wonderful great spring semester.

00:09:51 **Tania**

Thank you so much, Malia. I loved how you framed that and what great timing for us as we come back to campus next week, and to all keep that in mind.

00:10:00 **Tania**

Our next presenters are in a position that allows them to address all three pillars of sustainability: people prosperity, and planet. Please welcome Gary Nellesen, the Executive Director of Facilities Planning and Management and Eera Babtiwale, who I just use her short title, our as they share some updates about our facilities.

00:10:25 **Eera**

Thanks, Tania.

00:10:26 **Gary**

Good morning all. So, again, I'm Gary Nellesen, it's my privilege to serve the college as Executive Director of Facilities Planning and Management, and to build all of these amazing school facilities.

00:10:36 **Eera**

And I'm Eera Babtiwale, Special Projects Director of Sustainability, I work with Tania on an almost everyday basis, and with Gary here, in facilities.

00:10:45 **Gary**

So, I get to talk a little bit about people to start with. I need to really recognize the team aspect of what we do. You drive around campus, you see a lot of success with what's happening in terms of buildings, but also the way we're connecting those buildings together.

00:11:01 **Gary**

And I think that the team that is responsible for that, of course, is the project managers and the staff that support them and support the projects here in facilities, people that take care of the facilities. But certainly, beyond that, we should recognize a lot of contractors and folks that support that.

00:11:19 **Gary**

Our executive management, give us good guidelines and make quick decisions and also, continue to fight for ... to hold onto the resources in terms of people and physical resources that it will take to take care of these facilities for a long time.

00:11:34 **Gary**

Beyond that, of course, our board of trustees sets policies that give us the space to build things that are sustainable in these ways. Our administrative services team, everybody in administrative services is a big part of what we're doing here. Certainly, all the people that are involved in designing and getting us to the point where we have excellent facilities at the end when we built something, put so much of their extra time and talent into this process.

00:12:00 **Gary**

And of course, the public that is paying for all of this stuff when they pay their property taxes or they pay their rent one way or the other, their commitment to our building program going all the way back to 2000, is outstanding. We've got a lot going on right now. We're spending over 150 million a year on facilities that comes from those taxes that people chose to pay.

00:12:21 **Gary**

They voted for it. It's an amazing contribution to this college. And I've got a couple of interesting examples, lots to talk about. We're really just focusing on a couple of projects, our new stadium field and track. You know, it seems like we're doing amazing things to meet the needs of our student athletes and our kinesiology students, but these facilities are for more than just our student athletes and our students in general.

00:12:47 **Gary**

The Wellness Center, this is a brand new place where all of us, including the community can come to maintain their own physical well-being, to do the self-care things that are necessary to a productive and a life of good well-being. These facilities are built to last.

00:13:04 **Gary**

Just connecting back to what Malia was talking about a little bit, this is really on the east side of the campus, the Cal Poly side. And as we go through these next few projects, we're going to see that you'll be able to walk from this very point to the west all the way to Grand Avenue, across pedestrian bridges and along the main east-west spine of our campus, often called the Miracle Mile, all the way to the front door of the Sophia Clark Theater.

00:13:31 **Gary**

And that's a huge accomplishment for a college that is as steep as Mt. SAC is. And that's just one example. There's so much more what we're doing in terms of accessibility so that these facilities will serve all of us, all people in this community. And this is the aquatics portion of it.

00:13:48 **Gary**

This replaces our 1970s pool. The facility is designed to be able to run two water polo games at the same time with warmup planes, a diving competition. This was built in a way that is well-taken care of. We have the resources to take care of it correctly. Then this will be in place for 50 years, another small remodel, another 50 years. And we can just keep going.

00:14:10 **Gary**

These buildings are built with the kinds of materials that are both sustainable but also last a long time. The value that is coming to us from these investments means that those spaces will be maintainable for a reasonable cost. These are huge, very complicated facilities. And I should just recognize the team that takes care of them. The commitment that our administration has made to staffing these facilities for the long - term success.

00:14:35 **Gary**

Now, we're talking about our student center - facility doesn't just provide a place for our students to be both safely and securely inside, but also, outside. And it goes beyond that even to the third floor where we're creating an amazing facility for the community, for the campus to come together, and for events. And that's a way that we're serving people beyond just our campus community.

00:15:01 **Gary**

We're very close to completing this project. The area will be outdoor gathering space with natural shade, seating places for students, connectivity, places to plug your phones in, and is built in a way that it can be used all through the year, even in the hottest days or even on the cooler days like today, very effectively by students.

00:15:23 **Gary**

These are open spaces, are things that the faculty asked for. From my memory back in 2008 when we first did measure RR, it was built into our facilities master plan and now they're coming to fruition. So, places for students to be at all different levels of interaction.

00:15:37 **Gary**

From quiet spaces to just wide-open gathering spaces, study rooms with all the best tech that we can provide, and with furniture and support items that students will be comfortable in. And that will be there in 20 years and in 30 years. They won't be broken and getting drug outside and put under the pine tree. Really putting a lot of effort into doing those things correctly, doing them right. And that's value in my view.

00:16:03 **Gary**

Our pedestrian bridge work is wrapping up right now. That bridge is a part of that accessible pathway from parking on into the core of campus. It's a big effort. You know, we never really built a giant bridge like that over the street. Done very well safely, and our transit center that will connect people from the entire community and beyond, students that we serve that are outside of our district, will be able to come very efficiently to our campus, and then be connected to this main east, west spine and get around campus easily, open, and accessible for everyone.

00:16:34 **Gary**

And then shade trees. So, a big effort that we're doing is to provide natural shade to buy trees that populate our campus to cool it to reduce the heat island effect of large paved area, and also, to support the academic programs where students can actually see specimens of trees. And this is a big investment both on the front end, but also, on the long-term where we have to have the folks to care for these plants and trees, this landscape.

00:17:03 **Gary**

Much of it has been done with water-efficient landscape. And then just kind of last comment, working on tying in our athletics fields to the south of Temple to for the first time, recycled water on campus. And I could talk a lot more about how our sustainability efforts affect and serve all of us on this campus and beyond in our community. It's a privilege to serve this college and be able to build such amazing facilities here.

00:17:30 **Gary**

So, I think Eera, you're up.

00:17:31 **Eera**

Thanks, Gary.

00:17:32 **Gary**

I left plenty of anytime.

00:17:33 **Eera**

You did, you absolutely did. I mean, it's a great segue talking about shade trees and planet is of course, one of the pillars of sustainability, and we do so much on Mt. SAC's campus to really promote support, steward, and protect our planet here, right here in our own backyard.

00:17:47 **Eera**

The very real example is the wildlife sanctuary itself. So many of you have been able to visit it and you know what a precious gem it is for our campus. Well, it's going to be getting a refresh with a brand new visitor center and more prominent entry.

00:17:59 **Eera**

As a matter of fact, just a few weeks ago, we had the groundbreaking ceremony and Professor Flisik and Professor Cooper were there speaking, the co-directors of the sanctuary who have done an amazing job of really providing this amazing resource to everybody in our community, both on campus and off campus.

00:18:13 **Eera**

And now, with this new visitor center and entry, the sanctuary is going to have even more prominence, it'll be more accessible, it'll get the light that it needs to have to really exemplify how we can take care of our environment both here on campus, and then at home when we go back to our families. It's just an exemplary resource that we have on campus of really how we can promote the planet and protect it.

00:18:32 **Eera**

In addition, we're really promoting the ability of the campus to serve as an urban forest in this concrete jungle that is Southern California. Here you see a shot of the campus and certainly, there's so many buildings, so much asphalt, so much paving, but quite a bountiful resource of trees. And these trees do so much for us as so many of you know.

00:18:50 **Eera**

We've been doing a tree inventory over the past couple of years. Currently, we're at about 2,514 trees. We aim to get to 4,000 by 2030. It's entirely possible. These trees are going to provide us with shade certainly and visual relief, but also, carbon storage, pollution removal, avoided run-off, and dollars saved because they actually save us money in terms of energy efficiency.

00:19:11 **Eera**

This is an amazing resource that we have right here on our campus. Something that we can do to promote our urban forest and really promote climate action just through the promotion of trees.

00:19:21 **Eera**

In addition, in terms of the planet, we're doing so much in terms of habitat restoration and preservation. The west parcel, for example, is a small parcel of land, about eight acres of land across the way. And the college had a choice to actually develop this but chose rather to do habitat restoration.

00:19:37 **Eera**

So, we went in there, all the invasive, noxious weeds were taken out, and then indigenous native dropped tolerant plants were reinstituted, recycled water from Walnut Valley Water District was brought into place for the first five years to help those plants established.

00:19:50 **Eera**

And we're already seeing the benefits of this restoration through the reintroduction of the California nat catcher, an endangered species. And we've already seen it nesting and beginning to flourish in this parcel of land.

00:20:02 **Eera**

So, continuing this commitment, a college recently decided to purchase 72.7 acres of land in the buzzard peak area near Grand Avenue to preserve in perpetuity for the life of the campus. So, this is going to again, promote wildlife flora and fauna. It's also going to provide us with an opportunity to offset our carbon through carbon sequestration.

00:20:21 **Eera**

This is an amazing resource and again, a commitment that the college is making to not just our campus, but to the surrounding community and to our planet. In addition, in terms of the planet right here on our own campus, in the heart of campus, we're beginning to look at how we can promote everyday lifestyle changes through things such as organics collection.

00:20:38 **Eera**

And so, in the next few months, you'll be seeing a revamp of the receptacles that we have across campus. For example, those old concrete receptacles that we use for landfill and for recycling are going to phase out and will be phasing in big bellies, which is a brand that allows us to use receptacles that have bins for recycling for landfill and trash. And for composting, they'll include signage that will be educational so people will be able to understand how to dispose of the material that they have in their hands.

00:21:03 **Eera**

They're also going to be Bluetooth-enabled. So, they'll communicate to our ground staff as to when they're at full capacity and need to be changed out. So, they're very efficient. Really excited about this. It will have a kickoff probably in February.

00:21:15 **Eera**

In terms of prosperity, this pillar of sustainability is often overlooked and to Nellesen's point, there's so much to financial sustainability that we can really do.

00:21:23 **Eera**

In terms of our physical campus, we have of course, electric vehicle charging stations available to EV drivers, which is going to become more and more common as California begins to phase out of fossil fuel cars in 2035. And so, having the infrastructure in place to allow EV drivers to charge while they're on campus is absolutely key.

00:21:42 **Eera**

We have 59 charging stations available in the two new parking structures and we intend to bring on more to the heart of campus, working with our utility provider. And then to really help us synergize the EV charging stations and the electrical building energy used and consumption, we're looking very, very hard at bringing on solar panels onto our campus for the first time.

00:22:01 **Eera**

A total of 2.3 megawatts of energy is what we're considering right now. Three different locations and this is going to offset about 18 to 20% of our existing electrical use. At the same time, we're looking at how we can really tighten up our operations and make this campus run more smoothly and more energy efficiently. It's a really fine operation.

00:22:20 **Eera**

A lot of coordination is being done here to make sure that we can come off of our reliance of electricity with the utility provider and become much more self-reliant. At the same time, we want to look at how we can phase out of natural gas dependency. This is absolutely critical.

00:22:34 **Eera**

Over the next few decades, California's looking at a decarbonization plan, intends to become carbon electric free by 2045. And so, it behooves us to really do the same thing. We are essentially a small city here at Mt. SAC. We are a huge utility consumer, and so, looking at how we can come off of our dependency of natural gas and become more self-reliant is absolutely key.

00:22:55 **Eera**

We're looking at all of our buildings, all the equipment, the central plant, the thermal energy storage system, and how we can again, tighten up our operations, and then offset the energy use that we use on campus. This of course, isn't a light switch that we can simply turn on and off. It will be a phased approach looking at a 25%, 50% and then a hundred percent reduction in emissions between now and 2050, if not sooner, 2045 would be the ideal goal.

00:23:21 **Eera**

And the hope here is really to create a campus that is truly symbiotic. One that is able to promote education, promote our environment, promote financial sustainability all at the same time. That's that people, planet, and prosperity. And the campus is truly a living example of that.

00:23:36 **Eera**

Something we're really excited about. We're really hoping that you are also motivated and inspired by and if you have any questions, Gary and I, are absolutely available to you to talk things sustainability at any time. Feel free to reach out to us.

00:23:49 **Tania**

Thank you so much, Eera and Gary. It is amazing how our campus has changed over just the past few years. Yesterday, I had an opportunity to tour our new Wellness Center and the pool area, and they're just such amazing facilities.

00:24:01 **Tania**

Please be on the lookout for information from the athletics team on how to register for using the facilities this spring, their opening hours and classes they offer for us. An email should be coming out with this information tomorrow or early next week.

00:24:19 **Christina**

Thank you for listening to the Magic Mountie Podcast, and don't forget to share your favorite episodes.