

Assessment of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Efforts in the UCLA Sustainability Community Through Student Experiences



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Abstract

Sustainability Action Research’s Team Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) was created to assess EDI in the UCLA sustainability community and what shortcomings needed to be addressed to cultivate a welcoming and inclusive environment for all students. Sustainability and Environmentalism have been historically upper-class and white-dominated fields, which many people feel is exclusive and contrary to the sustainability movement that is inherently tied to socioeconomic inequities. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that UCLA sustainability is educating leaders in sustainability from all backgrounds to address the intersectional aspects of sustainability.

Team EDI, therefore, conducted their research project, “Assessment of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Efforts in the UCLA Sustainability Community Through Student Experiences” over a twenty-week period by outreaching to the UCLA sustainability community and the broader UCLA community and leadership, distributing a comprehensive survey aimed at hearing directly from student experiences with sustainability and their identities, and hosting Community Conversations with students from one of three key identity groups: Race and Ethnicity; Class and Socioeconomic Status; and Gender and Sexuality. Additional identity groups of significance were Ability and Education. Our research uncovered decentralized EDI efforts throughout the UCLA sustainability community that, while showing intent to create more welcoming and inclusive spaces, ultimately fall short for some students from marginalized communities that seek more representation in leadership and course material. Therefore, we provide recommendations to the UCLA sustainability community to centralize EDI efforts, collaborate with diverse identity organizations, and implement student-initiated and run EDI resources, guides, and training sessions.

Introduction

Team Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) investigated the current status of EDI in sustainability at UCLA, specifically through student feedback, and identified shortcomings in relationships, access to, and accountability from sustainability leadership and culture. The project centered around this essential question: “What are students’ experiences in sustainability spaces at UCLA, and how might EDI practices address these shortcomings?”

The first four weeks of the project were spent interviewing key sustainability staff to understand their expectations and desired project outcomes. From weeks five to ten, we developed the aforementioned question to guide our research as we reached out to dozens of different student organizations and spoke to faculty and staff to develop the methodology for our survey. During Spring Break, our team met with UCLA’s Zero Waste Coordinator Kikei Wong who encouraged us to use her “Community Conversation” style of focus group to understand students’ survey responses in further detail. In week eleven we opened our survey up to undergraduates for two weeks and gathered 127 student responses. We analyzed the initial data,

finding that the three most common salient identities to students' interaction with sustainability were Race and Ethnicity; Class and Socioeconomic Status; and Gender and Sexuality. Given the saliency of these three identities, we decided to host Community Conversations to hear directly from students from these three key groups. We spent two weeks identifying six questions to ask Community Conversations participants (see Appendix B on Page 33 for the list of Community Conversation questions). We held our Community Conversations sessions during week six and began an in-depth analysis of survey and Community Conversations responses to create this Comprehensive Report in the final four weeks of our project. In addition to this review, we made an abridged deliverable with key information and summarized our significant findings in this [presentation](#).

Defining the UCLA Sustainability Community

Our project aimed to investigate the climate of EDI in the UCLA sustainability community, which we defined as all UCLA undergraduate students, graduate students, staff, and faculty invested and involved with sustainability initiatives, education, and policies at UCLA. We then defined UCLA sustainability as initiatives, programs, events, and projects led by these students, staff, and faculty.

As the first Sustainability Action Research (SAR) team investigating EDI in sustainability, partially as a result of social justice calls for inclusive, anti-racist practices in institutions, Team EDI established a foundation for future research to build on beyond the duration of the project. Our team recognizes that the lack of previous research greatly limits the scope of this project, and it is essential that more programs invest resources into ensuring EDI is implemented in all forms of sustainability at UCLA.

It is also important to acknowledge that Sustainability is widely a [white-dominated](#) and [represented field](#), yet environmental harms like climate change and injustice [disproportionately affect Black people, Indigenous people, and People of Color](#). Additionally, other marginalized groups like [folks with disabilities](#) and people that identify as [LGBTQ+](#) are also excluded from a widely heteronormative and ability-exclusive sustainability movement. Exclusiveness is perpetuated by spaces at universities that do not take it upon themselves to ensure that students of all backgrounds are welcomed into sustainability spaces and empowered to pursue their own form of leadership. Therefore, it is important that the UCLA sustainability community takes it upon themselves to actively pursue justice on an individual and institutional level by incorporating EDI into sustainability initiatives, education, and policies.

An EDI in sustainability project therefore must be informed by a framework founded on promoting environmental justice. Environmental justice issues are rooted in racism and classism and are systemic in this country because of laws and regulations that constantly marginalize vulnerable populations. Team EDI seeks to provide a research foundation to eliminate racism, discrimination, and unhealthy and dangerous environments for all people in the UCLA community to ensure UCLA is a just institution and environment.

A Foundation in Critical Theory and Intersectionality

Our EDI in sustainability project will have a foundation of intersectionality and Critical Race Theory to address the problems created by structural racism that hinder marginalized students' ability to exist in sustainability spaces at UCLA. Critical Race Theory scholars like UCLA's own Dr. Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw assert that racism is perpetuated by ideas of "color-blindness" and "neutrality" and are tools of the hegemony of white supremacy. Along with Feminist scholars, Queer theorists, and Disability studies experts, Critical Race Theorists understand the existence of intersectionality, which informs one's identity and perception ("Critical Race Theory"). Furthermore, Dr. Crenshaw's work on Intersectionality should also be understood, as it emphasizes the importance of understanding all levels and overlaps between identity and perception that create the conditions that the antidiscrimination and social justice movements seek to address (Cho et al. 2013). These theories inform our work, as we seek to allow students, faculty, staff, and community members the resources and spaces to exist comfortably in sustainability spaces while also asserting our responsibility to challenge oppressive systems and structures.

Defining EDI in Sustainability

We, therefore, define EDI in sustainability as...

1. Fostering an inclusive, safe, and welcoming sustainability community for people of all backgrounds, including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age, ability, gender identity, sexual orientation, status, religion, and education.
2. Including and elevating the voices and needs of historically underrepresented groups, like communities of color and low-income communities, in sustainability efforts.
3. Recognizing the existence of structural racism and discrimination and actively challenging these norms and preconceptions that pervade environmental science and sustainability fields.

Current EDI in Sustainability Initiatives

On an institutional level, UCLA promotes EDI in sustainability through courses offerings that emphasize the equity aspect of sustainability, such as Food: Lens for Environment and Sustainability (ENVIRON M1A), which focuses on the integration of environmental, social, and economic, and technological solutions for food production, security, and access; Environmental Sociology (ENVIRON M133), which focuses on the interrelations between social factors like class, race, gender, and religion, and environmental factors like pollution and waste disposal; and Environmental Justice through Multiple Lenses (ENVIRON M167), which focuses on the intersection between race, economic, class, and environment.

UCLA Sustainability has promoted EDI in sustainability through a variety of efforts and projects. For example, sustainability staff members are given training on social justice and sustainability and UCLA Housing and Residential Life organizes EDI-related programming like

the annual Student Leadership Institute for Climate Resilience retreat and Sustainival. Furthermore, UCLA Sustainability collaborates with the Basic Needs at the Community Programs Office on programs addressing food insecurity, such as Bruin Dine, and partners with Human-I-T to refurbish electronic waste that is then provided to under-served communities and low-income individuals.

Other current UCLA Sustainability EDI initiatives include the Office of Sustainability's EDI webpage and survey located on the Office's website <https://www.sustain.ucla.edu/>, the Institute of Environment and Sustainability's (IoES) newly formed EDI Committee, and student-run programming with the Office of Sustainability's Social Media Team. All of these initiatives aim to involve UCLA students directly so that it properly caters to the UCLA community. The Social Media Marketing Team for the UCLA Office of Sustainability is run by students who are passionate about sustainability and social justice, and the team creates content that is centered around inclusivity and diversity. The IoES EDI Committee plans to have three students (two graduate, one undergraduate) involved in the planning, decision making, and implementation of solutions to address any issues presented to the committee. All of these current EDI initiatives are bridging the gap between the university and students so that there is transparency and effective communication in place.

UCLA students have made considerable progress initiating efforts to promote EDI in sustainability. The Environmentalists of Color Collective aims to maintain a dialogue about how class, gender, ability, race, and nationality, and other backgrounds relate to sustainability, while E3: Ecology, Economy, and Equity emphasizes the three E's of sustainability and organizes efforts that incorporate environmental sustainability, economic viability, and social justice.

Methods

Our preliminary research consisted of reviewing EDI in sustainability reports, initiatives, and policies by other universities and environmental organizations to understand their purpose, methodology, and areas of success and for improvement, as detailed in our initial [Literature Review](#). This research informs our methodology, the three primary methods being: Outreach, Survey, and Community Conversations.

Outreach

In order to better understand Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in UCLA's sustainability community, we reached out to student leaders and faculty in sustainability and EDI spaces. Outreach consisted of contacting various student organizations and faculty on campus to establish a more concrete understanding of our team's project scope. For example, we connected with the Disabled Student Union, American Indian Student Association, Samahang Pilipino and Access Organization, Environmentalists of Color Collective, Afrikan Student Union, Queer Alliance, Muslim Student Association, and Transfer Leadership Coalition. We also contacted faculty and students in environmental and EDI fields for advice on our project proceedings and to better understand other EDI in sustainability efforts occurring at UCLA. Additionally, we

reached out to department faculty to familiarize them with our project and to use their connections to students and academic organizations to share our survey with general email lists. This allowed us to reach students beyond the comprehensive list of student organizations provided to us by Kikei Wong's Zero Waste outreach. Outreach efforts beyond contacting students included:

- Bonny Bentzin, the Deputy Chief Sustainability Officer, in the initial stages of our project to get an understanding of current EDI efforts in sustainability at UCLA and where our efforts would be best devoted.
- Patricia Châu Nguyễn, the Senior Director of EDI for UCLA Alumni, while drafting our survey to get general suggestions for effective surveys and narrowing our sample size from all students and faculty to only undergraduate students for easier data collection.
- Dr. Raphael, the IoES Director and EDI Committee lead, to get an expert opinion on the definition of EDI in sustainability and the purpose of the new EDI Committee, and how our groups can collaborate.
- Carl Maida and Dr. Cully Nordby, SAR advisors, to get advice on how to address personal questions in our survey.
- Nurit Katz, the Chief Sustainability Officer, to gather more information about EDI efforts at the campus and UC-wide levels. Recommendations received include gauging student awareness of the EDI webpage on the Sustainability website and accompanying survey.
- Danielle Acheampong, UCLA Student Affairs Information and Research Office (SAIRO) faculty member, for advice on our final draft survey.
- Kristen McKinney, SAIRO (Student Affairs Information and Research Office) director, for advice on distributing our final draft survey.
- Kikei Wong, Zero Waste Coordinator, for advice on survey outreach and Community Conversations, an inclusive dialogue term created by Wong, to get in-depth information on results from our surveys.

These meetings have directly informed our surveys, bringing us to the second phase of our methodology: our comprehensive survey of student experiences in sustainability and identities.

Survey

We created and distributed a survey to better understand general student experiences in sustainability related to EDI and how student identities experience their interaction with sustainability. A core tenet of crafting our survey was ensuring that it in itself was equitable, inclusive, and reached a diverse array of participants. This builds off of our outreach, where, in addition to contacting and establishing connections with diverse student organizations and departmental faculty, we worked with EDI faculty specialists to ensure our survey met EDI expectations. Since identity issues can be difficult to assess in survey responses, we identified and addressed various practical and EDI-conscious questions below.

The first section, “Knowledge of and Experience with Sustainability at UCLA,” was included to gather context of students’ understandings of sustainability in general and at UCLA. Additionally, this section identified initiatives, organizations, and policies that have reached and impacted students, including student clubs, educational topics like Environmental Justice, and the Office of Sustainability’s EDI webpage and survey form.

The second section, “Perception of Sustainability at UCLA,” provided students an opportunity to rate the level of inclusivity in the UCLA sustainability community based on Race and Ethnicity, Class and Socioeconomic Status, Gender and Sexuality, Ability, and representation in leadership positions.

The third section, “Experience with Courses That Discuss Environmental Issues,” provided students with an opportunity to rate the diversity of course material, faculty, and overall inclusiveness of intersectional topics of discussion.

The fifth section, “Reflect on Your Sustainability Experiences,” provided students with an opportunity to write in-depth feedback about their experiences in the UCLA sustainability community and general sustainability in relation to their most salient identities, which they were subsequently asked to indicate. These salient identity groups were then used to inform the topics of our Community Conversations sessions.

The sixth section, “Identities,” was included to establish a comprehensive and respectful demographic understanding of participants and to gather information on how identities and positionalities influence students’ experiences with sustainability spaces and initiatives at UCLA. Definitions and examples of responses were provided to ensure that participants understood what was being asked of them.

The final section, “Contact Information and Additional Information” provided participants with a link to a second survey to fill out their contact information so they could be properly compensated for their participation in our research. Funding from The Green Initiative Fund (TGIF) provided monetary compensation for students randomly selected through a raffle. The separate form ensured confidentiality for participants and de-identified the data gathered. The survey questions can be referenced in Appendix A on Pages 31-33.

Community Conversations

Lastly, we held Community Conversations to get an in-depth understanding of individual and grouped student experiences in sustainability related to EDI. Community Conversations built off of the results acquired from our survey and focused on three key groups: Race and Ethnicity; Class and Socioeconomic Status; and Gender and Sexuality. These groups were selected because student responses in our survey indicated that these identities were the most salient for most participants and because there is noted marginalization of BIPOC, LGBTQ+, low income, and socioeconomic status-identifying individuals in sustainability and environmentalism in general.

Survey participants that indicated a desire to participate in Community Conversations in our contact information survey were invited to participate in our Community Conversations. We also reached out to 64 student organizations and promoted our Community Conversations on the

UCLA Sustainability Instagram account. We had a total of 11 participants: 3 in the Race and Ethnicity session, 3 in the Class and Socioeconomic Status session, and 5 in the Gender and Sexuality session. We were also able to compensate all students participating in Community Conversations with funding provided by TGIF.

Our Community Conversations addressed these main points:

- What are individual student experiences in sustainability related to EDI, and how do they compare with each other and survey results?
- Where are areas in sustainability they feel require the most attention regarding EDI?
- What are EDI sustainability suggestions they hope to see at UCLA?

Each session was led by 2 Team EDI members, one facilitating the conversation, and the other taking notes and recording the discussion for further analysis. Participants were required to complete a Pre-Conversation Survey to provide their consent to record and participate in our research. This Pre-Conversation Survey can be referenced in Appendix C from Pages 33-34.

Overall, information collected from Outreach, Survey, and Community Conversations provides a data-driven and factual basis for action-oriented EDI recommendations for the UCLA sustainability community.

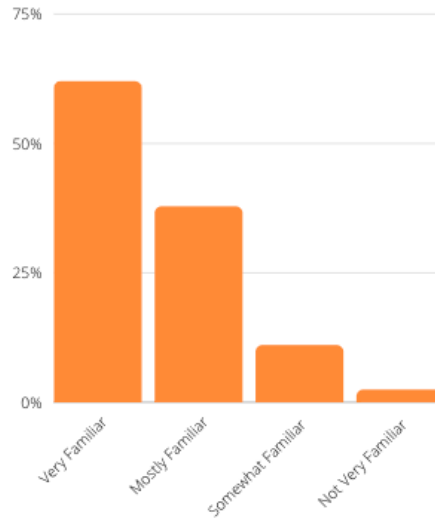
Results

Section 1: Knowledge of Sustainability in General and at UCLA

The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in Sustainability Assessment survey began by asking students about their general knowledge of sustainability definitions, concepts, issues, and solutions, and knowledge of sustainability specifically at UCLA.

In response to the question: “How familiar are you with the concept of sustainability? (Not very familiar, somewhat familiar, mostly familiar, or very familiar),” 86.6% of participants indicated they were mostly or very familiar with the concept of sustainability.

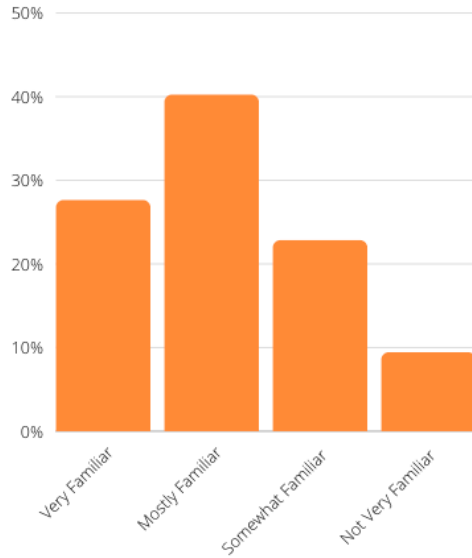
"How familiar are you with the concept of sustainability?" n=127



In response to the question: “Please provide a brief description of what sustainability means to you,” participants responded with various points of interest, including the importance of environmental stewardship, recycling and avoiding waste, individual action, general thriftiness, and ensuring the prosperity of future generations. Participants’ understanding of sustainability was rooted in living lifestyles that support the health and safety of the planet and all that live on it. Many participants also mentioned recycling and reusing as ways that individuals can act sustainably. Some participants also made a point to recognize that sustainability is rooted in “environment, equity, and economy,” environmental justice, and addressing the needs of vulnerable and underserved populations.

Furthermore, in response to the question: “How familiar are you with the concept of environmental justice? (Not very familiar, somewhat familiar, mostly familiar, or very familiar),” 67.8% of participants indicated they were mostly or very familiar with the concept of environmental justice.

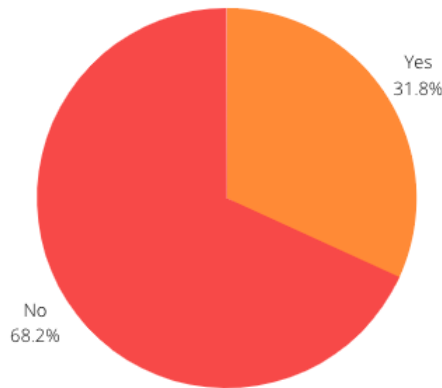
"How familiar are you with the concept of environmental justice?" n=127



In response to the question: “Do you know who to contact to voice your opinions on the sustainability community at UCLA?” only 31.8% of participants indicated they were sure of whom they could go to voice their opinions.

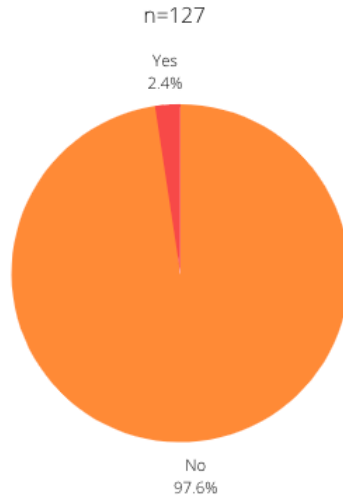
"Do you know whom to contact to voice your opinions on the sustainability community at UCLA?"

n=127



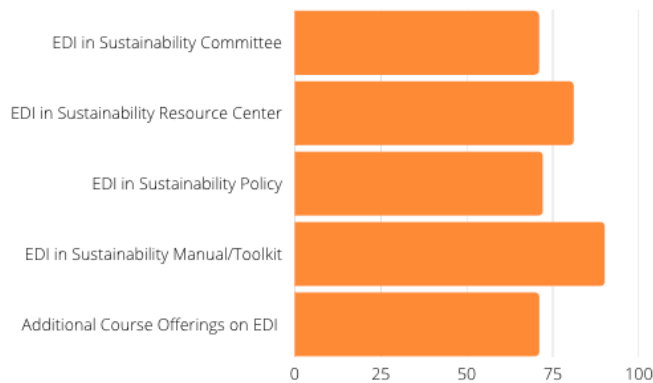
In response to the question: “Are you familiar with the EDI page on the sustain.ucla.edu website?” 97.6% of participants indicated that they were not familiar with the Office of Sustainability’s EDI webpage.

"Are you familiar with the EDI page on the sustain.ucla.edu website?"



Our survey also included a question that gauged student interest in various prospective EDI initiatives for the UCLA sustainability community, and a majority of participants indicated interest in the initiatives featured in the following chart:

"Which of the following EDI in sustainability student, faculty, and/or staff-led project(s) would you like to see at UCLA? (select all that apply)" n=127

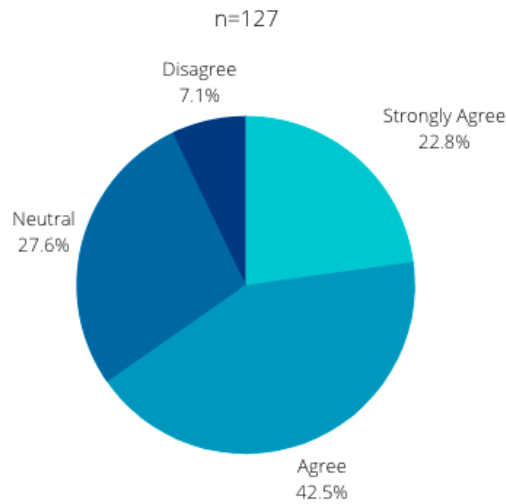


Section 2: Perception of Sustainability at UCLA

Our survey then asked participants to rank statements regarding the inclusivity of sustainability at UCLA on a scale of strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree.

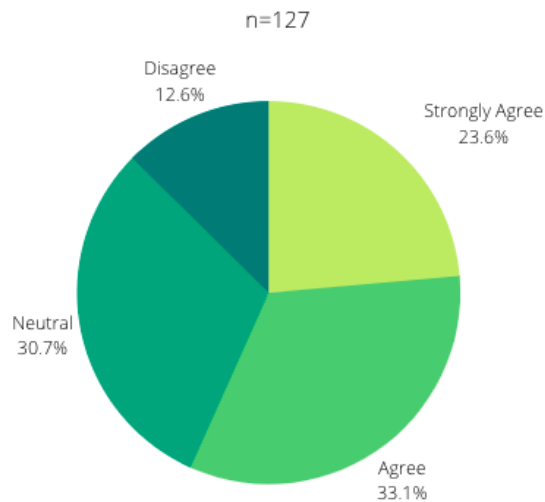
In response to the question: “Sustainability at UCLA encourages the participation of people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds,” 65.3% of participants “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that Sustainability at UCLA was inclusive of people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds.

"Sustainability at UCLA encourages the participation of people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds."



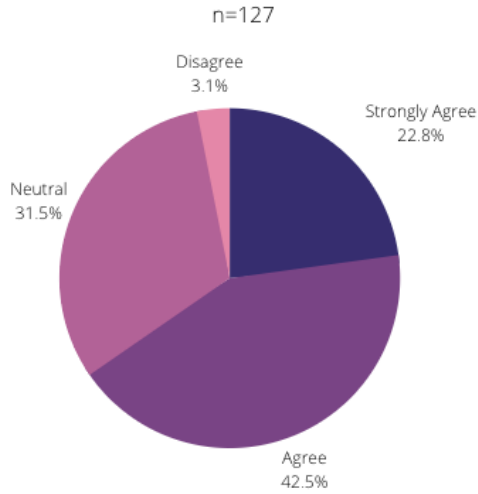
In response to the question: “Sustainability at UCLA encourages the participation of people of all socioeconomic backgrounds,” 56.7% of participants “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that Sustainability at UCLA was inclusive of people of all socioeconomic backgrounds.

"Sustainability at UCLA encourages the participation of people of all socioeconomic backgrounds."



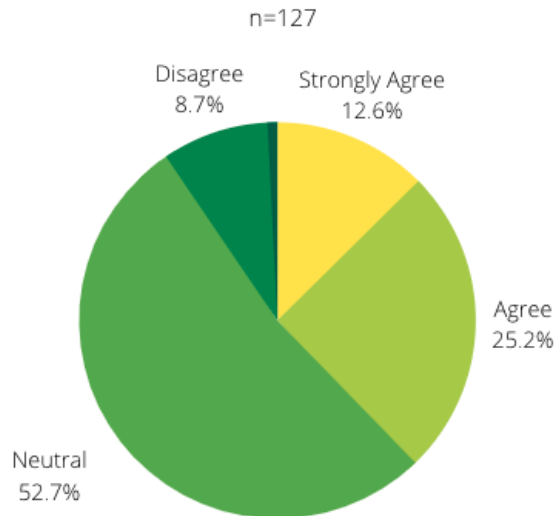
In response to the question: "Sustainability at UCLA is inclusive of LGBTQ+ people," 65.3% of participants "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that Sustainability at UCLA was inclusive of LGBTQ+ people.

"Sustainability at UCLA is inclusive of LGBTQ+ people."



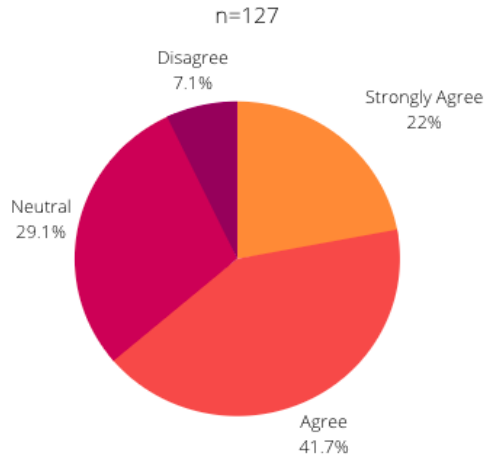
In response to the question: "Sustainability at UCLA is inclusive of people with disabilities," 37.8% of participants "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that Sustainability at UCLA was inclusive of people with disabilities.

"Sustainability at UCLA is inclusive of people with disabilities."



In response to the question: "I feel included and represented in sustainability efforts and spaces at UCLA," 63.7% of participants "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they feel included and represented in sustainability spaces and efforts.

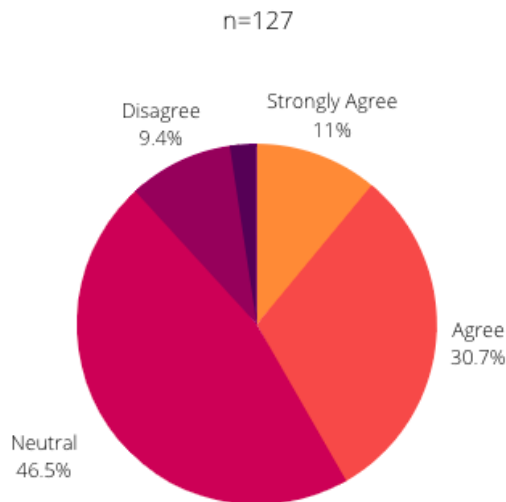
"I feel included and represented in sustainability efforts and spaces at UCLA."



Diversity of Sustainability Leadership

In response to the question: "Sustainability student leadership at UCLA is diverse," 41.7% of participants "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that student leadership is diverse.

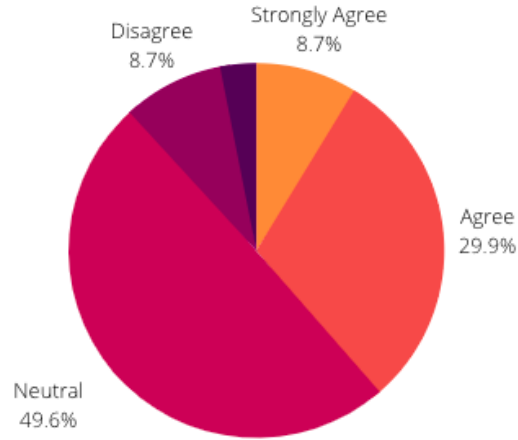
"Sustainability student leadership at UCLA is diverse."



In response to the question: "Sustainability faculty and staff leadership at UCLA is diverse," 38.6% of participants "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that faculty and staff leadership is diverse.

"Sustainability faculty and staff leadership at UCLA is diverse."

n=127



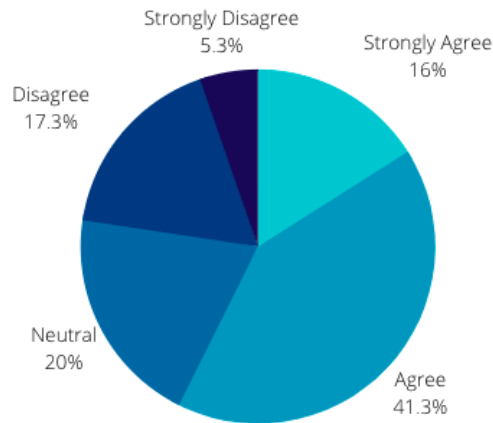
Section 3: Experience with Courses That Discuss Environmental Issues

Our survey then asked participants who have taken one or more environmental-related courses (59% of participants) to reflect on their experiences with environmental coursework to assess the diversity and inclusion of UCLA environmental coursework and material.

In response to the question: "My professors present a diverse array of course material from different racial and ethnic backgrounds," 57.3% of participants "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that environment-related course material is from different racial and ethnic perspectives.

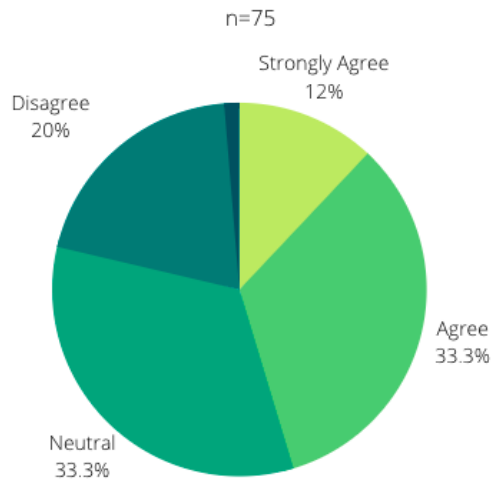
"My professors present a diverse array of course material from different racial and ethnic backgrounds."

n=75



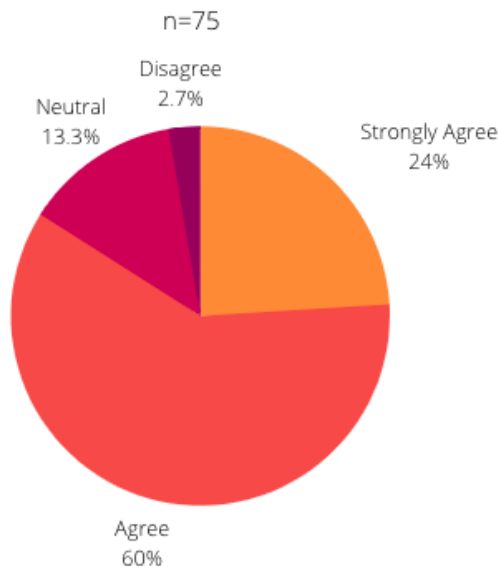
In response to the question: "Courses consider the viewpoints of people from all socioeconomic backgrounds," 45.3% of participants "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that environment-related course material includes viewpoints of all socioeconomic backgrounds.

"Courses consider the viewpoints of people from all socioeconomic backgrounds."



Further, in response to the question: "Course material includes both ecological and social dimensions of environmental issues," 84% of participants "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that environment-related course material includes both ecological and social dimensions.

"Course material includes both ecological and social dimensions of environmental issues."



Section 4: Reflecting on Students' Sustainability Experiences

The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in Sustainability Assessment Survey included a question for students to expand upon their experiences in UCLA sustainability in relation to their most salient identities. The question was:

“Thinking about your identities, please write about your feelings and experiences (positive or negative) that influence how you feel about and interact with sustainability.”

This open-ended question was followed by a question asking what identity shaped that experience in order to give context for our analysis:

“Which identity of yours do you most associate with this experience?”

The data and responses received from this question were sorted according to the salience of identity. The most common salient identities were Race and Ethnicity, Class and Socioeconomic Status, Gender and Sexuality, (Dis)ability, and Academic Focus. Survey participants also mentioned identities like Immigration Status, Age, and Moral Values that shaped their experience in UCLA sustainability, but further research is necessary to delve deeper into exploring the salience of these identities with regards to UCLA sustainability, and perhaps could be a further point of research for future projects.

Common Themes Among Identities

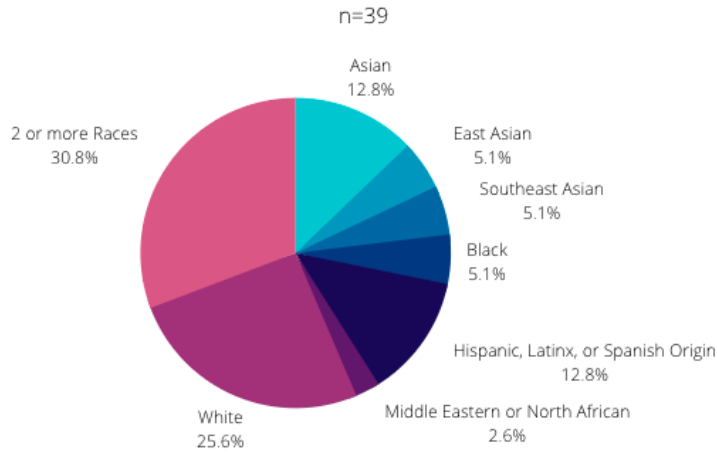
Team EDI analyzed data from our survey and Community Conversations by finding and documenting common themes expressed in the most salient identities of Race and Ethnicity; Class and Socioeconomic Status; Gender and Sexuality; Ability; and Education (see Appendix D on Pages 34-40 for direct quotes from survey participants and Appendix E on Pages 40-43 for direct quotes from Community Conversations participants).

Race and Ethnicity

Survey Themes

30.7% (39/127) of total survey participants indicated Race and/or Ethnicity as the most salient identity influencing their experience with sustainability.

Of the 39 respondents who felt race/ethnicity was their most salient identity:



Of the 39 participants that indicated Race and Ethnicity as their most salient identities, 10 participants identified as solely white (25.6%), while the 29 others were non-white (74.4%).



White (10/39) and non-white participants (29/39) respectively responded with common themes in their experiences. White participants’ experiences were shaped by eco-anxiety and privilege in identity and resources. They find sustainability to be a hopeful field that requires passionate individuals to tackle these issues. White participants’ responses acknowledge the importance of sustainable action and advocating for BIPOC and otherwise marginalized communities. By being able to collaborate with fellow classmates and do learning outside of the classroom, they are introduced to the plights of BIPOC and otherwise marginalized communities and socioeconomic injustices that make them view sustainability in a certain way. They feel that the courses could do better in integrating diverse ideas and people into the curriculum than “have students have to call out when they see misrepresentation or are left out.” White participants, therefore, acknowledge certain privileges they carry as white students of sustainability and in sustainability spaces. UCLA’s courses have opened up the idea of sustainability, but only when

interacting with fellow classmates and doing outside learning are they able to engage more fully with broader definitions of sustainability that include socioeconomic dimensions.

Non-white participants' experiences were generally shaped by their cultural identities. Participants expressed gratitude for student-led spaces like the Environmentalists of Color Collective that "allow for conversation and community when it comes to tackling environmental issues, such as environmental injustice." However, these spaces are few, and many clubs and organizations on campus are perceived to be "non-POC led". Non-white participants' responses expressed the following themes: Inaccessibility to sustainability because of affordability, education (including lack of concern for environmental issues), and white-dominated spaces. Again, many students expressed concern over the topic of environmental justice not being a priority in sustainability curriculum. They express concern over how the Environmental Science major has many people from privileged backgrounds, but the courses themselves do not put socioeconomic and intersectional issues and solutions at the forefront of the course material.

Further, cultural diversity (including coming from immigrant or low-income households), lack of inclusion of specific racially and ethnically minoritized perspectives (including of international students and undocumented folks), and concern over systemic issues (including environmental racism and settler colonialism) were also key themes in non-white participants' experiences, as many grapple with institutional structures that can create more barriers than opportunities for prospective sustainability scholars and leaders.

Community Conversation Themes

The Race and Ethnicity Community Conversation session had 3 participants: one who identified as Korean-American and white, a second who identified as Asian American, and a third who identified as an immigrant from East Africa. Although the discussion was nuanced, we were able to extrapolate some significant themes.

The participants agreed that although sustainability is an intersectional field, it is often not portrayed that way. They acknowledged that there exists an image of a stereotypical environmentalist who is 'outdoorsy' and enjoys nature. However, there was a belief that there should be a more holistic view of sustainability.

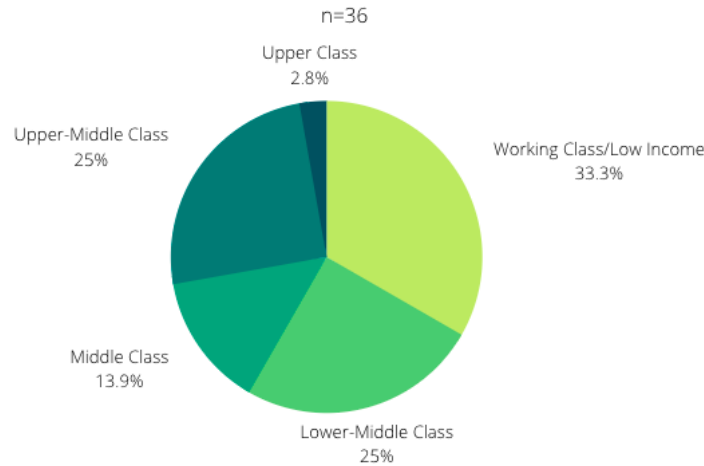
They also agreed that the sustainability movement in general and at UCLA has been largely White-dominated, which made their cultural differences magnified when they were present in sustainability spaces such as classes and organizations. Participants cited examples from their own life such as a disconnect with cultural instincts for the preservation of land in American culture. There was a collective agreement that representation for BIPOC folks is important, especially since environmental issues disproportionately affect BIPOC communities. They also stated that seeing BIPOC leaders in the Sustainability movement is both validating and inspiring. There was recognition of issues such as capitalism and other overarching systemic issues which fuel environmental harms.

Class and Socioeconomic Status

Survey Themes

28.3% (36/127) of total survey participants indicated Class and Socioeconomic Status as the most salient identity influencing their experience with sustainability.

Of the 36 respondents who felt socioeconomic status/class was their most salient identity:



Participants identifying as working class/low income or lower-middle class (21/36) and participants identifying as middle class, upper-middle-class, or upper class (15/36) respectively responded with common themes in their responses. Participants identifying as working class/low income and lower-middle class commonly expressed that because sustainable products are generally inaccessible due to their high cost, they are often forced to choose cheaper, unsustainable products as a result. For example, one working-class/low-income class participant described how they can only afford “to purchase at fast-food restaurants and fast fashion stores because they [are] cheap.” Furthermore, working-class/low-income and lower-middle-class participants shared concerns that the sustainability movement, in general, is exclusive and less accessible to lower-income communities, with one working class/low-income participant explaining that “low-income [people] have less accessibility [to] or knowledge on sustainability.”

Participants identifying as middle class, upper-middle-class, or upper class commonly discussed how their socioeconomic status facilitated their ability to be sustainable or to interact with sustainability, especially by increasing the financial accessibility of sustainable products and living. In addition, middle class, upper-middle-class, and upper-class participants expressed how their socioeconomic status enabled them to have generally positive experiences in sustainability. Some middle class, upper-middle-class, and upper-class participants acknowledged how their socioeconomic status provides them with the privilege to be sustainable, with one upper-middle-class participant explaining, “I feel like my class background puts me at a privileged position when approaching sustainability because I can afford to pay more and spend more time doing something sustainable” and another explaining, “I feel pretty privileged in my efforts to be sustainable as it is much easier with disposable income.” Some middle-class,

upper-middle-class, and upper-class participants also acknowledged how their socioeconomic status provides them with the privilege to be unaffected by the environmental injustices that often affect lower-income communities (and communities of color).

Community Conversation Themes

We had a total of three participants in the Class and Socioeconomic Status Community Conversations session. The participants all identified as lower income. The participants commonly expressed how sustainability is an integral part of their lives as a means for survival and to save money, rather than for the common reasons people practice sustainability, such as for morals. For example, participants listed common sustainable practices like reducing food waste, reusing plastic bags and containers, passing old clothes or reusing old clothes for cleaning, and not using heating or air conditioning as practices to save money rather than to be solely sustainable. The participants also expressed that sustainability as a concept is generally inclusive of people of all backgrounds, as it is something that everyone can adopt, but the sustainability movement itself is often eurocentric and exclusionary. Reflecting on how sustainable practices vary based on socioeconomic status, as well as by culture, participants expressed the need for sustainability to be approached not as a one-size-fits-all movement that shames others, but instead as an inclusive movement that focuses on efforts rather than perfection. For example, one participant explained, “Sustainability doesn’t come in a one-size-fits-all thing, and it’s not exactly productive to be constantly shaming people for not fitting this cookie-cutter mold of sustainability.”

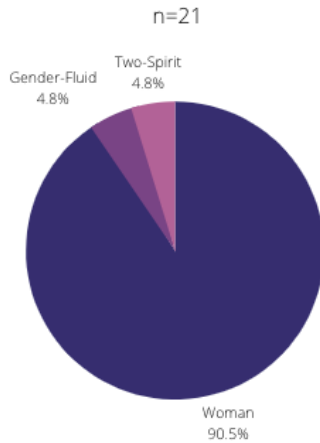
In regards to sustainability specifically at UCLA, the participants felt that there is a sense of moral gatekeeping to and villainization of sustainability at UCLA (in addition to sustainability in general), as sustainability at UCLA strongly discourages the use of plastic bags or fast fashion when lower-income individuals often reuse and maximize the use of these products. The participants also felt that while sustainability at UCLA does make an effort to be inclusive, there is room for improvement, especially because information on sustainability is often not accessible to everyone.

Gender and Sexuality

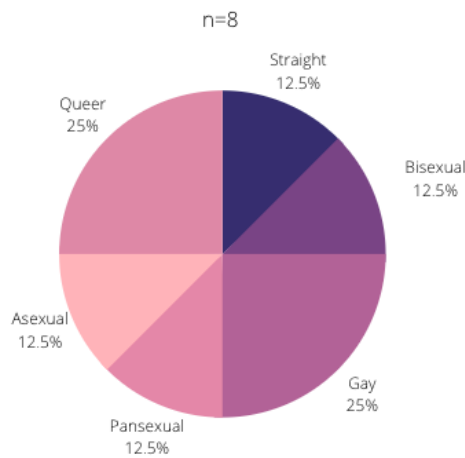
Survey Themes

22.8% (29/127) of total survey participants indicated Gender and Sexuality as the most salient identity influencing their experience with sustainability, with 21 participants indicating gender as their most salient identity and eight indicated sexuality as their most salient identity.

Of the 21 respondents who felt gender was their most salient identity:



Of the 8 respondents who felt sexuality was their most salient identity:



Students who indicated that their gender identity or sexual orientation was most important to their sustainability experiences discussed inclusivity and diversity as being key parts of their interactions. Most women and LGBTQ+ participants feel included within sustainability. While the environmental science major is composed of about 75% women-identifying people, women were overrepresented in the survey (84.3%). Some participants, however, felt that having multiple overlapping identities made them feel excluded in sustainability spaces. For example, one participant wrote: “As a queer international student, sometimes I feel a little excluded from the activities or opportunities especially the programs that are restricted to citizens.” Participants felt that sustainability at UCLA should be more diverse: “It seems like a lot of leaders in sustainability are white males and though they may try to be inclusive, their perspectives are limited by their inability to know the experiences of women/POC.”

Community Conversation Themes

The five participants in the Gender and Sexuality Community Conversation discussed their general experiences with gender and sexuality as well as in relation to sustainability and at UCLA. Generally, LGBTQ-identifying people fear sharing their sexuality in academic or professional sustainability spaces at and beyond UCLA will cause people to treat them differently. For example, student experiences with non-sustainability-specific bodies like the Engineering Department and related clubs have been discriminatory. However, student experiences with UCLA Sustainability in relation to gender and sexuality have overall been positive, with participants pointing out the connections between LGBTQ- and woman-identifying people and social efforts. For example, students discussed the connection between sexuality and people who are interested in the environment or eat plant-based diets. Still, there are areas for improvement. The conversations emphasized that sustainability in the United States and at UCLA follows the dominant narrative of American and male sustainability and can overlook practices used in other countries. Students also felt that representation in sustainability and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields, in general, is important to students, but needs to include LGBTQ+ people of color. Participants agreed that sustainability and inclusivity are interlinked and cannot be separated; an exclusive space is “inherently not sustainable”

Ability

2.36% (3/127) of total survey participants indicated disability as the most salient identity influencing their experience with sustainability. Two common themes emerged from students who most associated disabilities with their sustainability experiences: people with disabilities do not feel understood and sustainability should recognize intersectional identities. Furthermore, students feel personally blamed for their limited capacity to be sustainable as a result of their disabilities.

Education

3.94% (5/127) of participants indicated their experience as a student as the most salient identity influencing their experience with sustainability. Out of these five participants, two were first-generation college students and one was a transfer student. Some survey respondents felt UCLA courses were a good source of information on sustainability, while others felt UCLA courses were lacking and instead relied on university organizations and peer social media posts. Most of the latter expressed concerns over courses that leave out the social aspects of sustainability in favor of STEM and courses taught from the Eurocentric perspective.

Discussion**Survey and Community Conversations Results**

Our survey and community conversations revealed the many identities and positionalities of undergraduate students that interact with UCLA sustainability or sustainability in general. These students varied in the extent of their involvement with UCLA sustainability, their experience with interacting with UCLA sustainability, and their views on how sustainability at UCLA can be more equitable, diverse, and inclusive.

When asked to discuss what sustainability means to them, participants had a variety of diverse answers, which reflect the diverse student population that UCLA sustainability has the potential to interact with and educate. Students have a diverse and passionate foundational understanding of sustainability, and could immensely contribute to sustainability initiatives on campus, especially if UCLA sustainability is accessible and welcoming to all of these students. Many participants in both the survey and community conversations noted that UCLA sustainability is dominated by white women, Westernized ideals of sustainability, and lacks the perspective, leadership, and education from BIPOC and otherwise marginalized folks. The relatively high percentage of participants who were only mostly, somewhat, or not very familiar with the concept of environmental justice is a testament to the fact that the experiences, struggles, and triumphs of BIPOC and otherwise marginalized environmentalists is not and has not been a priority in UCLA sustainability education.

Furthermore, survey results showed a relatively high percentage (68.2%) of participants who do not know whom to contact to voice their opinions on the sustainability community at UCLA, which is deeply concerning considering the many opinions that students have about UCLA sustainability. Without an outlet for students to express their needs, opinions, and concerns about sustainability, UCLA sustainability is unable to properly address and serve their service population, and as a result, the sustainability initiatives that we work so hard to implement may fall short of their intended goals. This adds to the concerning statistic that 97.6% of participants indicated that they were not familiar with the Office of Sustainability's EDI page. In order for EDI initiatives to be effective, they must reach their target audience and interact with them productively. We hope that our survey and Community Conversations can be better foundations for understanding the opinions and needs of undergraduate students, and are only a starting point for continued open dialogue and action regarding EDI in UCLA sustainability.

There was also a generally high percentage of answers other than "agree" or "strongly agree" on questions in the "Perception of Sustainability at UCLA" and "Experiences with Courses That Discuss Environmental Issues" sections asking participants to rank statements regarding the inclusivity and diversity of sustainability at UCLA and environment-related courses, respectively. The high percentages of "neutral," "disagree," and "strongly disagree" responses indicate that students are not confident in the inclusivity of UCLA sustainability spaces and education. This is concerning considering that UCLA prides itself in creating an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment for all students, but not all students can confidently say that sustainability at UCLA encourages the participation of people of all racial and ethnic, socioeconomic, gender and sexuality, and disability backgrounds. Further, only 63.7% of participants felt represented and included in sustainability spaces and efforts at UCLA, which is

strong evidence that UCLA sustainability has more work to do with EDI initiatives and creating a safe, welcoming sustainability community.

The high percentage of uncertainty about the inclusivity of UCLA sustainability spaces is related to the perception of student, staff, and faculty leadership in UCLA sustainability as non-diverse. Those with the power to implement education, initiatives, and policies should represent those that they serve, and the gap between the undergraduate student population and those that administer the sustainability education to them should be bridged. This gap is reflected in the lack of diversity perceived in the sustainability course material that students are presented with. Since almost half of the students believe that their professors do not present them with a diverse array of course material from different racial and ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, it is unsurprising that BIPOC and otherwise marginalized students do not feel that they are represented or that the social dimensions of environmental issues are a priority to UCLA sustainability.

This is further explored in the common themes among surveyed identities. Students who noted that their race and ethnicity identities were most salient to their experiences in EDI in sustainability—white or non-white—generally felt that UCLA sustainability is a traditionally white-dominated space and lacks the perspective of BIPOC leaders and education. Concern over experiencing systemic and institutional injustices and oppression while trying to navigate sustainability education and leadership was apparent, especially when they felt that UCLA sustainability did not support them in ways they needed. This is important to address as a community that wishes to combat environmental injustices, those that are directly affected are not given the opportunity to advocate and prioritize their community's struggles or celebrate and uplift their community's achievements, movements, and activism.

Participants who felt that class and socioeconomic status was their most salient identity did recognize current EDI efforts in sustainability at UCLA, but they also expressed concern over the degree to which these efforts are reaching students who are traditionally excluded from sustainability spaces. Participants identifying as working-class/low-income and lower-middle class felt there were several barriers, like their living situation or financial limitations, that prevented them from fully adopting certain sustainable practices promoted by UCLA sustainability, such as sustainable, zero-waste products. This highlights the need for sustainability at UCLA to acknowledge financial or socioeconomic limitations to sustainability, promote a more accessible form of sustainability, and provide lower-income students with resources to practice sustainability. The way in which information is communicated at the university also needs to be interactive and intentional, whether that is through workshops or course work because participants currently feel that sustainability is not accessible because of this lack of knowledge. In addition, some Community Conversations participants expressed that sustainability is an integral part of their life, as they practice traditionally “unconventional” forms of sustainability, such as by maximizing the use of plastic bags and fast fashion clothes and limiting waste of meat products, as a means for survival and to save money. These participants also emphasized the need for sustainability at UCLA to recognize the validity of

these “unconventional” sustainable practices rather than promoting a one-size-fits-all form of sustainability that villainizes and stresses against the very products that lower-income individuals maximize the use of.

Participants who noted that gender and sexuality identities were most salient to their sustainability experiences expressed the importance of having LGBTQ+ representation in sustainability spaces. Although many people did feel sustainability is inclusive of LGBTQ+ students, some participants explicitly stated they felt excluded from sustainability spaces based on their identities as LGBTQ+ students. They found sustainability organizations at UCLA to be more diverse in composition and opinion than sustainability courses at UCLA. However, participants still felt that UCLA sustainability is more inclusive than other departments such as engineering. This trend was mirrored by woman-identifying participants who acknowledged the ease with which they entered women-dominated sustainability and social impact spaces at UCLA compared with other academic spaces. This demonstrates the necessity of further research and more consistent implementation of EDI practices across UCLA classes, organizations, and departments, especially those without a large ‘representative’ body as in sustainability. In line with across-the-board inclusivity, participants felt that sustainability does not consider practices from other countries, which excludes important student demographics. They added that sustainability practices associated with LGBTQ+ culture such as veganism can marginalize or neglect different cultural practices involved with meat consumption. This reflects the importance of acknowledging different backgrounds and outlooks on sustainability. As the participants said best, sustainability is inherently inclusive, and an exclusive environment can never be sustainable.

The new initiatives by the Office of Sustainability's Media Team to educate on social-justice-oriented topics are an example of a great step towards making intersectional topics a priority in UCLA sustainability. Students want to see these initiatives in their organizations, classes, extracurricular opportunities, and from their leadership—the UCLA sustainability staff and faculty. Students would like to see more power given to them to be involved in creating the initiatives that directly affect them, and deserve to be compensated and recognized properly for their contributions.

Recommendations

Based on information gathered from our Outreach, Survey, and Community Conversations, we have developed the following recommendations to the UCLA Sustainability Community that we feel are pertinent to establishing our ideal vision of an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment for all involved and potentially involved with UCLA sustainability. Students from marginalized groups within the main group identities we assessed expressed a great need for more inclusion of intersectional topics, representation from minority groups experiencing environmental injustices, and more accessible and action-oriented EDI initiatives from UCLA sustainability leadership. Team EDI’s recommendations are therefore based on direct student feedback and extensive research and must be implemented to ensure that UCLA

sustainability is reaching diverse audiences and challenging harmful systemic oppression that perpetuates injustice and exclusion for marginalized groups that face the brunt of climate and environmental injustice. The UCLA sustainability community is fostering the next generation of sustainability leadership and movement builders, and it is crucial that they are educated with an intersectional, well-rounded curriculum and within a diverse community.

Recommendation 1: Centralize and Democratize EDI in Sustainability Efforts

Sustainability at UCLA must ensure transparency and communication between sustainability leadership, students, and all relevant stakeholders through centralized efforts to hold leadership accountable. Through our outreach, it was evident that EDI efforts in sustainability at UCLA were definitely present, but also decentralized and in some cases ineffective. Students did not know where to go to express concerns about the community or to have their voices heard, even with the Office of Sustainability's webpage dedicated to their EDI survey form. Additionally, club leaders and sustainability staff expressed a need for centralized guides in implementing EDI in their respective spaces, but no such guide has been created and distributed as of yet.

Also, collaboration with the UCLA Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion was difficult, even though the Chief Sustainability Officer Nurit Katz has tried to establish a connection and outreached on our behalf. This shows that further headway needs to be made in building lasting and productive connections within EDI spheres and the UCLA community as a whole.

Additionally, the Institute of Environment and Sustainability Director recently created an EDI committee composed of faculty, staff, and students, but only called for one undergraduate student to participate. Undergraduate students expressed concern over the lack of representation in one of the only spaces to make their voices heard. Centralized efforts between all UCLA sustainability stakeholders are necessary to ensure true equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Recommendation 2: Collaborate to Increase Access

It is necessary to open up sustainability efforts beyond sustainability spheres like clubs and organizations that are geared towards sustainability and environmentalism and into cultural organizations, socially-focused clubs, and identity-oriented groups in order to emphasize the inherent intersectionality in sustainability-related topics. This will also elevate marginalized voices that are often ignored or silenced in sustainability spheres. This directly relates to the opinions and experiences of marginalized students we interviewed and surveyed that expressed exclusion from sustainability spaces.

Recommendation 3: Provide Resources and Trainings, Student-led and Initiated

Sustainability leadership should provide resources like EDI newsletters and guidebooks and mandatory action-oriented training for all UCLA sustainability organizations and clubs.

Action-oriented educational tools are necessary to promote constant learning of EDI practices and unlearning of harmful internalized prejudices and systemic oppression.

Sustainability admin should also properly compensate the passionate student advocates that will develop and host these training sessions. These initiatives should be student-led and initiated in order to elevate student voices and opinions and ensure accountability to the communities that are directly impacted by UCLA sustainability initiatives and spaces.

Specific Suggestions Provided By Students

The following suggestions were directly provided to our team by the students we outreached to, surveyed, and interviewed in our Community Conversations. It is important that these students were allowed the space to provide these suggestions and that sustainability leadership take action to work towards actualizing these goals.

- Dining:
 - Halal and Kosher for options that are already vegan
 - Increasing cultural variety in plant-based food
- Housing:
 - Accessible composting education and collection program
- For Clubs and Organizations:
 - EDI guidebook and training
- Initiatives to be Organized by Sustainability Staff and Faculty:
 - Workshops on EDI and anti-racism and discrimination topics and skills
 - Subsidy programs for clothes/sustainable products
- Education and Course Material:
 - More Environmental Justice-focused classes

Making UCLA Sustainability More Equitable, Diverse, and Inclusive

UCLA sustainability has a unique opportunity to act upon this wide range of student input and feedback to take action to create the most equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment for all students. We hope to see future Team EDIs build upon this comprehensive research and work together with UCLA sustainability leadership and with the broader UCLA community to enact these initiatives and create even more accessibility for students of all backgrounds and identities. We also want to emphasize that EDI initiatives are merely the first step for any organization or institution to address institutional and systemic oppression that is often unfortunately perpetuated within science, sustainability, and environmentalism. We hope that the student body and marginalized communities are further empowered and uplifted through this work and that we constantly keep leadership accountable to the needs of the passionate undergraduates that drive and inspire the great legacy of activism and movement building that led UCLA sustainability to be where it is today.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Sustainability Survey Questions

A. Knowledge of and Experience with Sustainability at UCLA

1. How familiar are you with the concept of sustainability? (Not very familiar, somewhat familiar, mostly familiar, or very familiar)
2. Please provide a brief description of what sustainability means to you.
3. Where would you say your knowledge on sustainability and environmental issues/solutions comes from? (e.g. college courses, student organizations, etc)
4. How familiar would you generally say you are with environmental issues? (e.g. air pollution, deforestation, etc)
5. How familiar would you generally say you are with SOLUTIONS to environmental issues?
6. How familiar are you with the concept of environmental justice?
7. Which major environmental organizations, centers, or resources are you aware of or familiar with on campus? (check all that apply)
8. Please list the sustainability clubs, organizations, or extracurricular activities you are involved with on campus (if any).
9. How familiar are you with places, offices, clubs, etc at UCLA where you can go to learn more about or get involved with sustainability?
10. Do you know who to contact to voice your opinions on the sustainability community at UCLA?
11. Are you familiar with UCLA's sustainability goals?
12. Are you familiar with the EDI page on the sustain.ucla.edu website?
13. If you answered "yes" to the previous question, please briefly describe how helpful you find the EDI page. If you answered "no" to the previous question, please proceed to the next question.
14. Which of the following EDI in sustainability student, faculty, and/or staff-led project(s) would you like to see at UCLA? (select all that apply)

B. Perception of Sustainability at UCLA

1. Sustainability at UCLA encourages the participation of people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds.
2. Sustainability at UCLA encourages the participation of people of all socioeconomic backgrounds.
3. Sustainability at UCLA is inclusive of people with disabilities.
4. Sustainability at UCLA is inclusive of LGBTQ+ people.
5. I feel included and represented in sustainability efforts and spaces at UCLA.
6. Sustainability efforts at UCLA address issues of race and class.
7. Sustainability student leadership at UCLA is diverse.

8. Sustainability faculty and staff leadership at UCLA is diverse.
9. Have you taken classes that discuss environmental issues (e.g. environmental science, geography, public policy, urban planning, etc)?
 - a. Yes, No

C. Experience with Courses That Discuss Environmental Issues

1. Please select the subject area(s) for the classes you have taken that discuss environmental issues.
2. My professors present a diverse array of course material from different racial and ethnic backgrounds.
3. Course material addresses how environmental degradation affects people and communities.
4. Course material includes both ecological and social dimensions of environmental issues.
5. Courses consider the viewpoints of people from all socioeconomic backgrounds.

D. Reflect on Your Sustainability Experiences

1. Thinking about your identities, please write about your feelings and experiences (positive or negative) that influence how you feel about and interact with sustainability.
2. Which identity of yours do you most associate with this experience?

E. Identities

1. Pronouns
2. Major (pick the category that best describes your major)
3. Expected Graduation Year
4. Are you a... (select all that apply)
 - a. First-generation college student?
 - b. Transfer student?
 - c. Out-of-state student?
 - d. International student?
 - e. Undocumented student?
 - f. Students experiencing houselessness?
 - g. Formerly incarcerated student?
 - h. Students impacted by the criminal justice system?
 - i. None of the above/prefer not to say
5. Race [racial group you identify with] (select all that apply)
6. Ethnicity [cultural heritage you identify with] (ex: Peruvian-American, Vietnamese, Kumeyaay, etc.)
7. Gender Identity: How do you describe your gender?
8. Sexual and Romantic Orientation (please select all that apply)
9. Political Affiliation
10. Religion

11. Do you have a physical, emotional, and/or developmental (dis)ability?
 12. If you answered "yes" to the previous question, would you mind explaining? If you do not feel comfortable explaining or if you answered "no" to the previous question, please proceed to the next question.
 13. Do you identify as...
 - a. Working-class/low-income
 - b. Lower-middle class
 - c. Middle class
 - d. Upper-middle-class
 - e. Upper class
 - f. Prefer not to say
 14. Are there any other identities not listed here that you would like to mention that have shaped your experiences with sustainability (e.g. national origin or first language)? If so, please list them.
- F. Contact Information and Additional Information
1. Is there anything else you would like to tell us? (comments, questions, concerns, feedback)

Appendix B: Community Conversations Questions

1. What are your experiences with sustainability?
 - a. What are your experiences with sustainability At UCLA?
2. Has your identity shaped your experience?
 - a. If yes, how and please be specific?
 - b. If no, why do you think that?
3. Do you think your identity is important to represent in the sustainability movement and spaces? Why/why not?
4. How would you describe the degree to which sustainability at UCLA is inclusive of or accessible to people from all (race/gender/etc) backgrounds?
5. Do you feel like sustainability is inclusive of people from all backgrounds at UCLA?
6. What do you most value in an inclusive environment?

Appendix C: Pre-Conversation Survey for Community Conversations

1. You are invited to take part in a research project for UCLA's Sustainability Action Research Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Team. This research study is designed to understand how identities influence students' relationships with sustainability. The study will consist of one Community Conversation lasting approximately 70 minutes. To keep your answers confidential, we will ask you to adopt a pseudonym for the interview. At no point during the interview will we ask you for personal identifying information. You may refuse to participate in the study without any penalty. If you decide to participate, you may refuse to answer any questions and you may withdraw from the study at any time

without any penalty. We may ask you follow-up questions to better understand your experiences and you may refuse to answer these questions as well. If at any point during the study you have questions, please feel free to ask to obtain clarification. You must be an undergraduate at UCLA to participate. If you have any follow-up questions regarding the research study upon completion of your participation, please feel free to email pratikanagpal01@g.ucla.edu or alyssasmoreno@gmail.com. If you understand the information presented to you and agree to the research study requirements, please consent below. Thank you for your participation.

- a. I consent to participate in Community Conversations with SAR's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Team.
 - b. I do not consent to participate in Community Conversations with SAR's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Team.
2. We will be using a voice recorder to accurately collect the information shared during the interview. All recordings will be transcribed and recordings will not be used for any additional sections of this study. We will use this information, in conjunction with information provided by other participants, to understand how identities influence interactions with sustainability. Do you consent to an audio recording of the Community Conversation?
- a. I consent to an audio recording
 - b. I do not consent to an audio recording

Appendix D: Key Quotes from Survey Participants

Section 1: Knowledge of Sustainability in General and at UCLA

Three common themes emerged from students defining what sustainability means to them:

1. **Sustainability as a moral cause and for fear of climate disaster and to protect the Earth**
 - “Practicing sustainability means living lifestyles, using products, composting, and recycling in a way that *allows us to sustain the health and safety of our planet* as well as the ecosystems, animals, plants, and atmospheric cycles it supports.”
 - “Moving forward with how we interact with the environment with methods that *can prolong our relationship with the planet without harming it.*”
2. **Sustainability as recycling and reusing initiatives to combat waste and using Earth’s resources efficiently**
 - “*To use resources in a way as to not overuse it* and recycling if possible to avoid waste.”
 - “Sustainability means being conscious of your actions and *trying to reduce your wast[e]/carbon footprint*. Some examples of sustainability include using reusable materials, reducing plastic use, recycling and repurposing items, and buying items that are recycled or good for the planet.”

3. **Protecting the Earth and those that live on it**

- “Environment, equity, economy. *Environmental justice.*”
- “Sustainability means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations. *Sustainability is equitable and takes vulnerable and underserved communities into consideration.* Sustainability means respecting and protecting natural systems and processes.”

Section 4: Reflecting on Students’ Sustainability Experiences

Race and Ethnicity

Three common themes emerged from participants identifying as white:

1. **Eco-anxiety**

- “I’ve found it to usually be disheartening and hopeful at the same time. *It’s like the community knows we are doomed but also can’t just stand by and watch so we still do something.* So my actual interactions and actions I take for sustainability are positive because of the hope and dedication and passion to the issue, but when it is discussed it is usually just a reminder of how far behind we are.”

2. **Having privilege in sustainability due to identity and resources**

3. **Acknowledging the importance of sustainable action and advocating for BIPOC and otherwise marginalized communities**

- “I think, being a white female, *I have always had the more textbook/classroom idea of sustainability, but being with fellow classmates and learning more on my own, I have broadened that definition to understand native ideas, BIPOC, and socioeconomic injustices, etc, that have made me view sustainability differently which affects how I view my own actions.* However, I do think that many courses could do a better job integrating diverse ideas and people into the curriculum rather than have students have to call out when they see misrepresentation or are left out.”

4. **Acknowledging the certain privileges they carry as white students of sustainability and in sustainability spaces.**

Six common themes emerged from participants identifying as non-white:

1. **Inaccessibility to sustainability because of affordability**
2. **Education** (including lack of concern for environmental issues)
3. **White-dominated spaces**
4. **Cultural differences** (including coming from immigrant or low-income households)
5. **Lack of inclusion of specific racially and ethnically minoritized perspectives (including of international students and undocumented folks) e**
6. **Concern over systemic issues** (including environmental racism and settler colonialism)

Quotes:

- "Positive experiences are seeing spaces for people of color such as the *Environmentalists of Color Collective* that allow for conversation and community when it comes to tackling environmental issues, such as environmental injustice - but these are few ... However, it seems that a majority of the students involved with environmental/sustainability initiatives and clubs on campus are non-POC, and also do not focus on giving back to the community outside of UCLA. Sustainability at UCLA, to me, seemed to focus greatly on researching technologies and applying them solely to the school instead of education and advocacy outside of campus. In my eyes making a real difference, such as improving sustainability in Los Angeles, means going to the community and doing community service work. Many environmental/sustainability clubs on campus were thus all talk and no action in my eyes. It also seems that sustainability/the environment is equated mostly to physical aspects of the terms and not socioeconomic aspects. I felt that there was not enough discourse and action taken going against environmental injustice/racism. I felt there was not nearly enough discourse about how our economic systems would be impacted by climate change."
- "I am an Asian female born in Orange County which is largely privileged and white. Coming into my major my sophomore year at UCLA, I chose my major at the time to solve "white-centered issues" such as cleaning the environment for cleaner air and other more local issues. At the time, I wasn't taught environmental justice nor understood the magnitude at which environmental degradation incorporates ALL classes and backgrounds, but doesn't necessarily protect all classes and backgrounds. As of late, I have become more aware of how my actions affect all parties and now think with diversity at the forefront of my mind when making decisions. I find those who study environmental science are privileged to have this as their main goal; most people in the major are white and female. I hope in the future that the environmental department can step away from this and give opportunity to those who have not necessarily studied ES yet and give them the chance despite prior experience."

Class and Socioeconomic Status

Participants identifying as working class/low income or lower-middle class shared two common themes in their responses:

1. **Sustainable products as financially inaccessible and/or having to choose cheaper, unsustainable products as a result**
 - "As a low-income student, I think it's sometimes hard to be sustainable as *cheap items are usually not environmentally friendly.*"
 - "Sometimes it is difficult for low-income individuals/families to choose more *sustainable options because they tend to be more expensive.*"
2. **Sustainability movement being exclusive or less accessible to lower-income communities**

- “Sometimes the *sustainability movement feels elitist and unattainable* in the sense of having a voice and agency but I feel like social media has helped dim these barriers.”
- “To live sustainably is a collective effort... but we should be aware that minorities and *low-income people have less accessibility or knowledge on sustainability.*”

Participants identifying as middle class, upper-middle-class, or upper class shared four common themes in their responses:

1. **Sustainability as financially accessible**
 - “I feel like my class background puts me in a privileged position when approaching sustainability because *I can afford to pay more and spend more time doing something sustainable.*”
2. **Having the privilege to be sustainable**
 - “As an [A]sian American woman with financial security, *I feel pretty privileged in my efforts to be sustainable* as it is much easier with disposable income.”
 - “I’d say *I have the privilege of being able to be unaffected by a majority of environmental issues*, which many others don’t. I also have resources, like compost bins and access to hybrid cars, that allow me to act more sustainably.”
3. **Easier to be sustainable or interact with sustainability because of socioeconomic background**
 - “As someone with a mid-upper class socioeconomic status, *it is easier to think about ways to live more sustainably.*”
4. **Having generally positive experiences in sustainability because of socioeconomic background**
 - “*I generally have positive feelings and experiences with sustainability b[ecause] from my background...*”
 - “*I have a positive influence with interacting with sustainability.* I have the privilege to be able to use sustainable products and zero waste products where they are widely available to me and I can afford them.”

Gender and Sexuality

The following three key takeaways emerged from the survey regarding gender and sexuality:

1. **People who identify as LGBTQ+, especially women-identifying participants, generally feel included in sustainability**
 - “I feel like my identities allow me to dive deeper into sustainability than someone who doesn’t align with my identities would be able to. I’ve *never had a negative experience in the sustainability community at UCLA*, and I know that might not be the case for everyone, but I’m grateful to the sustainability officers for creating a safe place for us to practice sustainability and educate others.”
 - “As a white woman, *I have felt very comfortable and included in environmental*

spaces because I tend to be in the majority demographic. I do feel frustrated sometimes when sustainable living ideas are expensive or exclusive of those who can't afford them."

- *"I have had positive experiences with sustainability being a welcoming space for me in light of my identities as a queer woman."*
- *"I have only had positive experiences with my interactions in clubs, classes, and speaker panels on this topic. I have been lucky enough to hear from a broad range of indigenous thinkers and scientists, hear from people of color, and see representation of the LGBTQIA+ community. I find the environmental space a really welcoming one."*
- *"I am a member of the LGBTQ+ community and I felt very included by the people in UCLA sustainability and that was one of the aspects that drew me to the community."*
- *"I am empowered as a female to create change on a corporate level that is led by sustainability."*
- *"I'm not sure how closely my identity is linked with my interaction with sustainability. If anything, environmental organizations I've seen on campus are largely female, so I feel more comfortable expressing my opinions in those spaces."*

2. Sustainability should include more diverse perspectives

- *"Now I have learned from indigenous peoples the importance of using what you already have to be sustainable and the extent to which sustainability needs to include more diverse voices."*
- *"It seems like a lot of leaders in sustainability are white males and though they may try to be inclusive, their perspectives are limited by their inability to know the experiences of women/POC."*

3. Students with intersectional identities feel excluded from sustainability spaces at UCLA.

- *"As a queer international student, sometimes I feel a little excluded from the activities or opportunities especially the programs that are restricted to citizens or PR only."*

Ability

Two common themes emerged from students who most associated disabilities with their sustainability experiences:

1. **Sustainability can feel like a personal burden, especially when people with disabilities feel blamed for not being as sustainable as people without disabilities**
 - *"Sustainability can be difficult and feel like a personal (rather than systemic) issue/burden."*

- “As a disabled woman, I do have to interact with sustainability differently. Sometimes I can’t do everything perfectly because of my health needs, but I always try to be as sustainable as possible. I get frustrated when people say that disability is an excuse to not be sustainable, as I believe sustainability simply means doing everything that you CAN do. As such, disabled people can definitely still be sustainable, they just might not be able to make as many changes as an able-bodied person... It is all about doing what is practicable and possible for each individual, and, unfortunately, only the individual will know what that is.”
2. **Sustainability should recognize intersectionality**
- “I think that *looking at intersectionality is essential in sustainability efforts*. I have not noticed any personal experiences with my identities and sustainability, but I do look through an intersectional lens.”

Education

Students who felt their identity as a student most impacted their sustainability experiences reflected these common themes:

1. **UCLA courses and organizations are an important source for sustainability motivation**
- “I associate my student identity most because I have not learned much about sustainability elsewhere. I feel like there is a lot of potential for me to learn and pass on my knowledge in other spaces.”
 - “My environmental racism course has dramatically affected how I feel about sustainability.”
 - “I think *my experiences in my classroom and student organizations make me excited about the work being done* for sustainability.”
 - “*Learning about environmental science and the climate crisis has motivated me to learn more and dedicate my career to creating a more sustainable world*. My own experiences in the outdoors have strengthened my desire to want to protect natural systems and support communities that depend on these systems to function properly.”
2. **The UCLA community is a more effective and inclusive source for sustainability motivation than courses, which focus on a limited STEM perspective**
- “As an engineer, my work here has not really considered any race or social standing when it comes to the projects or courses I have taken. I understand environmental racism is real, but I think I tend to focus on carbon emissions as a whole, rather than specific geographical locations. There are absolutely some people that are disproportionately affected by these emissions, depending on where they live.”
 - “I hope I was able to provide the perspective of someone whose professors and projects do not really address the topics of injustice in the environment.”

- “Sustainability has been taught to me in a very eurocentric way. Plastic straw and bag ban, farmers markets, fast fashion, etc... It is only through clubs and friends that I generally consider the EDI lens.”
- “*Sustainability is focused more for STEM students* and doesn't focus on the interdisciplinary aspects of sustainability.”

Appendix E: Key Quotes from Community Conversations Participants

1. Race and Ethnicity

The three participants in the Race and Ethnicity Community Conversation brought up four themes in the discussion:

1. **Sustainability is actually an intersectional field, but often not portrayed that way**

- “I never really identified with [woods and outdoorsy stereotype of environmental science majors]... learning more about things like Korean food and how they are important, like, just like plants are as well as like temple food is. And kind of gaining a more holistic idea of what sustainability means like it's not just going outside, but your own health ... I think my household identity has allowed me to realize there's much more to sustainability than just, like, what the stereotype is.”

2. **Cultural differences with the largely White-dominated sustainability movement in general and at UCLA in classes and organizations**

- “I know like both of my birth parents are from like remote villages where they really valued the land and like really make every way to preserve the land that they're on. But like I moved to America so young, so I feel like anything to preserve the land in the world and, like, take care of it was kind of wiped away just because of like American culture. So I've definitely been trying to like learn more about it and learn from people who know more about it.”

3. **Representation for BIPOC folks is important, environmental harms disproportionately affect BIPOC communities**

- “I think for me like representation is huge. It's kind of like just generally especially like being a mixed person like my whole life I've kind of just been like I don't really know like anybody that because I also grew up on the east, northeast in the northeast, so like, just not a ton of people who look like me and I kind of just like I think that's, so that's, yeah, it's just kind of validating I guess to see other people who look like you in spaces and also like to be. So, like leading sustainability spaces. It's kind of just like inspiring.”

4. **Capitalism and other overarching systemic issues fuel environmental harms**

- “Capitalism has a huge effect on us because modern sustainability is about buying recycled things, not getting to the core of how society is interacting with other people and with nature.”

2. Class and Socioeconomic Status

The three participants in the Class and Socioeconomic Status Community Conversation brought up five themes in the discussion:

1. **Sustainability being an integral part of their life for survival and to save money, rather than as an aesthetic or for morals**
 - “So for us, *sustainability has always been an integral part of our lives*, but not so much as for moral reasons, rather than for *survival reasons*, as if this is what we need to do to survive.”
 - “...sustainability was more approached from a moral aspect at UCLA compared to...*a survival once like I was used to.*”
2. **There is a sense of moral gatekeeping and villainization to sustainability at UCLA and beyond**
 - “At UCLA there is some sort of *gatekeeping to sustainability*...Like this *villainization* of all plastic bags...but a lot of people do repurpose them. Or like [when] we buy fast fashion stuff, it gets handed down past generations, gets a lot of wear, and then also becomes repurposed as like a rag or something else towards the end of its lifespan.”
3. **Sustainability as an idea is inclusive of people of all backgrounds as something everyone can adopt, but the sustainability movement does feel eurocentric**
 - “I feel like sustainability as an idea is inclusive of people from all backgrounds because there’s always something that people can do, modify, or adopt to become a little more sustainable. But...*sustainability as a movement does tend to feel very exclusive and centric towards certain groups.*”
4. **Sustainability at UCLA does make an effort to be inclusive but there is a lot of room for improvement**
 - “To a degree, *there are efforts for inclusivity at UCLA*, but there’s still certain areas where I think *there could be a lot of improvement.*”
5. **Sustainability should not be approached as one-size-fits-all, and fostering inclusive spaces means not shaming others but rather focusing on efforts instead of perfection**
 - “...need to make an *environment that’s not based on shame and focused on effort rather than perfection*. There are a lot of ways that people can be sustainable and it varies by culture, socioeconomic status, and so forth. And I think that’s something that we need to pay attention to - that *sustainability doesn’t come in a one-size-fits-all* thing, and it’s not exactly productive to be constantly shaming people for not fitting this cookie-cutter mold of sustainability.”

3. Gender and Sexuality

The five participants in the Gender and Sexuality Community Conversation brought up six themes in the discussion:

1. **LGBTQ-identifying people fear sharing their sexuality in academic or professional sustainability spaces at and beyond UCLA will cause people to treat them differently**
 - “You never know how [your sexuality is] going to be perceived. So you try to... moderate how you normally act... out of fear... is this persona going to start treating me differently from this point on?”
 - One student shared her experiences working in a lab with straight men outside of UCLA: “either my perspective as a woman or someone they perceived as queer or whatever it may be affected how I was treated among the group and the seriousness that they offered towards my opinions and outlook.”
2. **Students discussed the connection between sexuality and people who are interested in the environment or eat plant-based diets**
 - One student has been on dates with girls who are mostly vegan or vegetarian and they feel pressure to consume less meat but shared: “it's such a big part of my culture that I just can't completely let go of.”
3. **Student experiences with UCLA sustainability have overall been positive but feel there is room for more improvement**
 - “I don't think my gender or sexuality has impacted my experience with sustainability and kind of the vibe that I get from the environmental science groups that I'm in is that they are more you know, like open and accepting.”
 - Sustainability is generally inclusive of all people at UCLA, but there are challenges in ensuring that people with diverse identities are admitted to the school and then included within sustainability communities: “[the environmental science major] overwhelmingly has white women... but within the clubs, at least that I've been participating in, I do see a lot of diversity in sexuality, gender”
4. **Student experiences with non-sustainability specific bodies like the Engineering Department and related clubs have been discriminatory**
 - An engineering major is really involved with student organizations and stated engineering-focused clubs do not prioritize inclusivity. Although it has improved recently in larger organizations, the smaller clubs lag behind. Spaces inconsistently use pronouns, and many people do not remember the correct pronouns even if they do ask for them.
5. **Representation in sustainability and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields, in general, is important to students but needs to include LGBTQ+ people of color**
 - “I think that it's important to show people that it's just a very normal thing to be... a queer person in science.”

6. Sustainability in the United States and at UCLA follows the dominant narrative of American and male sustainability and can overlook practices used in other countries

- One student shared her experiences with the rhetoric used in cisgender and heterosexual sustainability spaces that discusses “leaving a better planet for your children” with the assumption that straight people are more likely to have children. She had not heard this type of ideology before coming to UCLA but feels it alienates LGBTQ+ people who might not be having biological children. Vegan dishes in other countries like India are very normal, but not considered to be a special or separate vegan meal (dishes are not assumed to have meat in them).