

Barriers to UBC Staff Climate Action Engagement

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Executive Summary

In response to the pressing need for increased staff engagement in climate action initiatives at the University of British Columbia (UBC), a comprehensive research study was conducted to identify barriers, enablers, and recommendations to enhance staff involvement in sustainability efforts. The study aimed to address challenges such as lack of knowledge, support, time, capacity, and finances, which hinder staff participation in climate action. Through qualitative interviews with staff members, key findings emerged, revealing a need for greater institutional support, collaboration, and dedicated time for climate action discussions. Staff-faculty connections were identified as a valuable resource for initiating sustainability projects, while reward incentives and tailored environmental education were recommended to motivate staff involvement. Furthermore, integrating sustainability responsibilities into job roles and fostering top-down leadership buy-in were deemed crucial for long-term engagement. The research underscores the importance of creating a supportive and inclusive environment that empowers staff to actively contribute to UBC's climate action agenda. By implementing the recommendations outlined in this report, UBC can establish a culture of environmental stewardship and resilience, advancing its commitment to sustainability and fostering a more sustainable campus community.

The University of British Columbia (UBC) faces several challenges and opportunities in fostering staff engagement in climate action initiatives. This pilot project, in partnership with SEEDS, was designed and conducted in the context of a UBC qualitative research course. Through a qualitative research effort as a part of this SEEDS collaboration, key enablers and barriers to Management and Professional Employee group (M&P) staff participation have been identified, along with a set of recommendations to enhance involvement and drive meaningful change.

Enablers of Staff Engagement include:

1. **Persistence, Passion, and Personal Interest:** Staff members' individual passion for sustainability acts as a catalyst for change, driving engagement in climate-related initiatives.
2. **Departmental Culture:** Supportive work cultures within departments encourage staff engagement in sustainability initiatives, fostering a sense of community and collaboration.
3. **Collaboration:** Collaborative efforts between staff, faculty, and students enable the creation and continuation of sustainability projects, leveraging diverse expertise and perspectives.
4. **Access to Resources:** Availability of resources, including toolkits and inter-departmental committees, provides staff with the necessary tools and motivation to initiate concrete actions towards climate action.

Barriers to Staff Engagement include:

1. **Lack of Knowledge:** Staff members may lack clarity on climate action concepts and resources, leading to uncertainty and hesitancy in engaging with sustainability initiatives.
2. **Lack of Support:** Limited institutional support and leadership buy-in hinder staff efforts to implement climate actions within their roles, at times resulting in feelings of isolation and disempowerment.
3. **Lack of Time and Capacity:** Heavy workloads and competing priorities leave staff with insufficient time and resources to dedicate to climate action initiatives, exacerbating feelings of overload and burnout.
4. **Lack of Finances:** Financial constraints are a limitation of implementing staff-led sustainability projects, with perceived cost barriers discouraging investment in environmentally-friendly alternatives.

To overcome barriers and leverage enablers, several short-term and long-term recommendations have been proposed regarding support and resources. By implementing these recommendations, UBC can create a supportive and inclusive environment that empowers staff to actively participate in climate action initiatives, advancing its commitment to environmental stewardship and resilience.

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List of Abbreviations

CAP2030: Climate Action Plan 2030

ISP: Indigenous Strategic Plan

UBC: University of British Columbia

M&P: Management and Professional Employee Group

Introduction

Project context and relevance

Increased climate engagement and climate action are critical for supporting the UBC community in achieving its climate goals, as identified in the UBC Climate Action Plan 2030 (CAP2030). One of the goals within CAP30 is for three quarters (75%) of UBC faculty, staff, and students to be aware of UBC's climate action goals and be participating in UBC's evolving and expanding culture of sustainability by 2030 (UBC, 2023). The 'Climate Action Campus Initiative' (CACI) works to increase staff and faculty engagement on issues and actions related to climate change; in response to and in support of CAP2030, the Climate Emergency Task Force (CETF) report, and the UBC strategic plan, all in line with the Paris Agreement and the commitments UBC has done following them to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions on campus and in the UBC neighborhoods (UBC, 2024). Working in collaboration with others, the initiative hopes to help meet UBC's goals to increase UBC faculty, staff, and students' awareness of UBC's climate action goals and be more engaged in climate change actions and initiatives. To ensure staff participation and engagement, UBC's 'Climate Action Campus Initiative' (CACI) has identified a need for research to gain a better understanding of staff experiences and what were the barriers preventing them from engaging further with climate action in the context of their work environment (Cigagna, 2024), this project was therefore designed to focus on identifying the primary barriers that UBC staff encounter when engaging with climate action and sustainability initiatives on campus. The engagement team within Sustainability and Engineering from Campus and Community Planning asked SEEDS to take over this research. As part of SEEDS' partnership with IRES, graduate students taking a Qualitative Research Methods class in IRES led the research process.

UBC Climate Action Plan 2030

On December 5, 2019, UBC joined other organizations and governments around the world to declare a climate emergency. The declaration recognized the severity, complexity, disproportionate impacts of, and disproportionate responsibilities for the climate crisis and committed UBC to develop a collective response that embeds climate justice throughout its activities and priorities. Following this, an ambitious action plan was developed, the [UBC Climate Action Plan 2030](#) (UBC, 2023). The plan is being implemented in parallel with UBC's wider Climate Emergency Response, which includes nine priority areas, including accelerating greenhouse gas emissions reductions. The CAP 2030 puts the university on an accelerated path to net zero emissions for buildings and energy supply as well as to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 for both the Vancouver and Okanagan campuses (a target of 85% reduction in campus operations emissions by 2030 and achieve a 100% reduction in operational greenhouse gas emissions by 2035, UBC CAP 2030). If the CAP 2030 is accompanied by an accountability framework that outlines responsibilities for implementation, monitoring progress, and governance for decision-making over time, there is a recognition that barriers exist to a full engagement of staff members across UBC, this project intended to identify those.

Goals and Objectives of the Project

This project's initial purpose was to provide insights into challenges and barriers to UBC staff participation in climate action and sustainability initiatives. However, the project included enabling factors to climate action as well. The research had two goals: by shedding light on these barriers and enablers, inform the development of strategies and interventions to foster engagement of UBC staff in climate action, aligning with the goals set out in UBC's Climate Action Plan 2030 and Climate Emergency Declaration, but also to train the course students on qualitative research methods within the framework of a "real life" project.

Research Objectives:

1. Conduct an analysis of the unique challenges encountered by UBC staff in the Management and Professional Employee group (M&P), in their efforts to engage with climate action and sustainability initiatives on campus.
2. Investigate what factors influence the ability of UBC staff to actively participate in climate action and sustainability initiatives, with a focus on identifying the barriers at play.
3. Review UBC's CAP 2030 and Climate Emergency Declaration to evaluate the alignment with staff engagement targets and identify opportunities for amendments to policies or plans related to climate action.
4. Develop a report highlighting research findings and recommendations which emphasize the primary barriers faced by UBC staff and provide evidence-based recommendations to overcome these barriers.

One Additional objective was to:

1. Assess challenges faced by leaders and decision-makers in supporting and facilitating staff engagement in climate action initiatives, with view to identifying key areas for improvement and potential strategies for effective integration of sustainability

Background

In their commitment to sustainability and climate action, institutions like the University of British Columbia (UBC) play a pivotal role in driving tangible progress. UBC's dedication to environmental stewardship is evident through its ambitious goals, including implementing a zero-waste plan, constructing green buildings, engaging in outreach initiatives, and developing water action plans, all aimed at fostering sustainability and combating climate change on campus by 2030 (CAP 2030). However, despite these efforts, unlocking staff engagement in climate action remains a significant challenge. UBC's Climate Action Plan 2030 (CAP2030) aims to boost climate awareness and involvement among its staff, faculty, and students. To address CAP 2030's target of having 75% of the campus community engaged in climate action, it's crucial to explore the challenges UBC administrative staff face in promoting climate action within their roles. While student and faculty engagement is well-documented, there's limited research on staff involvement, despite their unique potential contributions. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the specific barriers encountered by administrative staff and recognizing their importance in achieving campus-wide climate action goals.

Also, the existing literature engages several key themes that are relevant to this examination of staff climate action, including how climate knowledge is beneficial for climate action and campus sustainability engagement by staff. Climate awareness and understanding are the first steps towards climate action (Net Impact, 2023). The science-policy interface in climate action continues to face challenges of disconnection, with a clear gap being identified in sharing scientific knowledge with the public (Watson, 2005). Without knowledge of the climate crisis, and the understanding of why people should participate in climate action, the pursuit of climate action will only reach the portion of the population who already knows and cares about the changing climate. Awareness of climate change has been proven to lead to significant behavioral change in various sectors (Halady & Rao, 2010), further solidifying the need for increased environmental education to be carried out. There is a general emphasis on the positive impact of staff inclusion in campus-based climate actions, however, there is a gap in knowledge regarding the barriers they face in their involvement and the conditions of how administrative staff can be motivated or empowered to engage. The majority of literature about campus-based climate action centers around student involvement, perspective, and leadership, positing that the roles and engagement of students result in positive climate action on campuses (Clarke, 2009). Therefore, this research seeks to expand upon existing literature by examining the role and empowerment of administrative staff, who wield decision-making capabilities crucial for climate engagement within campus settings. By addressing this gap, the project aims to provide valuable insights into the unique challenges faced by administrative staff, and support staff to identify strategies and enhance their involvement in campus-based climate action initiatives, ultimately contributing to more comprehensive and effective sustainability efforts within academic institutions.

Brinkhurst et al. (2011) argue that the common discourse around the role of climate action is around top-down or bottom-up, primarily focusing on institutional leaders and students. This discourse ignores the "middle" (staff), who have the capability to communicate with both the "top" and "bottom" as well as ensure the longevity of climate action plans based in a campus setting (Brinkhurst et al., 2011). This organizational dissonance is one of the major roadblocks for campus-based climate action plans which Mousazadeh (2021) in part blames the lack of support and resources available to staff. Our study intends to address the barriers this "middle" group of administrative staff has in implementing climate action and potential avenues to support positive climate engagement, specifically engaging with directors of administration and operations as well as program support staff. Our research will ask the central research question: **How does UBC administrate and support Staff the barriers to engaging in climate action in their job roles?** As a sub-question to facilitate future recommendations, we also asked: **What are the enablers for UBC Staff to narrate the barriers to climate action?**

Research Methodology and Methods

Research Methodology

To address our research question, our team designed the study through a phenomenological approach. Phenomenological studies seek to “explore, describe, and analyze the meaning of individual lived experience” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). We intended to understand the engagement of staff members, specifically how staff perceive, describe, and make sense of climate action in their roles. This approach mirrors the source of inquiry of phenomenological studies. Phenomenological research is an effort to understand how the understanding of individual experiences reveals common themes or “essences” that come to light, which makes it meaningful in policymaking or initiative planning (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). This study is meant to lay the groundwork for future research and projects into UBC staff participation in climate action, we selected our data collection and analysis structures based on this framework. That said, this should be understood as only a pilot study given the limitations of the project within a course assignment.

Semi-structured interviews allowed us to conduct conversations with participants and highlight the importance of their individualized experience but also providing them the opportunity and anonymity to speak to structural-based barriers to climate action in their roles. While we had developed a set of question themes and guiding questions, as seen in Table 1, we hoped the semi-structured approach would provide the flexibility and feeling of a natural conversation which would allow participants to feel comfortable in sharing their experiences. Observation of the setting and participants occurred informally during all interviews; however, we conducted two formal site observations. Observations allowed us to see how participants interact and maneuver within the space where they would likely enact climate action, and how the forms of climate action exhibited in the units already.

Positionality

This project in collaboration with SEEDS was assigned and designed through the team’s participation in a qualitative research course. In designing the research methods, it became clear that defining and acknowledging the team’s positionality in this project was significant. The research team was made up of four women, all of whom are in the process of graduate degrees in sustainability-related fields. With climate action built into the research team’s coursework, research, and day-to-day within our departments, it is easy for us to take for granted the ease with which we can consider and implement it as a part of our lives. We wanted to have the guiding questions framed as non-judgemental but instead curious about our relationship to climate action and also in understanding that structural inhibitors don’t reflect personal values. Since we asked the majority of our questions unstructured and as follow-ups, this mentality needed to expand beyond the wording of the questions and into us as people in conducting the interviews.

Research Methods

To frame our discussions and understand the landscape of research into campus staff engagement in climate action we started with a preliminary literature review. The team then conducted semi-structured interviews over Zoom and in person depending on the participant's preference. Nine interviews were conducted representing nine different UBC units and a total of eleven participants. Seven of the interviews were with one staff member, with the remaining two were with two participants. Nine of the participants were identified through a list of contacts the project partner sent to us to interview, with three being contacted due to their relationship to

research team members. Ten out of the total eleven participants were affiliated with the Sustainability Coordinators Program for staff members.

The interviews lasted roughly thirty minutes each and were recorded, transcribed, and anonymized using *Otter.AI* software. Following two of the interviews conducted on Zoom, team members conducted a field visit for observation purposes. Final transcripts were sent back to the respective participants to review and comment on in terms of anonymity and any amendment of details. Following the member checks, we conducted in-vivo and descriptive coding of individually assigned transcripts within the *Otter.AI* software, then came together as a group to identify common themes and group them for analysis and discussion.

Ethics and Limitations

The entirety of this project was conducted within the timespan of ten weeks as a part of a course on qualitative methodology. Because of this, we had to grapple with the temporal constraints as full-time students while also accommodating and planning around the understandably busy schedules of staff members within the two weeks of interviews we allotted. We initially had planned to do a focus group discussion, which would have highlighted more structural and less individualized barriers to climate action however due to these temporal constraints we could not find a time to gather participants. The research should also not be used to generalize the experiences of all staff members as we did not interview CUPE staff members, and M&P staff experiences within different units likely vary. All of the participants were anonymized and given the opportunity to select their pseudonyms.

Table 1. Interview Guiding Themes and Related Purpose

Interview Guiding Themes	Purpose	Example Questions
Job Role Responsibilities (generally)	To establish their position and background at UBC, how they interact with their job more generally.	“What are your day-to-day responsibilities in your job role?”
Individual Perception of/Relationship with Climate Action	Their personal reflections and definitions of Climate Action, framing the importance of their own experience with the term and practice in the interview	“What is your definition of Climate Action” “Why are you committed to climate action and sustainability”
Job Role in relationship with Climate Action	Combining their discussion on their job roles with their personal reflections about climate action and sustainability- understanding the current reality. Additionally attempting to highlight the broad unit/structural relationships with climate action	“Do you perceive climate action or sustainability as defined in your job role?” “Where does climate action occur in your unit?”
Barriers and enablers of climate action within their job	What they perceive as barriers and enablers to climate action in their work- framed with the thought experiment “If you had any necessary resources available to you, what would be your dream	“What are the major barriers to executing such a project?” “What has enabled your sustained commitment to climate action in your job role?”

	climate-related initiative or project to implement in your unit”	
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Results

In our initial coding process, we created a concept map to show the relationships between the codes and themes that were emerging, shown in Figure 1. Using this as a reference, we organized codes within the transcripts into the two broad categories of barriers and enablers, then into subcategories or “main themes.” We grouped the codes into four main themes for barriers, and into four main themes for enablers as well. The main themes of barriers as well as a sampling of codes that were organized into it and associated quotes are in Table 3. The same structure but for enablers are shown in Table 2.

Figure 1 is a concept map based on what we heard in the interviews. The purpose of the concept map is to provide a visualization of the connections between various themes throughout the interviews and demonstrate the key points that we identified from our conversations with the interview participants.

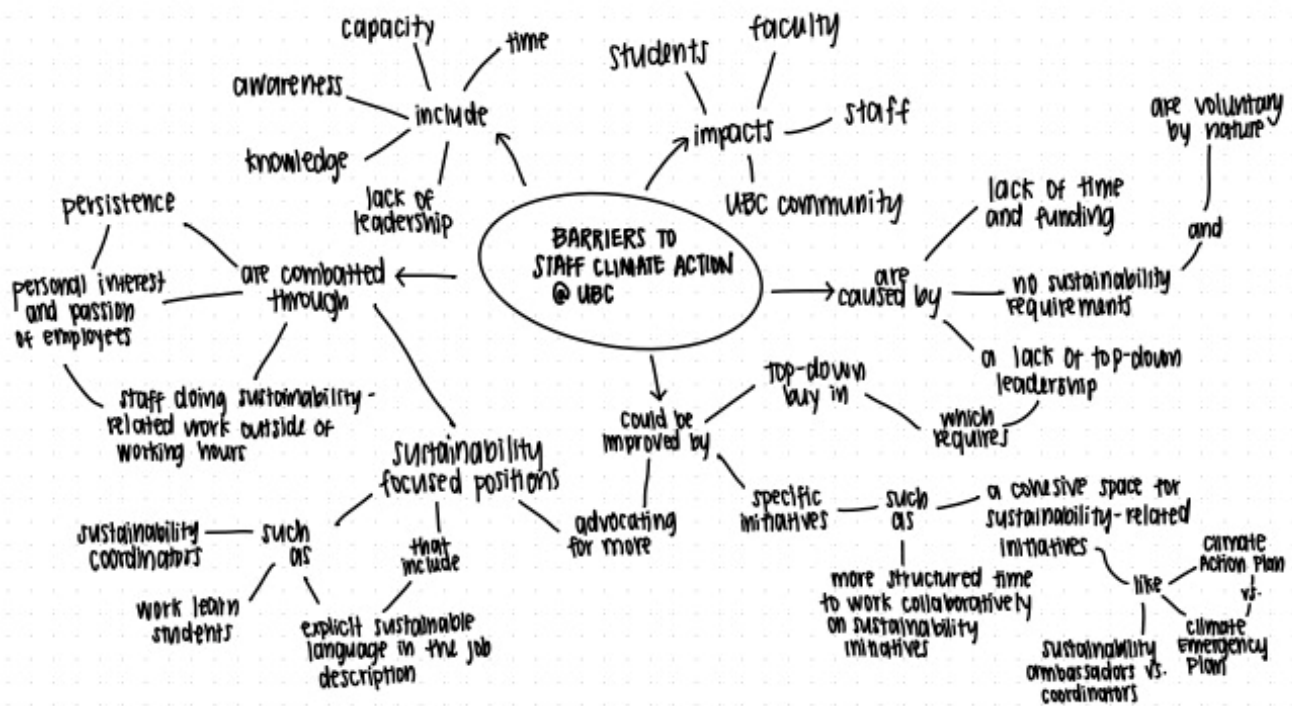


Figure 1: Barriers to Staff Climate Action at UBC Concept Map

The concept map in Figure 1 helped derive main themes, which we used as a foundation when we began the analyzing and coding processes. Table 2 includes the main themes, codes derived, example quotes, and the interview participants who provided the quotes.

Table 2: Enablers: Themes and Codes

Main Theme	Codes	Example Quotes
Personal Interest	Passion	“Seat 93, something is going to be done about it because you keep asking me” - Seat 93 quoting “boss”
	Persistence	

	Initiative	
Departmental Values	Culture	“The decision for vegan plant-based options for pizza... was just trying to go with the [unit’s] mission statement [regarding sustainability]” - Olivia
	Informal	“It’s those lunchtime conversations that it kind of comes up... talking about climate change without saying climate change” - B1
	Day-to-Day	
Collaboration	Staff-Staff	“So, for the past two summers, we’ve had a Work Learn student come in, that focuses on sustainability initiatives in the office. So it’s primarily like a research and guidance role, and we’ll continue to support our Work Learn students coming the summer and make recommendations for more sustainable practice.” - Jim
	Staff-Faculty	
	Staff-Student	<p>“The compost the mix containers, the paper, we’ve added our own on the far end closest to my office, because [a professor] mentioned, one of our faculty members, mentioned before, it’s like, oh, we should have like plastics, soft plastics, recycling and because normally you would drop those off at the depot and the city of Vancouver doesn’t pick that up” - Olivia</p> <p>“Anyway, I got one of those guys, the facilities person, he got real passionate about it, too- so the two of us started working on it. And then Emily, got me in touch with...a professor in land and food or forestry, and so the human wildlife conflict course. And she goes, “we can get students to collect the data on this.” So they’ve been doing this is the fourth year they’ve done the data.” - Seat 93</p>
Resources	Toolkits	“The Staff Sustainability Coordinator program... mostly like an ambassador role. So you bring sort of sustainability initiatives and events and ideas back to your office.” - Jim
	Support	
	Organization	“It’s really kind of a bit of a networking opportunity as well to just kind of connect with other people that are trying different initiatives in their different environments as well. So they have two kinds of streams to it, the office kind of admin side, and then the lab side. So just kind of bringing people together to hear about what everyone’s working on and take those ideas back.” - Lisa

Table 3: Barriers: Themes and Codes

Main themes	Codes	Example Quotes
Knowledge	What does climate action encapsulate?	“For example, she’s, it becomes sort of okay, so we can engage better with place with a land-based understanding of things. She’s, she’s helped us all develop land acknowledgments, which, in and of itself, I don’t think that’s a climate action thing. But it, it helps children to have a different understanding, for growing up in this world about how to live well with everything.” - A1 & A2

		<p>“So like, you know, being conscious about, like, how many flights you take, and things like that, and sort of those little steps. But for me, I struggle with this idea of climate action, when I think about like, you know, yes, individual.” - Oliver</p>
	How do I contribute to climate action?	<p>Interviewer: “And do you perceive climate action or sustainability planning as belonging to your role? Or why or why not?”</p> <p>Oliver: “Not at all. Currently, it's just not a major area of conversation in our office, it's not a focus.”</p>
	Information and communication	<p>“I mean, I think we're getting it in exactly the same source that everybody else at UBC is, is getting it just like the kind of the broad announcements about the climate action plan. And, and that it's in that it's there. So we'll get those bulletins. I think we, we get more information on the sort of more local initiatives from the sustainability coordinator program. And also, our own interests. So yeah, I don't, there's no, nothing's being targeted, kind of at our office specifically. So yeah, comes out of kind of our own interest in that and the coordinator program.” - Jim & Lisa</p>
	Resources	<p>“She's really created this context in which we can share information with each other, and I have found that's really motivating and also really helpful for like concrete information about resources at UBC or what other departments are doing. And there's a I think he's an undergraduate student, but there's a student who's putting together a toolkit for us that provides like a little bit of background on different departments and how they started their climate committees and the challenges they have encountered.” - AN</p>
Support	No current central location for sustainability resources	<p>“Well, I think one of the other barriers, confusion is, just this whole confusion between the Climate Action Plan and the Climate Emergency Response. And the difference between Campus and Community Planning and the Sustainability Hub, like most staff, unless you're in that area don't understand the difference. Or necessarily like what each one does, yeah. So that would be a barrier.” - B1</p>
	Top-down leadership and buy-in	<p>“Like I think UBC as an old colonial institution's still very top-down, still very bureaucratic and huge. And like, yes, you know, offices can make little decisions here or there. But if we really want like, sustained not to use that word again, but like are like, really supported initiatives, like they do have to sort of come from that. That framework.” - Oliver</p>
	Need initiative	<p>“Climate Action to me is about the action. Part of it, not just being aware, but actually doing whatever is in your hand to do. And so, you know, at home, I do a lot of different things, you know, be as zero waste as I can be, and you know, just those sorts of things, but I'm also an avid amateur birder. And so, and that opens you up to just like your heart beats, when you see the birds that you love to see or whatever.” - Seat 93</p>
	Isolated	<p>“So fellow staff, people, it's that it's always nicer to work with somebody anyway. So that has been good.” - Seat 93</p>
	Communal and institutional support	<p>“It just has to be an institutional priority. Otherwise, we, you know, we're all just walking around trying to recycle. And that's actually not going to get us anywhere, it has to be, you know, where, where the investments are coming from where all of those investments are going, all of that. So it really has to come top down.” - Jim & Lisa</p>
Funding	Unpaid	<p>“Yeah, so it's like, within this current unit, it's kind of like it's happening in pockets. But it's not like, it's like a, everybody has to come forward with what they're doing in relation to climate action strategies, right? And then in my last unit, it's, it was like, very just off the side of people's desk. If you were</p>

		interested in it, you could do it, but it's, but like it, if you didn't do it, I don't think anybody would notice." - Laura
	Volunteer work	<p>"So I actually have, as part of as a faculty member, like a portion of my time is supposed to be devoted to service and I serve on other committees in my department, and the Climate Action Committee doesn't actually count towards my service loads. So it's completely extra. Like only really got listed as a formal committee this past year, I think, when we have like a, you know, the department creates a list of, of all the committees, and they include things like the Graduate Studies committee, the undergraduate studies committee, the you know, like the committee, the Executive Committee, like we have all these committees and, and Climate Action Committee is like not even considered formal, like one of those regular committees. It's kind of it's a new thing that doesn't count as service." - AN</p> <p>"But this money comes entirely from outside the department, right? It's not, it's not recurring funding. It's this one-time sustainability fund." - AN</p>
	Lack of funds	
	Emphasis on cheaper options rather than sustainable options	"And catering is a huge thing. And I can remember when the climate emergency thing came out and at first, I went to the person in our office and said, "Oh, what do you think about, you know, how can we get rid of single-use stuff or use stuff that can be compostable and biodegradable?" And her, her response was, "Well, it's, it's more expensive" and so, okay, so, so that's the disconnect." - Seat 93
Time and Capacity	Not embedded in job descriptions	"Um, to be honest, I'm not sure that it's explicitly written into the job description. But in my general approach to work. When I'm kind of working on different projects, like developing out field safety guidelines, one of the things that I do is look at our university's big you know, institutional strategies, and try to figure out ways to connect whatever I'm doing into those priorities. So while not explicitly written in, it does, the, the, the climate action plan would inform and is in my mind when I'm kind of like working through this project." - Laura
	Priorities	"And it's just been like, all the sessions have been during like meetings that are not changeable. Or like, you know, I have to prioritize student times, and they booked weeks in advance, and then these meetings will pop up. So yeah, it's been challenging, but we'll get there." - Oliver
	No structured time	"So I think it needs to be more intentionally built into our, our jobs. And like, our unit would be interested in doing something like that, like we've been working- we worked as a unit during work hours to go through the ISP, and institute changes in our work based on the ISP and it was all done collaboratively during work hours, and it felt like very effective and very collaborative. Because I think we all felt quite empowered to do that. But we haven't- I don't think we've been given the same or feel the same ownership of this work." - Jim & Lisa
	Impacts of Covid-19	"I would say, obviously, funding is the main barrier, any kind of initiative is going to require funding, but I think it also goes hand in hand with capacity. UBC has been on a bit of a hiring freeze, basically, since the start of COVID. And so people are being asked to do other work and other jobs that weren't formerly a part of their job description." - Jim & Lisa

Discussion

We frame our discussion based on the identified main themes of barriers and enablers in the interviews. While this is the way we chose to discuss our results, we also want to acknowledge the overlapping nature of these main themes, which oftentimes fall into one another in unique and complex ways. While we attempt to highlight the interplay between the themes, our focus is structuring our findings so that they might be helpful in project planning and future research.

Enablers

We identified the main enablers of staff engaging in climate action as 1) Persistence, passion, and personal interest, 2) Departmental culture, 3) Collaboration, and 4) Toolkits and Resources. Personal interest in sustainability and climate-related actions and initiatives is a catalyst for change, and amongst our interview participants, was an enormous factor that allowed and encouraged them to engage in climate action. The personal interest is needed from an individual's perspective, but a departmental culture that supports the individual in sustainability initiatives is also required. Having a work culture that encourages climate action amongst staff was necessary for the more engaged staff. A culture of support and encouragement sparks collaboration between and amongst staff, faculty, and students, which allows sustainability initiatives to be created and prolonged. Finally, the existence of toolkits and resources aided immensely in providing individuals with the tools they needed to incorporate sustainability into their work. The culmination of these enablers helps demonstrate the factors that support staff in engaging in climate action.

Persistence, Passion, and Personal Interest

The code of *Persistence, Passion, and Personal Interest* represents a set of codes that refer to the individual staff members themselves, and their own qualities and characteristics. Individuals' interest in sustainability and environmentalism acted as a catalyst for change with sustainability-related initiatives. Much of the time, these feelings of passion and personal interest were not necessarily direct responses to the questions that we asked but rather shared through stories and the way they spoke about the work they were doing.

One of the first questions we asked in all the interviews was, "What does climate action mean to you" to determine how people were talking about climate action in their own lives. We recognize that climate action is difficult to define, and that it is highly contextualized and unique to each person. After we asked this first question to our very first interview participant, Seat 93, she lit up and dove right into her answer. "Climate Action to me is about the action," she shared enthusiastically. "Part of it, not just being aware, but actually doing whatever is in your hand to do. And so, you know, at home, I do a lot of different things, you know, be as zero waste as I can be, and you know, just those sorts of things, but I'm also an avid amateur birder. And so, and that opens you up to just like your heart beats, when you see the birds that you love to see or whatever". As soon as she shared her interest in birdwatching, I chimed in, excited about our shared interest, being an amateur birdwatcher myself. We shared a laugh and spent a couple of minutes chatting about the most recent birds that we had seen. This building of community sparked Seat 93 to share a story with us about an initiative that she's been working on for the past 4 years, which all began because of her love for the birds. When she first started working in her office, she would hear a periodic "thumping" noise against the outside of her building every so often. She shared with us that she didn't know what the thuds were at first, and asked a coworker what the noise was. Her coworker, who had been working in the office for 5 years before Seat 93 had started, shared that the noise was coming from birds striking the glass windows and plummeting to their deaths. When Seat 93 found this out, she shared her disgust with us, exclaiming, "Ugh! And then I kept hearing them and I couldn't unhear it. It was just sickening".

The plethora of differences between Seat 93 and her coworker and what caused Seat 93 to act upon this issue are not clearly defined, but it's evident that Seat 93's personal passion for the birds and her interest in environmentalism sparked her to do something about it.

Additionally, it's important to consider the uniqueness of the paths that staff members might take to engage in environmentalism and caring about sustainability. Throughout our interviews, we discovered that people had very diverse relationships with climate justice, with some of them beginning their learning journeys in sustainability, while others had lived their lives committed to environmentalism. One respondent, Jim, shared that "I have some family that are like climate change deniers. So that was always a pretty strong motivator for me to learn more" while his colleague Lisa shared a very different upbringing. "I grew up in a household that was very, that kind of, paid attention to what was going on with the environment with climate change and everything was really important, and to contribute [to climate action]", demonstrating the differences between their two families, despite ending up as coworkers working in the same department. The diversity of journeys to get to this place of wanting to do more to contribute to climate action is necessary to acknowledge, that people from very different backgrounds can and do hold similar values. This motivation to be engaged in climate action and sustainability initiatives is something that can change over time and is a strong enabler for climate engagement on campus.

With personal interest also comes persistence, and through Seat 93's story about her bird window collision initiative, it's evident that persistence is also a vital enabler for climate engagement, and especially the longevity of environment-related initiatives. When talking about the steps she had to take to get her initiative off the ground, she recalls going to her supervisor countless times, asking them for support and resources to do something about the birds. She told us through a chuckle that one day, her supervisor told her, "Something is going to happen because you are persistent". She continued, "I don't know if he loves that or not about me, but I was going with it". Even though Seat 93 talked about her persistence as a good thing, something that enabled her to continue with her initiative and get other sustainability-related projects carried out within her department, it's important to recognize that her persistence might not be a common quality among other staff members. Seat 93 shared additional enabling factors that contribute to the stability that she feels in her role, sharing that "I'm not shy and I'm old. That is both in my favour on stuff like this, because I don't mind just going and talking to [my supervisor], and I'm situated perfectly for that". Although this refers to how her persistence empowers her to get things done within her unit, it's important to acknowledge that these enablers of persistence, passion, and personal interest are two sides of the same coin. They can both enable staff members to engage in sustainability-related actions and initiatives, but the lack of these qualities can also act as a barrier.

Departmental Culture

Departmental culture and the support that is provided to staff members are also important for enabling staff climate engagement and action. Having the necessary support and acknowledgment of the importance of sustainability-related work is necessary for sustainability initiatives to be pursued within departments. For example, AN shared that it's important to have "people who care" in her department, even if she was "the person who [...] pushed to have this [sustainability initiative] happen". Olivia also talked about how the support of her department and the interest that students, faculty, and staff show in sustainability-related topics and initiatives is what enables her to incorporate sustainability into her own work, even if sustainability wasn't especially emphasized in her personal life. Olivia talked about the decision to only order vegetarian and vegan options when catering events, sharing that "I think it was a collective decision from faculty, staff, and then just trying to go with the [department] mission statement". This demonstrates the importance of the environment that you're in, and for staff, the departments or units that they're a part of which have a heavy influence on their sustainability-related actions. Contrastingly, for Oliver, it's not at the top of mind for his department, which also deals with important equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives on campus. When we asked him about his department's involvement or

interest in sustainability and climate actions, he shared that “Currently, it's just not a major area of conversation in our office, it's not a focus”.

Additionally, in units across campus, building community and sharing space has been beneficial for the relationships between faculty and staff, and improving sustainability culture within the departments. B1 told us about how staff and faculty are starting to spend more time together to build community. B1 talked about the role of faculty in their unit, “They [faculty members] have done a lot to enable it. And it's just like, [my department] is just such a nice department to work in, like, everybody gets along really well. And we're all like, pretty collegial. And so like, you know, we'll go over and we'll have, we've started to make a point of going over to have lunch over there. Because sometimes you just eat in front of your desk, but now there's like, and everyone there is making a point to move away from their desk to have lunch. So, it's also like those lunchtime conversations, you know, that it just kind of comes up in, you know, and so like that, like that's nothing, you know, that's just spending time together”. Having the opportunity just to chat and get to know members of different populations on campus is beneficial not only for departmental culture but also for individuals being able to share ideas and initiate projects that they'd like to see happen within their units. This can lead to collaboration between different on-campus populations, which can enable even more sustainability and climate actions on campus.

Collaboration

Collaboration between and amongst staff, faculty, and students is another immense enabling factor that allows and encourages staff to engage in climate action in the workplace. In the case of Seat 93, as mentioned in the *Persistence, Passion, and Personal Interest* section above, she has been working on her window collision initiative to save birds from striking the windows and dying. This has been a 4-year long initiative, that owes much of its longevity to the collaboration between multiple stakeholder groups on campus. When Seat 93 first started the initiative, she felt alone and unsupported. Going to her supervisor multiple times to receive guidance and look for resources to find a solution to this problem yielded low results until she was able to connect with others and collaborate on the project. Seat 93 started to reach out to fellow staff members working in her unit to gain support and feel uplifted. When she was able to gain the support of fellow staff members, she shared “So fellow staff, people, it's that it's always nicer to work with somebody anyway. So that has been good”, demonstrating that community support can help with the impetus to continue to work on sustainability and environment-related initiatives. As she went on, she shared the process with us, “Anyway, I got one of those guys, the facilities person, he got real passionate about it, too- so the two of us started working on it”. She told us that from there, the collaboration continued to grow from beyond staff to include faculty and students as well, “And then [redacted], got me in touch with...a professor in Land and Food or Forestry, and so the human-wildlife conflict course. And she goes, “we can get students to collect the data on this.” So they've been doing that and this is the fourth year they've done the data”. The collaboration with staff and faculty, to gain the expertise and knowledge required to find attainable solutions to the issue was a crucial part of the process, and speaks volumes to the benefits that both populations can bring together. Additionally, incorporating the students into the project by allowing them to collect data both for their courses, but also for a tangible project that they could follow along throughout the process provides benefits again to both staff and students. In Seat 93's case, the staff were integral to the creation of the project, but the collaboration with faculty and students was necessary for the project to continue for so many years.

Another huge enabler that we came across throughout our interviews was the collaboration specifically between staff and students. Some of the staff interviewed supervised Work Learn positions, which are roles that students can apply for and work within a department or unit throughout the year. B1 shared that they hired a Work Learn student, “So we actually get like a small pot of money each year. And that enabled us to hire a Work Learn student this year, which has been amazing in terms of like building our capacity to move things forward”. The benefit of these Work Learn students is that even if sustainability is not explicitly written into staff members'

job roles and descriptions, they can write sustainability into the Work Learn student's job descriptions. As B1 states, "So whether the [Work Learn students] like it or not, they're also doing climate action". The collaboration between the staff members and the Work Learn students ensures that the students have a say in how they want to contribute to projects that incorporate sustainability and climate action into their role, but staff members have the leadership and oversight to impart their own sustainability ideas that they might not be able to carry out in their own work days. Similarly, Jim shared about his department's involvement in the Work Learn program, "So for the past two summers, we've had a Work Learn student come in, that focuses on sustainability initiatives in the office. So, it's primarily like a research and guidance role, and we'll continue to support our Work Learn students come in the summer and make recommendations for more sustainable practice". Not only does collaboration act as an enabler, but also an immense opportunity for future collaboration and future involvement in climate action on campus.

Access to resources

Another enabler for staff climate action on campus is the existence of easy access to sustainability-related resources and tools. UBC's climate resources, such as the Climate Action Plan and Climate Emergency Plan are good beginning resources for staff members to refer to when interested in incorporating sustainability into their work. For example, Laura talked about how even though sustainability isn't included in her job description, she still refers to these resources and uses them to help inform how she carries out her work. Laura told us "I'm not sure that it's explicitly written into the job description. But in my general approach to work. When I'm kind of working on different projects, like developing out field safety guidelines, one of the things that I do is look at our university's big you know, institutional strategies, and try to figure out ways to connect whatever I'm doing into those priorities. So, while not explicitly written in, it does, the Climate Action Plan would inform and is in my mind when I'm kind of like working through this project". This demonstrates the importance of the existence of these resources, but having access and understanding about what resources are available are also equally important.

There are also sustainability-focused positions, such as the Sustainability Coordinator position that many of the interview participants held. In addition to this, there are also student-focused sustainability-related positions, such as Sustainability Scholars and Sustainability Ambassadors and the Work Learn students who have sustainability-related tasks written into their job descriptions. About the need for prior knowledge when accessing these resources, B1 shared that "the difference between Campus and Community Planning and the Sustainability Hub, is that most staff, unless you're in that area, don't understand the difference,". A variety of UBC-created climate resources do exist, but to increase ease of access for staff members (and beyond), the creation of a hub as a central repository for all climate change and sustainability-related resources is necessary.

Barriers

Barriers were split into the four main thematic categories of 1) Lack of Knowledge, 2) Lack of Support (Top-down and Lateral), 3) Lack of Time and Capacity, and 4) Lack of Finances. Knowledge speaks to the individual experiences and confusion around climate action generally and on campus. Even if there is this knowledge, the section on lack of support will highlight how staff members who do want to engage in climate action often feel isolated and deterred by the emphasis on individual motivation for completing such projects. Lack of time and capacity speaks to those who do continue to carry on climate action in their job roles only to find that, in many cases, it increases work hours without pay and often feels like a volunteer role with no reward. Lastly, the mentality and priorities around finances in staff job descriptions make it seem like a choice between sustainability and fulfilling job responsibilities of pursuing low-cost options and saving departmental funds. All of these barriers paint a picture of what staff experience in their own journey and experience with climate action.

Knowledge

For our research purposes, knowledge refers to how staff participants understand and comprehend climate action and the resources available to them. While personal initiative acted as an impetus for climate action for some staff members, it was heavily informed by their own history in climate-related education or upbringings. Because of this, initiative is a double-edged sword. While the passion allows for fruitful and driven staff leadership on climate action initiatives, it also means that the leadership is only reserved for the people who have had outside access to support in climate-related topics. The way we will discuss knowledge in this section is not necessarily the lack of knowledge out there, but the problem with the accessibility of relevant and useful education, resources, and tools to the people who might not seek it out voluntarily.

One of the first questions we asked in our interviews to everyone was “what does climate action mean to you?” We designed this question so that participants didn’t feel pressured or insecure about their own knowledge about climate action but more so as a reflection of how climate action has been presented to them. When I asked this question to Jim and Lisa over Zoom, their strong reactions almost transported them to the empty chair in front of me. Jim leaned back in his chair from his at-home desk-set up and took a large inhale. Lisa furrowed her brow and looked away from the camera in thought.

“That’s a big question” Jim finally said, and we all laughed because it was true. It was almost ridiculous how broad of a question and term it felt like, almost more abstract than anything. This was how most participants reacted when we asked them the question, taking a moment to gather their thoughts and give their response. Despite being a tough question, they all had similar themes emerge from their conceptualizations of climate action; namely that it is in response to an urgent climate crisis, and that it has large justice implications.

Lisa described climate action as an “an ongoing process of just of learning and staying up to date on what’s going on and, and what steps we can take as, as individuals to contribute to mitigating the climate disaster, but then also, you know, really advocating for some of those other bigger and more organizational changes that that can be adopted as well.” Highlighting the individual and institutional facets of climate action which was revealed as a common way of participants framing their response to this question. Seat 93 focused more on the individual side of climate action, saying that “Climate Action to me is about the action. Part of it, not just being aware, but actually doing whatever is in your hand to do.” She then provided examples from her day-to-day life to embellish what action may mean. However, other participants emphasized the institutional factors at play over the individual, stating that, “As individuals, I don’t think that adds up to very much. So action, I think, probably is bigger, it’s more at a governmental level, or it’s at a level where we tried to impose or restrict particular things that cause issues. So, for us in our little world, I don’t know how much of that we do.” This varied conceptualization of climate action and the actors with agency was always vague and participants tended to second guess what they were saying, as if there was a correct answer they should be citing. This inevitably led to questioning and dichotomizing their specific job role with participation in climate action.

Because of this vague and often grandiose idea of climate action, staff members often discount what climate action in their job roles looks like, or don’t conceptualize actions that are aligned with climate action as, “climate action”. In an interview with staff from a unit that deals with children and child-care, this comes up, “[Indigenous support staff helps so] we can engage better with a place with a land-based understanding of things. [Ingenious support staff] helped us all develop land acknowledgments, which, in and of itself, I don’t think that’s a climate action thing. But it, it helps children to have a different understanding, for growing up in this world about how to live well with everything.” Despite questioning the climate-action relatedness of land acknowledgements, the participant, A1, goes on to perfectly situate land acknowledgements as a climate-action step because of its ties to land-based learning. For Oliver, they describe climate action as not a significant part in their job role or unit “Currently, it’s just not a major area of conversation in our office, it’s not a focus.” these quotes are emblematic

of one of our findings in which staff members might engage with climate action however don't have the tools or words or strata to define it as such.

Another important finding is how the common definitions of climate action actually isolated staff in some cases. Oliver found that the common conceptualization of climate action promoted generally wasn't inclusive or specific enough to their unit. For Oliver, who has co-workers that are disabled, sustainability messaging suggesting biking to work instead of driving or taking the bus piques the question of assumptions of sustainability, "what type of person are you thinking about when you're saying, 'what does your office need to do to be more sustainable?'" In effect, what Oliver is suggesting is that sustainability measures and definitions tend to isolate or inadvertently villainize disabled people for not participating in sustainability measures that are more difficult or impossible for them to do.

Part of this issue is that staff members get their information around sustainability from generic sources that often come with preconceived assumptions of demographics. When asked where they get their campus climate information from, Lisa explains that "we're getting it in exactly the same source that everybody else at UBC is, is getting it just like the kind of the broad announcements about the climate action plan... So, we'll get those bulletins. I think we get more information on the sort of more local initiatives from the sustainability coordinator program. And also our own interests. So yeah, I don't there's no, nothing's being targeted, kind of at our office specifically." The lack of tailored definitions of climate action embedded in the very conceptualization of climate action is often isolating and puts the onus on staff members to understand how their work is framed in a lens of sustainability.

Support (Top-down and Lateral)

If a staff member wants to implement climate actions in their day to day or within work hours, they often don't feel supported in doing so. Lack of support was revealed in the interviews as an institutional barrier, feeling disempowered to conduct climate action because leadership doesn't facilitate it or make it accessible. As Jim states "Individual impact is negligible, really. And so without institutional support from leadership nothing is possible." this sentiment calling upon leaders and people in positions of power on campus was a strong theme that emerged, Vicky also said that peer pressure isn't enough to get people interested or thinking about climate considerations in their day-to-day, "as far as for climate action, unless it's coming down from top, or unless you yourself are keen, then it's just not going to happen." These quotes also highlight the isolation that comes as a result of not having buy-in from leadership. Staff who are keen or empowered to consider climate in their job roles often feel isolated in doing so because it is rooted in personal initiative rather than the culture of their unit or required of jobs. This puts an onus on this population of staff, who are already taking on additional work hours and are extremely overloaded.

Staff participants also cited having problems navigating the resources available to them or finding the appropriate channels of support to address their concerns or ideas. These furthered feelings of isolation when there was interest in seeking collaboration or help with climate-related questions related to their job. While participants indirectly pointing towards this as a barrier, talking about not knowing who to talk to about the lack of bike parkade covers, or inconsistent information about construction regulations, B-1 specifically identified this as a barrier "Well, I think one of the other barriers is this whole confusion between the Climate Action Plan and the Climate Emergency Response. And the difference between Campus and Community Planning and the Sustainability Hub, like most staff, unless you're in that area don't understand the difference. Or necessarily like what each one does." B1 highlights that the sheer number of resources available makes navigating them disorienting. This suggests that while staff members do know there are resources available, the problem is knowing where or how to access the appropriate channels for the much-needed support they are seeking.

Time and Capacity

Throughout our interviews, we heard lots about time and capacity as being major barriers to staff climate engagement. As Oliver mentioned, "Yeah, so I think of one [barrier] is time and capacity, right. So for at the adviser level, for example, you're expected to commit to three hours of student appointment time per day. So 15 hours a week of student time, plus your project work on the side, not plus emails. So obviously, your job takes up a good portion of that". Most participants shared their struggles with time and capacity constraints, which hinder their active involvement in climate action initiatives within their departments. In the interview with Jim and Lisa, it was highlighted that when the Indigenous Strategic Plan (ISP) was launched, structured time (within working hours) was provided for units to come together and discuss implementation strategies and to set strategic goals for each department. However, initiatives such as CAP and other climate-related endeavors lack the allocated time to conduct similar discussions and planning. The demands of their primary responsibilities leave limited room for engagement in additional activities such as sustainability projects. Regarding this concern, Jim shared that "it needs to be more intentionally built into our jobs. And like, our unit would be interested in doing something like that, like we've been working - we worked as a unit during work hours to go through the ISP, and institute changes in our work based on the ISP and it was all done collaboratively during work hours, and it felt like very effective and very collaborative. Because I think we all felt quite empowered to do that. But we haven't - I don't think we've been given the same or feel the same ownership of this work". Therefore, integrating climate action into job roles fosters a collaborative approach that empowers staff to take ownership of these initiatives.

Jim and Lisa shared that "UBC has been on a bit of a hiring freeze, basically, since the start of COVID," and the impacts of this drought, including "So people are being asked to do other work and other jobs that weren't formerly a part of their job description. And so the like, the other thing that an initiative like this would take would be a lot of planning, a lot of advocacy where a lot of there'd be a lot of elements in it. And I think everybody is already feeling quite stretched. So there, there would have to also be an investment of people to make it happen". This underscores the challenges of promoting sustainability initiatives across campus. During our interview with Oliver, he emphasized that his unit's responsibilities primarily revolve around desk work, posing a challenge to integrating sustainability considerations within his unit. He shared, "And then I think in terms of our office, you know, it's very desk-job heavy, right? So it's like, we respond to emails, we meet over Zoom or students come into our office to meet with us. So I can't, it's hard to think of like a sustainability lens within this very, like, not stale environment, but this like very traditional office setup, right?". Staff members who have high priority tasks that might not be directly related to sustainability often have difficulty incorporating sustainability into their jobs themselves. We also heard from AJ about workload and time constraints. She frequently emphasized that making meaningful contributions requires dedicated time and effort, saying "We dedicate a lot of time. And I don't think that that time is permitted to commit to these initiatives. So, we have to carve out time and a very hectic schedule to begin with. Having that mandated, would then allow us, I think, to focus even more time on it, which would be ideal". With such a demanding schedule, AJ and other staff members need to carve out time specifically to focus on sustainability initiatives at UBC. This might also mean delaying job description-related tasks.

The research also highlighted the voluntary nature of engagement in climate action activities among administrative staff. Despite recognizing the importance of environmental sustainability, many staff members perceive participation in climate action initiatives as voluntary rather than a mandatory, embedded part of their role. Unpaid volunteerism among staff reflects a need for greater recognition and support for sustainability

initiatives. The institution's emphasis on cost-saving measures may hinder long-term investments in environmental sustainability. Laura also shared that “within this current unit, it's kind of like it's happening in pockets. But [...] everybody has to come forward with what they're doing in relation to climate action strategies”. As a result, more strategic alignment and advocacy are crucial for securing financial support and advancing UBC's commitment to climate action. Almost all of our interviewees held roles as Sustainability Coordinators, and they highlighted a common trend: sustainability work is often undertaken outside of regular working hours or added on top of their already full workload. Despite being designated Sustainability Coordinators, their main job responsibilities (not necessarily sustainability-related) take up most of their workdays during working hours. Any engagement in sustainability efforts are pursued voluntarily, on top of their existing workload, or during their own time. This indicates that sustainability work is viewed as additional to their existing duties rather than integrated into their formal job descriptions or allocated working hours. Sustainability Coordinators are only allocated 4 hours a month to work on their sustainability goals, which is only 2.5% of their monthly working hours. A lot of the time, the meetings for these Sustainability Coordinator roles (10 out of 11 participants) are held during lunch hours or during other times which makes them difficult to attend. Instead of being rewarded for committing to sustainability, they are sacrificing their break time to attend these meetings. As a result, these individuals often face the challenge of balancing their sustainability commitments with their primary responsibilities within the constraints of their busy schedules.

An important finding highlighted in the research is that climate action initiatives often lack explicit integration into the job descriptions or roles of administrative staff at UBC. Laura explained that “To be honest, I'm not sure that it's explicitly written into the job description. But in my general approach to work, when I'm kind of working on different projects, like developing [redacted] guidelines, one of the things that I do is look at our university's big you know, institutional strategies, and try to figure out ways to connect whatever I'm doing into those priorities. So while not explicitly written in, it does, the, the climate action plan would inform and is in my mind when I'm kind of like working through this project”. While there might be awareness of the broader institutional goals regarding sustainability, the absence of specific mention or integration of climate action responsibilities within job descriptions contributes to a lack of clarity and accountability regarding staff involvement. This suggests a potential gap in communication and organizational structure, hindering staff engagement with climate action efforts. AJ and Oliver emphasized that participation in climate action and sustainability initiatives is not enforced by units and top-down leadership; rather, it is regarded as a personal choice. This approach may discourage individuals from actively engaging in such initiatives and directing their focus toward sustainability.

Another significant time and capacity barrier identified in the study is the issue of conflicting priorities among staff at UBC. Oliver highlighted that “it's just been like, all the sessions have been during like meetings that are not changeable. Or like, you know, I have to prioritize student times, and they booked weeks in advance, and then these meetings will pop up. So yeah, it's been challenging, but we'll get there”. The data revealed that while staff recognize the importance of environmental sustainability, other pressing tasks and responsibilities often take precedence in their daily work routines. Without clear guidance and support from organizational leadership, staff may struggle to allocate time and resources toward engaging in sustainability initiatives within competing demands. Incorporating these aspects enriches the discussion by addressing the challenges related to the integration of climate action into job descriptions and the impact of conflicting priorities on staff

engagement. These factors further emphasize the importance of organizational support, communication, and strategic alignment in fostering greater administrative staff involvement in climate action at UBC.

Funding

The research findings emphasized significant financial constraints as barriers to administrative staff engagement with climate action at UBC. The absence of dedicated funds for climate action events and initiatives creates a perception that sustainability efforts are a low priority within the institution's budgetary considerations. Again, a lot of the work that people are doing that is sustainability-related is done outside of working hours and is voluntary. So only people with a background or previous interest in sustainability themselves are inclined to seek out and sign up for these positions. In our interviews, all participants stressed the significance of funding as a primary obstacle to advancing sustainability initiatives at UBC. AJ, for instance, emphasized the necessity of securing financial support for organizing various climate action-focused events. They highlighted the challenge of continually seeking funding, which poses a significant barrier to realizing these initiatives. As was mentioned previously, considering Jim's reflection on the impacts of Covid-19 and people doing more work than they were prior to Covid, more funding is needed to hire more staff members at UBC so that sustainability can be comfortably incorporated into staff work. If the service load is decreased, and people have more time in their schedules to devote to sustainability, this will help improve staff engagement on campus, in their personal lives and in their work.

Additionally, Seat 93's coworker in charge of catering prioritizes cost-effective choices over sustainable alternatives. "And catering is a huge thing. And I can remember when the Climate Emergency thing came out and at first, I went to the person in our office and said, "Oh, what do you think about, you know, how can we get rid of single-use stuff or use stuff that can be compostable and biodegradable?". Her coworker's response was, "Well, it's, it's more expensive" and Seat 93 identified "the disconnect" between these sustainable options compared to single use products that are damaging to the environment. There is a need for a paradigm shift in thinking about cheaper options vs. sustainable options, and improved sustainability-focused departmental culture can help contribute to that.

Another great example pointed out by one of the participants was that providing students with compensation for opting for more environmentally friendly flight choices requires financial resources. Jim talked about the idea of purchasing carbon offsets as a dream initiative, especially because his department deals with lots of student flights, "It's very challenging, because, kind of our go-to answer tends to be buying carbon offsets for students, but we recognize that that just kind of passes the buck on to somebody else to actually come up with a solution while we're just paying money to continue to you know, have students traveling on a mass scale. But it is something we're doing right now. So I do think carbon offsets, if we could offer every student carbon offsets for their flights, that would be one big mitigation strategy that we can undertake, I think". In the same vein, Laura and AN talked about incentivizing the lack of travel, with AN sharing, "Yeah, so this is so far, what we've done, our first thing was basically a proposal that I made to the department, which was to commit to reducing the amount of travel associated with the air travel associated with visiting speakers". All of the aforementioned examples underscore the critical role that funding constraints play in impeding the progress of sustainability efforts within the faculties at UBC.

Limitations

It is important to acknowledge limitations in this research, such as a restricted number of interview participants, hindering the generalization of results to a broader population. The recruitment of participants is guided by recommendations from the SEEDS project partner. The recruited individuals sourced from two or three units with limited involvement in climate engagement, one or two units demonstrating notable proficiency in climate engagement, and one unit in the process of transitioning towards increased climate action in their practices. Additionally, data collection confined to specific UBC units, potentially limiting the external validity of the findings to those units and faculties. Furthermore, the research duration was limited to three months, impacting the depth of analysis and the ability to capture long-term trends or changes. Due to time constraints and the busy schedule of staff at UBC during this time of the year, we were unable to conduct focus group interviews as well. Despite the above limitations it is believed that the research findings offer valuable insights and foreground more large-scale research for SEEDS on the barriers in climate engagement.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Action

Many of the interviews we conducted came to the natural question of asking, “what’s next?” which elicited varied responses and ideas from participants. The purpose of this study was to build the groundwork to start thinking about the big question of what comes next. We organized this recommendations section into short-term and long-term initiatives and programming that could come out of the current findings, and then end with recommendations for future research pathways that could manifest as the next phase or potential phases of this project. In Figure 2, the relationship between our recommendations and how they might interplay with one another is depicted.

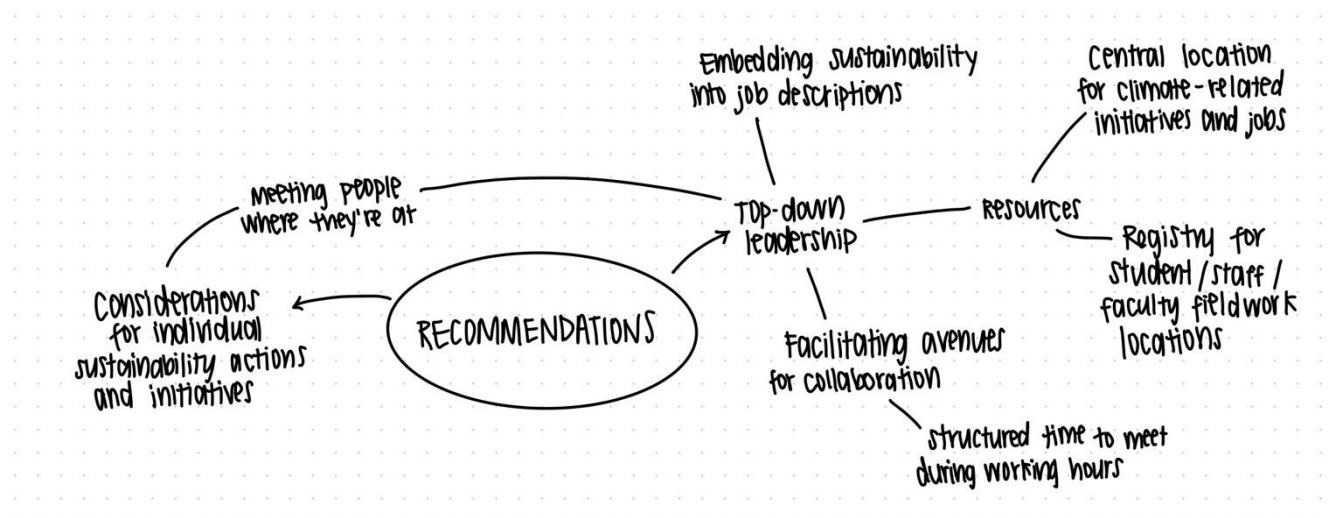


Figure 2: Recommendations Concept Map

Short Term Recommendations

Facilitating Avenues for Collaboration

Connecting Staff to Faculty

Two of our short-term recommendations come directly from what we saw as the most common enablers of climate action. In the enablers analysis, for instance, among staff and faculty or staff and students, we found collaboration to be a strong indicator of effective and long-term sustainability initiatives. While there are already programs connecting staff members to students such as the Work Learn program, Sustainability Scholars, and Sustainability Ambassadors, there are also connections between climate-keen staff with other staff members through the Sustainability Coordinator's role, we found that there wasn't any formal program to connect staff to faculty.

Staff-faculty relations in climate action can act as a resource for staff to get their projects off the ground. This is demonstrated in Seat 93's case, when a faculty member offered to incorporate data collection on window related bird-deaths as a part of the course they were teaching. In Olivia's case, the soft-plastics disposal system she worked on came from a suggestion from a faculty member. Staff and faculty can support one another through their prescribed job roles by suggesting solutions or seeking support for projects that begin with either party. We recommend an initiative in which staff and faculty can get connected about sustainability related initiatives they envision at the unit, faculty, or university scale. This would be targeted towards staff that are already keen on integrating or understanding climate-action in their roles.

Dedicated Time for Climate-Action Discussions

Another short-term recommendation that came out of the enablers is the ability to have time dedicated to discussing CAP 2030 and other climate initiatives embedded during working hours. Although staff are willing to spend their lunch hours attending meetings and workshops when they can, it should not be a sacrifice to learn about and embed sustainability into their everyday work. Jim mentioned that the opportunity to discuss the ISP during work hours allowed for fruitful conversations between unit staff members on how they could incorporate it in their work. Currently, staff members are expected to review climate-messaging and initiatives on their own time, which oftentimes is during lunch hours, deterring many from participating in conversations.

Reward Incentive

The three remaining recommendations are suggested to address specific barriers we isolated. The mentality of priorities can be addressed with creating a reward incentive for sustainable action. Possibilities of these rewards may be a climate action prize for staff or merit-based top-up types of awards. AN made this clear in their interview, believing that rewards are a way to get non-engaged staff members and the campus community in general to make climate action-aligned choices in their work are never rewarded for not traveling or it is not a visible decision," she says. This idea around rewards is echoed by Jim and Lisa except with regards to students. Jim and Lisa are interested in working on a reward for students who have documented and tried to incorporate sustainable practices while travelling and living abroad. Applying this reward incentive for units on campus might help staff come together in brainstorming how climate action might fit into their daily routines and choices, and in the process, it provides the support needed for those ideas to flourish.

Creating a Campus Climate Repository

It's important to acknowledge that it's amazing that UBC has so many resources about climate-related initiatives, positions, and events. However, the diversity of resources that staff, faculty, and students can access has become overwhelming to folks who are not focused on sustainability-related communications to begin with.

To address the high volume of resources, and the confusion around access to these resources, we recommend creating a repository directing people to the appropriate people, resources, and units that can help them with their questions or ideas. This way, disorientation around who to turn to or where to go can be alleviated as a barrier to staff members wanting to engage in climate action but are not sure how or where to get support. This climate repository would also explain the different units and organizations on campus that focus on climate and sustainability and define their unique goals and current initiatives that might relate to staff needs.

Another repository that has been requested by staff members is a database where staff, faculty, and students from UBC are travelling. This is to determine carbon emissions of flights, but also as a safety precaution to ensure that UBC as an institution can easily locate any of their community members in the event of an emergency. This would also ensure accountability on the university's behalf to reduce emissions and only take flights (and other methods of high emissions transportation) when deemed necessary.

Tailored Environmental Education & Hybrid work

Underlying all these recommendations is a need to make sure staff understand the multi-varied definition of climate action, and not feel excluded from its scope or suggestions. This speaks to our findings around how climate action isn't associated with accessibility, and how participants felt guilt around not being able to practice sustainable options because of the circumstances of their lives. For example, Laura mentioned that she needs to drive because she works between two campuses and has young children that need to get to school, but she felt guilty about driving her car to take her children where they need to go. Making climate action about meeting people where they are at and knowing that everyone might have a different relationship with it is key to any climate action efforts in the staff community. Perhaps in some units, sustainable action is demonstrated through a remote or hybrid work schedule, whereas in others it might be setting a goal for waste reduction. Ensuring that messaging about climate action goes beyond mass emails and instead targets individual units and their needs helps make the effort inclusive.

Mid to Long Term Recommendations

Top-down Leadership and Buy-In

Increased top-down leadership and buy-in from leadership positions are necessary to encourage staff climate action at UBC. Throughout the interviews, the need for support, time and capacity were addressed as major barriers to staff engagement in climate action. These can both come from top-down leadership, through formal support, as well as increased time to work on sustainability-related initiatives. There are systemic changes required within the university to ensure that staff members are working within their working hours, doing all the work they need to do that comes with their job roles and descriptions, and having the time to work on sustainability initiatives. As has been mentioned previously, Sustainability Coordinators receive 4 hours a month within their working hours to work on sustainability-related issues. While this is a great initiative that allows staff members to set aside some time per month to work toward sustainability goals directly, additional hours are inevitably needed on such issues. As Jim shared, "We're both part of the Sustainability Coordinator program. And all of the events happened at lunchtime or after hours. So it's there, but there doesn't feel like there's an empowered approach to it". Although there are short-term recommendations that come from this lack of leadership structure, there are also greater issues that can be addressed and help the culture at UBC to further incorporate sustainability into staff roles. Concerning the need for top-down leadership, Lisa said, "it just has to be an institutional priority. Otherwise, we, you know, we're all just walking around trying to recycle. And that's actually not going to get us anywhere, it has to be, you know, where the investments are coming from, where all of those investments are going, all of that. So it really has to come top-down". Although individual staff coming forward and leading the charge on sustainability projects and initiatives are incredibly important, they need to have the support and

encouragement to continue, as well as incentives for more staff to do so. However, the overarching need comes from institutional support and a change in the way that leadership roles on campus approach sustainability. Instead of thinking of it as something that takes away from “regular operations”, it needs to be embedded into everyday work.

Building Sustainability into Job Roles

As top-down leadership buys into sustainability initiatives and climate action within their units, a step that can be taken in tandem will be to build sustainability into job roles. Throughout all the interviews, we heard so many reflections about not being able to work sustainability into staff member’s day-to-day work because it wasn’t a part of their job description. Especially for staff members who might be new to their jobs, or not feel as stable as older staff members, they might not feel comfortable straying from their job descriptions. Staff members being rewarded by choosing cheaper options rather than sustainable options needs to be reversed, which also comes with that top-down buy-in. There are staff members who have the passion to incorporate sustainability into their work based on their own values, like Laura, who we heard from earlier in the report discussing her general approach to work and building sustainability into every aspect of her life. However, it is not enough to rely on individuals’ personal interest in the environment and sustainability as a long-term solution. In addition, even if individuals are interested in sustainability and the environment, they might not have the capacity to incorporate sustainability into their work because of the equally important work that they need to do within their units. For example, Oliver shares, “At the advisor level, for example, you’re expected to commit to three hours of student appointment time per day. So, 15 hours a week of student time, plus your project work on the side, plus emails. So obviously, your job takes up a good portion of that”. Something needs to be done to incorporate sustainability into job roles from a leadership perspective, and how to do that might require additional research.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although we have drafted a list of short-term and long-term recommendations for initiatives, as this research is meant to serve as the groundwork for more tailored approaches to understanding the staff experiences, we have also drafted recommendations for future research. This is in recognition of the limitations of our project, and the fact that we were only able to interview 11 staff members, which does not necessarily represent the broad array of staff considerations at an institution as large as UBC, with over 10,000 staff members. Additionally, future research is needed to determine which conditions empower staff to make changes, either for themselves or their units. This report is a rudimentary introduction into M&P staff perspectives and experiences on staff climate engagement, and future research will help narrow down meaningful changes within departments.

Focus Group Discussion on Findings:

In our initial research plan, our team had planned for a focus group discussion. Because of temporal constraints and the busy schedules of staff member participants, we were unable to go through with the focus group. We recommend conducting a focus group in response to our findings and recommendations. This can manifest in ranking and discussing the relative significance of the barriers and enablers we highlighted, as well as talking about any others not mentioned in the report. This focus group can also reflect the values of staff collaboration we highlighted as an enabler of climate action.

Survey of Findings:

In addition to a focus group, a distributed survey can be used to gather quantitative evidence from a wide demographic of staff members. While this would help in gaining a broader perspective of climate action from staff

on campus, careful attention would be needed to understand the answers from the context they were provided, for example what unit and type of staff member they are, how much funding is needed and used, etc. Our findings suggested a need to cater initiatives and climate action messaging to the realities of specific units, so generalizing the barriers and enablers cross-campus might isolate staff members.

Life Histories of Staff Members & Relationship to Sustainability:

A unique approach to understanding how staff members engage in climate action currently might involve gathering a few life histories. In several interviews, participants provided backgrounds of how they individually got involved in climate action and sustainability, which were extremely varied and interesting! Between straddling different conceptualizations of climate action between nations, to getting involved because of a familial culture of climate-denying, hearing these experiences showed the extremely human element of climate action. By selecting three or four staff members to share their life histories long form in relation to their involvement with climate action for distribution might help broaden ideas of what climate action means for others. A different approach to this would be using a “user journey map” methodology, adapted to climate change action, to help visualize the different steps and challenges encountered along the way, from the initial idea and motivation to the creation of a committee or program and the actual enforcement of actions.

Conclusion

Climate action is necessary for adequately addressing the climate crisis, and increased awareness and understanding of climate change are predecessors to climate action (Net Impact, 2023). Increased climate engagement and climate action are critical for supporting the UBC community in achieving its climate goals, as identified in the UBC Climate Action Plan 2030 (CAP30). Staff members play pivotal roles in advancing campus sustainability, yet conventional interpretations of sustainability initiatives often overlook their central contributions (Brinkhurst, 2011). Therefore, the research objectives outlined in the study aimed to delve into the barriers hindering administrative staff participation in climate action initiatives at UBC and to identify key enablers for enhancing their engagement. Through semi-structured interviews, the study successfully identifies four primary barriers—knowledge gaps, time constraints, insufficient funding, and lack of support—as well as key enablers such as persistence, passion, personal interest, departmental culture, collaboration, and available resources. By achieving these objectives, the research sheds light on the complexities of staff engagement in climate action and provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by administrative staff at UBC. Furthermore, the significance of the study lies in its potential to inform strategies aimed at overcoming these barriers and fostering a culture of active engagement and dedication to combating climate change among administrative staff. By addressing the identified barriers, UBC might be able to advance its broader sustainability objectives and contribute significantly to the global effort to mitigate climate change. Overall, the study's objectives have been effectively achieved, paving the way for actionable recommendations to enhance staff involvement in climate action initiatives at UBC.

This study presents a range of practical suggestions aimed at bolstering staff involvement in climate action initiatives at UBC. By addressing immediate and long-term recommendations and proposing paths for future research, the findings lay a strong groundwork for cultivating a sustainable culture and climate awareness among the university's administrative staff. These recommendations include fostering collaboration, dedicating time for climate-action discussions, providing incentives for units, offering tailored environmental education, and implementing hybrid work arrangements. Ultimately, by adopting the proposed recommendations and embracing

a culture of sustainability and climate awareness, UBC will be able to advance its commitment to climate justice, encouraging meaningful staff engagement and contributing to a more sustainable future for the university community and beyond.

Solving the climate threats is not solely dependent on the actions of a few individuals; instead, promoting critical thinking and positive outlooks can cultivate a sense of hope that helps people maintain their engagement (Ojala, 2012). Therefore, more emphasis should be placed on recognizing the potential of staff leadership and also finding effective ways to support their endeavours (Brinkhurst, 2011). It is also important to methodically address the underlying issues to overcome barriers to climate engagement among staff. This includes providing comprehensive training and resources to enhance staff knowledge of sustainability concepts and their relevance to job roles. Establishing clear top-down support structures, centralizing sustainability initiatives, and fostering a supportive organizational culture are important. Based on the findings of this research, allocating dedicated time for climate-related activities and securing adequate funding for sustainability projects are essential steps in empowering staff to actively engage in climate action efforts. Additionally, creating opportunities for collaboration and community-building can help mitigate the isolation experienced by staff in their sustainability journey.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Guiding Questions

General Job Role and climate

1. **What would you say your role encapsulates in [unit]?**
2. **Do you perceive [units] climate action or sustainability planning as belonging to your role? Why or why not?**
3. To what extent is climate action integrated into your daily work culture at [unit] ?
4. Is there another role at [unit] that focuses on climate action?
 - a. What is that role and how is your role connected to it?
5. What do you think your unit is doing well with in regards to sustainability?
6. **If provided the resources and time needed, what type of climate activities or climate-friendly practices could you envision employing in your [unit] that you don't already do?**

General perceptions around UBC climate policies

7. **What does Climate Action mean to you?**
8. What is your perception of UBC's general campus climate action policies?
9. Can you give an example of effective ones you have seen?
10. Have you personally been actively involved in any climate-related initiatives or events at UBC?
 - a. If yes, please specify the nature of your involvement (e.g., workshops, events, committees)
11. **Who do you think the main actors in UBC climate action are on campus?**
12. **Have you heard of UBC's Climate Action Plan before this interview?**

Barriers

13. **What factors prevent you from carrying out these activities now?**
14. What type of support, that you do not already have, would you need to carry out this sustainability action you just described?
15. What are the big barriers to carrying out climate action in your department
 - b. Financial, social, temporal, spatial

Moving forward

16. Which communication channels do you find most effective for receiving information about climate-related opportunities on campus?
17. If given necessary resources, would you be interested in integrating climate action planning in your role?
18. What type of support and resources would you need to engage more?