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Bucknell Building and Sustainability Discussion, 2016

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Bucknell: Occupied

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Amanda Wooden, interviewee (AW)

Dina El-Mogazi, interviewee (DEM)

Steve Buonopane, interviewee (SB)

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JT: All of my guests here are here to talk about sustainability issues here on campus. Specifically pertaining to Academic East, but then of course branching into a larger conversation about campus politics. So I think we'll just go around the room, I'll have everyone in the studio introduce themselves and then we'll get talking.

EL: Hi this is Elaine, I'm a senior at Bucknell. I've been involved in sustainability for all my years here.

SB: Steve Buonopane, I'm an associate professor in Civil and Environmental Engineering.

DEM: Dina El-Mogazi, I'm director of the sustainable design program for the Bucknell Center for Sustainability and the Environment.

AW: I'm Amanda Wooden, I'm a professor of Environmental Studies and chair of the Environmental Studies program.

JT: Alright, well, welcome to the studio, all of you. I think we'll start off by talking about the very specific issue which motivated this conversation, which is the proposed building of Academic East here on campus. So maybe I can ask one of you to talk about what that building is and maybe why it matters on campus.

DEM: I could start by saying that Bucknell has been building several buildings in the past few years. Academic West was a precursor of Academic East and it achieved a LEED silver rating, which was a nice goal to achieve in terms of sustainability. We've had a couple of fraternity houses, a couple of... or several residence halls and the Commons building. The Commons building just received a LEED gold certification, so building has been happening a lot on the campus lately in the past few years. However, Academic East is important because it may be the last building we build in a long time. Just in terms of what is available in terms of campus resources to create a new building. And so we want to make sure that that one really shows what Bucknell has to offer in terms of the kind of building that we can create.

AW: So I guess I can add to that the conversations about Academic East have become more public than conversations about past buildings have been and that has been a push that many of us have engaged in to try to open up and make more transparent the design process. And try to make sure that all of us on campus are shaping the vision for these buildings and try to actually move our conversation about sustainability beyond what at times may feel and seem superficial to a movement towards goals and commitments that we have as a University to make a real dent in, for

example, our energy consumption moving towards our commitments related to climate change. Maybe someone else can talk about that a little bit more. So the conversation about Academic East, then really many of us feel is kind of a last moment to, as Dina said, it's one of the last buildings in this building boom, to really try to crack open the process and really shape the way things are done. Not just for this building, but for all possible infrastructure and campus changes in the future.

SB: I'd like to follow up on something that Dina said. She mentioned that Academic West achieved LEED silver, but if you were to walk through the building, it looks more or less the same as any other building and the sustainability elements are not necessarily on display. And so we are an educational institution and a building itself can be part of the education of its occupants and anyone who passes through. The Academic East building will have a number of engineering faculty offices and engineering labs. And one of the things we strive to do in the College of Engineering is to use the campus itself as a teaching tool. So Academic East has the potential to become a teaching tool itself. The building can be an educational element. If the sustainability is brought to the forefront and is visible.

JT: So maybe I can ask several of you to talk about maybe how this building reveals larger ongoing conversations here on campus. Right? I mean, I imagine that many of our listeners may be on campus or off campus may be wondering [LAUGHS] why do we care so much about one particular building, right? so is there... what is the broader significance of this construction?

DEM: I could just add a little bit to that in the sense that over time we've been progressing this conversation about buildings. And buildings are really important 'cause buildings take up a lot of resources. I mean, you can imagine a building and its mass uses a lot of materials and then we have the energy it consumes, the water it consumes over its life-cycle. Anything that the University does might have some kind of impact on sustainability. But buildings have the biggest impact on sustainability of anything the University does. And that's why we're really concerned about buildings. And this is the most recent building in what we were just discussing as a building boom. And so this is a great time to bring a conversation about sustainability and the University to the forefront.

SB: Dina mentioned that buildings are a major impact in terms of energy uses and resources. There's some data I show my students the US Department of Energy classifies energy use as well as CO2 emissions into three major categories, buildings, transportation, and industry. And buildings is the largest sector of our economy--the largest contributor both to energy use and greenhouse gas emissions.

DEM: And I want to touch on more the people behind this building. The ideas and the galvanization of ideas that we're trying to produce. I think that is something that we struggle with at Bucknell. Especially in trying to provide students with a large opportunity to create a change on campus. I think this building is the opportunity to create something that can really come to life and be a long-standing testament to the commitment of students that they have to sustainability.

JT: So I'm hearing a lot of comments about the significance of the building in terms of sustainability, but from what I understand there is also a lot going on in terms of decision-making. So how are

decisions made on campus. Who gets to make decisions. So maybe you can talk about this building in terms of decision-making processes much less democratic decision-making processes.

DEM: I'll just start out. I've been on a few different planning committees for buildings over the years. This is probably the third one. And Bucknell's always done a good job in trying to represent on the committees different stakeholders. However, the campus as a whole hasn't been represented in the past, and there's a lot of impetus in the campus to really represent sustainability concerns, in this particular situation, for the reasons we already talked about. And to have students en masse be able to represent their concerns for sustainability--and I think students are really important overall because they're the ones who have the most stake in the future. They're the youngest. So however things play out in the future of what we do is important to the students. And so in this particular case, there was a letter that was composed that tried to bring forth this idea to the administration that we really want sustainable design for the future of Bucknell. And I believe the signatures ranked up around 300 and that was faculty, staff, and students.

[CROSSTALK]

AW: 334 as of yesterday.

DEM: Yeah. 334. OK, great. So, yeah. I think that's a really significant sign that things are... the climate is changing.

AW: Maybe I could also add to what Dina is saying about some -- the names of some decision-making oversight bodies that maybe have been floating around and are confusing. And emails. And conversations in public or in the letter. Many of you may have heard of the sustainability working group right? Referenced, and let me give you a little background on that. The sustainability working group, actually, Steve, Dina, and I we're all part of this, was an ad hoc group that really came out of hallway conversations in the fall of 2010 when ground was broken on Academic West. And many of us who are really closely attuned to what's happening about the built campus were taken a little bit by surprise by this. That we weren't really part of the conversation. A lot of people weren't part of the conversation. And I'm in the social sciences. We live in Academic West. So many people outside of those of us interested in sustainability were quite concerned with whether or not they were getting or having any input in the process.

JT: MmHm.

AW: And that's a longer conversation, but basically we started in the hallway saying "Hey, did hear about that? What happened? Do you know how this decision was made? I don't know how this decision was made." We started having these conversations and before you know it or shortly thereafter, a group of about eleven of us started meeting regularly to try to get, to wrap our heads what was happening, how decisions were being made. What policies and visions were guiding these kinds of decisions and try to formulate ideas about sustainability and integrative design and really to bring those to the President, bring those to facilities, bring those to lots of others on campus who make decisions about finances, etc. That we would hope with conversation we could help shift the process. We worked on that for several years. Just on the side.

JT: Just on your own. So this was not--

AW: Yes.

JT: in any way... you didn't have any indication that anybody cared?

AW: Well we did have indications that people listened to us when we organized, and we quickly got the ear of several people that I mentioned. So we spent a lot of time meeting with all of these people. We got funding to bring a consulting firm called Second Nature to campus, they generated a report which is online. You can find it. You can Google Second Nature Bucknell... in which they outline the steps the University could take to make decision-making more transparent. The process more sustainable and aim towards meeting our goals. Which the goals of the ACUPCC American Colleges and Universities Present Climate Commitment, sorry, long. [CROSSTALK] This was 2008, which the previous President signed, which commits us on a path toward net zero emissions.

JT: OK.

AW: The goal for that is by 2030.

JT: Whoa. Really?

EL: Yes.

AW: Yes.

[CROSSTALK]

JT: We've got to talk about that.

AW: Yes.

JT: OK.

AW: Yes. So the sustainability working group...we were meeting with people, we brought this consultant in. We worked hard. We had conversations with students and staff and faculty about how to create visions and really with generosity we were thinking "everyone, if we just listen and talk about it, it makes sense."

JT: MmHm.

AW: In the meantime, since we first organized ten buildings have been constructed or significantly redesigned, reconstructed. That's a lot.

JT: That's a lot.

AW: And so many of us were frustrated with that process. We stopped functioning when we didn't see a continuation of commitment to have the kind of conversations we were asking for. But almost two years ago, President Bravman announced the creation of the President's sustainability council.

JT: MmHm.

AW: Which he announced in the faculty meeting this Tuesday was constituted. It was constituted this week. The membership was announced this week. And so in the meantime [LAUGHS], in those two years, the sustainability working group--remember this is just ad hoc, we were just doing it--stopped meeting, the Greening Council--

DEM: which was the previous body that dealt with sustainability governance on campus, when we heard this great announcement about the President's sustainability council, also dissolved, so we've been waiting and hoping that... and the reason that these other organizations folded was that we really need to bring sustainability into the realm of upper administration at Bucknell. Otherwise it's a kind of-- it's a very difficult struggle to make things happen, and it happens at the middle levels instead of at the upper levels and that's where it really needs to happen. So that's what we've been hoping for or waiting for and it's really great news that now all of a sudden, we do have the opportunity for this and this building seems to be the test case-- or one of the test cases for the new President's Sustainability Council and how it will operate.

JT: So what exactly is this council going to do and how much power will it have?

AW: I would say, that it has as much power as any other upper level committee on the campus. So there are many official committees, we've been fighting for years and years just to get a sustainability committee to have equal ranking to other campus committees that are official. And that would be a great step forward, if we could just get that [LAUGHS]

JT: OK, so we were talking about, maybe the conversations about the response to this letter, right? Which was sent around. So we have the creation of the President's Sustainability Council, have you seen any other kinds of response from the administration?

DEM: I would just say as a member of the planning committee for the building that it really seems like we have the opportunity now to change the process a little bit, by which buildings are designed. So now we have a charrette plan?

JT: Can you explain what that is for listeners that might not know?

DEM: The word charrette is maybe unfamiliar to some. It just means an open community-wide forum to give design input to a building. So now we have the opportunity for that to happen. It's going to happen, I'll just put a plug-in, February 16, approximately 11-1 will be the time for people to really show up and give their views. And so what is important is that in sustainable design, we want everybody to have a say who wants to have a say and the way things are designed that affects them. Because this is a campus building, many people will use it, so many people have the opportunity to contribute to the design of it. And so that includes students, staff, faculty, all together in this particular design forum.

AW: I would say it's different, perhaps, in than what's commonly referred to as a stakeholder approach in which those making decisions about whatever--in this instance, the construction of a building--identify the most important people to talk to. And they give their input and those thoughts are considered. But this is more of a visioning process in which people can talk about, look at images, vote on the kind of ideas and the representations of their imaginations of sustainability, aesthetics they think is important and other related issues they think is important for this building. And we really push for an open invitation so that it wasn't identifying just wanted considered people who could have a or should have a voice

JT: MmHm.

AW: But that everyone should if they want to be involved in this visioning process.

DEM: And very much to the credit of all those involved in the planning of this building that this letter was put forth, the forum happened, and now they are giving us the opportunity to have a charrette on the 16th of February and a follow up will be happening in April. Now it's really important that the campus responds and shows up and gives their input because this is the chance. Unfortunately, though, you have to schedule these things on a certain day, and a lot of people can't attend. But I would say that... do whatever you can be there and if you can't be there, just contact one of us and try to give your input in writing or some other way. There's plenty of opportunity to do that as well.

JT: So for people who are unfamiliar with this particular practice, what are they going to engage in when they show up at 11 am on the 16th? What might be involved?

DEM: I mean one of the things that has happened recently on our campus that maybe some people have awareness of and others don't, is--so we have a Lewisburg park, here--Hufnagle Park--and we had a community-wide design charrette for that park, and I think that's a great example of how a broad consensus of people can come together, or a broad constituency of people can come together and create kind of a design consensus just by showing up and participating. In that particular forum, we met in Larison dining hall at Bucknell, and there were these different focus groups. Things like the landscape, the pathways and connections, the recreational facilities of the park, and things like that. And people walked around and looked at different options and opportunities. Visually represented. And voted on them. And that's all kind of being now synthesized and incorporated into a larger design concept for the parks. So we could do the same with this building easily. There are three different themes to the charrette that will take place on February 16th, and they are: sustainability, as we've been talking about today; aesthetics, and human health and well-being. And human health and well-being is the concept of this building, it is like the way that this building is being represented to the public, to the trustees, and to potential donors. Human health and well-being is there because we have this unusual representation within the building of biomedical engineering and education and some other engineering departments. And that's something that they could all get behind in this particular building, and create a theme and I think it's a great idea for a building at Bucknell. I really hope that the building does end up embodying that theme.

SP: I'd like to follow up on Dina's comment about the human health and well-being theme. And although that may be a separate focus group, that is sustainability.

JT: Hm.

SP: That is the social aspect of sustainability. The people in the building are literally the most valuable in terms of the money it takes to put them there, and many other ways. So if we shift our view of sustainable buildings from just dollars and sense energy savings to the value of the people that use the building and are educated in the building, it very much changes your perspective. The Harvard School of Public Health just released a major research study demonstrating how buildings can actually improve the health of their occupants. And that improvement means things like higher cognitive function, less sick time, and so forth. Those are things that this building can do and actually speak human health and well-being. Not just be a container in which there's human health and well-being.

JT: I'm really glad that you took the conversation in that direction, Steve, and I wonder if I can ask each of you to go around and give your vision of what you would like this building to look like, right? And obviously you intend to engage in that collaborative process, so this would just be one piece of the puzzle, right? When you think about this building, what is it that you would like it to be?

EL: I guess I want this building to be different. I want it to be innovative, I want it to showcase the intelligence of our students and the intelligence of our faculty and staff in the way that the design comes together. I want it to really have--stand out on campus so that people know that this is a building that showcases the school's commitment to its students and to knowledge and overall well-being.

SP: I don't have a preconceived idea about what that building should look like. I'd like to point out that a sustainable building can look like many things. What's really important to me is the process at which we arrive at that building, and making it substantially different than what it's looked like in the past. You cannot change the end product substantially without also substantially changing the process that you make that building come about. I would also, I would be pleased with something that's not just a cookie-cutter version of other buildings on campus. And I think that it is possible to create a building that is overtly sustainable, visually educational, and can harmonize with the campus aesthetic. It does not have to look like something that came from outer space.

AW: So just building on that, and I really like what you said, Elaine, about being different, innovative. That's really important. For this particular building, because we're on a building streak, and now we really have the chance to come together and do something different. In the realm of human health and well-being, some of the things that stand out in other building projects are things like biophilic design. So it's well-known that people really respond to images of nature, or actual nature within a building--green roofs, green walls, images of natural things, lots of natural light, open views to the surroundings--which we have plenty of opportunity here at Bucknell--and also things like indoor air quality, so just a really healthy environment where the air that you're breathing is really high quality, and not an impediment to your work life. Those are some of the things I would put forward.

AW: I would suggest that anybody who's thinking about this, right? Because it is going to be a collaborative process. It's something that I've done, and I've done in conversation with others, including everybody in this room, is just go online and look at some of the many different examples of what other campuses--most other campuses are doing--and the kinds of creative, innovative buildings that they're creating. Particularly if you want to look for this building, at labs. Lab buildings--at least part of it is going to be a lab building--engineering and education in this building. So thinking about, looking at what those buildings might look like, and see what you can imagine, what you can find the models. You can look at Stantec's website and see the LEED platinum, net zero buildings they have constructed to see what we can even do with the architects we hired here. I'd say that as a resident of Academic West and someone who was part of that process--or not as much part of the process as I wanted to be--there's this notion that people are pretty happy with Academic West and I really don't hear that. I certainly don't hear it from faculty in Academic West and we're a little frustrated, but I think one of the things most--other than kind of the key sustainability issues we're concerned with and not just doing a checklist of a few sustainability measures at the end, but rather re-conceiving the whole building to effectively integrate design from the very beginning, challenge our standard operating procedures of design, right? So I'd say I particularly want something that is not Academic West, and I want to see that in terms of sustainability, but in terms of aesthetics as we mentioned earlier. Bucknell Arts Council submitted a letter to the Academic West steering committee in which they talked about this and in really fascinating ways. We included quotes from their letter in our letter because it was so well done. One of the quotes they requested was let us build something that in 130 years from now may awe a new student or faculty member so that she may pause to reflect on her place on campus and in the world, and dream of how she will learn to engage with and find her own ways to make her environment a better place. So I think this building can be inspirational in a lot of ways. The process of designing it is educational, right? Knowing how we can do that better? How we can engage in a much more democratic and transparent process to create a fantastic vision of ways in which we can make our environment a better place and contribute to the world in what ways are important. I teach like the rest of us would teach about sustainability and I want to have a living, learning laboratory I can use as a positive example of that, rather than the reverse.

JT: MmHm.

AW: And I think that it's high time that we do that.

JT: So from what I understand and obviously I'm not as centrally involved in these issues as all of you in the room are, but the Bucknell vernacular, right? Has really asserted or has tended to assert a downward pressure on all planning processes. So how do you imagine, do you have any indication that in fact there will be more flexibility on the part of the administration when it comes to making sure that this building looks like other buildings on campus?

DEM: Well that's a really interesting question, I'm really glad you brought that up, because Academic East already has the kind of constraints of being this...

AW: partner

DEM: [INAUDIBLE] to Academic West, but at the same time all of these forces of interest in sustainable design and participatory design are coming together in this particular case, so it will be interesting to see what we can achieve within both the constraints but also the new forces of interest and coming together to--I think that even if we have to create a symmetrical, somewhat symmetrical building, that creates the other side of the quadrangle that looks out to the river--that was a really good thing that took place in the Master plan, which was to create this new quad that actually addresses the river and views out to the river. But we can really be as creative as, well, we should try to be as creative as we can in this particular instance, and I think that a lot of people are coming together to do that. And the Arts Council's participation is a great example of that.

SP: I think we need to challenge our architects and our consultants to not just consider the obvious and reproduce the Bucknell vernacular, and challenge them to really explore the possible design spaces and what this building can be, and still be considered acceptable on campus. And not to just do it in terms of aesthetics. What I would love to see--to be able to put before the administration--two buildings, what they look like and how much energy it's going to take and how many dollars it's going to take to heat and cool and operate those over their lifetime. And is the University willing to become more flexible on the aesthetics on campus, given that the return on that idea is perhaps very large energy savings. To me, that would be a good trade-off.

DEM: And some parts of the Bucknell vernacular are very sustainable in my understanding. So for instance, we have this thing on campus called Bucknell brick, everything's made out of Bucknell brick. Well Bucknell brick is local and it's also low-embodied energy compared to other types of material like aluminum and glass. Well that's not a problem, so let's try to work with the Bucknell vernacular, but also try to introduce other features that might not have been considered before, and make this innovative as well.

SP: I agree with Dina. A brick by itself, a Bucknell brick can be perfectly sustainable, it's very durable material. The challenge is that right now, behind the brick we have a wall construction that's 30-40 years old and not high-tech. We can have some brick on the outside and something really high-tech behind.

JT: So I know one of the phrases in the letter that circulated was this phrase integrated design. But I know I don't know what that means, and I'm assuming that at least some percentage of signatories also did not know what that means exactly, so can one of you walk us through what that is?

SP: To Amanda's credit, I believe there are footnotes and references, so you could educate yourself as to what integrated design is

[LAUGHS]

SP: I'll give a short summary. So it's basically highly collaborative, multi-disciplinary from the start all the way to the finish, and it does not--the typical design process which you call linear design is very sequential, you make one decision after another, and the problem is that the decision at the end of the line may actually have an impact on something that was already decided ten steps previous, and it's very difficult to circle around and reconsider decisions that were already made. And in some ways that's just human nature, you don't want to go back. And so integrated design is a much more

fluid process. It requires a different mindset--a lot of charrettes--Dina talked about one charrette. Ideally in an integrated design process, there might be something on the order of ten charrettes. They would start before, perhaps even the architects were hired, and they would finish--as Amanda was alluding to--after occupants have been using the building for 6, 8, or 12 months so that there would be a feedback process. So it's a very different mindset. It requires involvement of specific disciplines, professional disciplines involved in building design, such as mechanical engineers, contractors much earlier in the process, because their work, their decisions have a big effect on the sustainability of the building. There's a video I love to show my students, where there's an architect talking about the color and the paint that needs to be decided earlier in the process because the color and the paint actually affects the energy use. Typically that's a decision late in the process or something that's assumed it's going to be the same color that's always used. So sustainable design through integrated design requires lots of details sort of in the mix from day one. You can't avoid talking about them, but you also can't constrain yourself to certain decisions until much later in the process. You have to commit to much more time during the design phase, but in theory that pays off during the construction of the building and in a better performing building [INAUDIBLE].

JT: And do you have any indication that the architects that the campus is hiring or that the administration will be willing to integrate this integrative design process?

DEM: To a certain degree.

JT: OK.

DEM: Well, the architects were hired because they were the architects of Academic West and we're talking about a symmetrical situation, but in general I think the design process has been expanded because of the kinds of conversations that we've all been having, and the letter and so forth, and the forum, et cetera. Just the kind of thing that I always try to get people to understand is, design is the thought, the thoughtfulness that goes into a building and why not expand that process so you put the most thought and the most intelligence into a building that you can. You have a building that will, that we hope will last for 100 years, why not give it a couple extra months or a few extra months to have that thought go into it. And in general, I understand that modus operandi is that we do things as efficiently and quickly as possible, but I think in this case it makes sense to expand the time a little bit.

SP: Just to put a sharper point on something Dina said--the cost and time of designing your building is a tiny fraction of the resources that will, that building will consume over its lifetime. So the absolute best return on your investment is to spend more money, more time in the design stage.

JT: MmHm.

AW: So I guess in addition. One thing that we've all talked about, in the letter, the request for integrative or integrated design--interchangeable terminology there--is something we would like in this building design process to be the guiding philosophy. So we're happy that there's a charrette or to announce, but if you're just having a charrette without that being part of a larger process driven by this commitment to an integrative, detail-oriented longer, thoughtful, and intelligent conversation. Then what happens with the input, right? What happens with that outcome, and we

don't have the kind of time fresher that perhaps seemed to be the case just even last semester. So one of the goals for this architect Stantec had committed to providing some kind of design plans for--to the board of trustees at their April meeting. But there at least was at the forum stated flexibility on that, the funds aren't there, so there's most likely postponement for financial reasons--

JT: MmHm. MmHm.

AW: larger financial reasons. So when we don't even have that kind of pressure, which we might argue is also maybe we should be resisting anyway, but even without that, why not slow it down.

JT: MmHm.

AW: And I think that's really making sure then that we keep asking the question every time there's a public conversation, and outside of that any of you who want to ask the question about what is the guiding philosophy here and can we, you know, more input, why not more input, why not a longer process.

JT: MmHm.

AW: If that's what it takes to do this correctly.

DEM: Especially at a University where we're all about thinking, where we're all about putting our thoughts into things and so this is the perfect environment to do that kind of design. In other environments, the government sector for instance, there have been some really great buildings built by our architect who has been employed--Stantec, right? The NREL building that they did was very high energy efficiency. So why can't we do it in our sector which is, we're all about thinking and putting our research, our thought, interests into something before we actually apply it. So this is a great opportunity in that respect.

SP: The struggles and challenges that Bucknell is wrestling with right now in terms of sustainability are not unusual for an organization that's trying to make this transformation, but those that have done it successfully did it 10-15 years ago. And when I teach about sustainable buildings in a course that I teach here at Bucknell, I use the best examples in the country and in the world, and I say to myself why can't those examples be at Bucknell. And so we have huge resources here through the faculty and the students and we could be using those to catch up and leap frog some other organizations that have also struggled through this period.

JT: So you're listening to Bucknell: Occupied here on 90.5 WVBU Lewisburg, we're talking about sustainability here on campus. I wonder if we can switch a little bit away from the building and

situate the building in larger environmental commitments or lack thereof on campus. I know when one of you mentioned earlier that we are in fact committed to net zero by 2030, I was certainly surprised by that so maybe we can talk about how that's going on, is that going on, how might that go on, and get to it from there.

DEM: I'll just start off, but everybody really has something to contribute to this conversation. But historically speaking 2008, Bucknell's President at the time President Mitchell signed something called the American College and University's President's climate commitment, and that was a student led initiative. A couple of students harassed the President, basically, until he agreed to sign, but a lot of people were behind it, not just the students, but that's the way it took place. We were behind a lot of our peers in signing it, but we were ahead of others, so that was a really good thing for the University to do. And in the meantime, we have created a climate action plan that details our strategy for achieving that net zero by 2030. We also are committed to every two years we do a greenhouse gas inventory that shows where we are on that track to going towards that net zero amount. And we have students who do those inventories under faculty supervision as independent studies. And it's great. It's all... it's all public information that you can get online through ACUPCC, so I'll say that much. And I'm sure that other people here have the faculty perspective on that commitment and where we should be and where we are.

SB: So I'm thrilled that as a University we signed it, and I'm thrilled that we have people like Dina organizing students to continue to study it. What's frustrating from a faculty member who was personally committed to this idea, is that some of the recommendations and actions that need to be taken are sort of... not acted on. So yes, the climate action plan is less than perfect, but we could have spent the last 6 or 8 years with even more faculty and students involved making it better, finding better ways to do things if we think we can achieve some of them. The Greening Council was mentioned earlier. If you read our climate commitment, the Greening Council is the official body that's supposed to oversee our progress towards the climate commitment. And when we allow the Greening Council to fall into abeyance for two years, it makes one question what the University's commitment is.

EL: As a student, I think there's not much conversation or even awareness that there is this commitment to net zero. And I... I've kind of come to the conclusion that it is purposeful. Because I think if students knew that that was something our school was committed to, they would be more active in pursuing that commitment. And I feel that a lot of potential conversations that surround this goal get very systematically shut down because of the people who make the decisions ultimately in this school. There is a general, I have a general frustration with the fact that a lot of the things that we do at this school that seem environmentally progressive tend to be student-led, but the process of doing that is very long. It's grueling. It seems like the University doesn't want us to pursue these things, and that's frustrating because if we're a school that promotes higher education, quality education, we should be putting things into action that we teach. And I don't see that happening all the time, and I really think that we need to move in that direction.

AW: Yeah, I mean... I think it's also important to comment on what... some of the work the Environmental Club has tried to do. In the past, and others on campus, the push for the President Mitchell to sign this climate commitment came after a focus the nation event that was student organized, student-led, that was massively successful so many faculty and students organized, staff teaching, for two days, I think it was. [INAUDIBLE] There was momentum. And so really there are moments when we see a response, to be... the administration gets held to its commitments or pushed to make commitments that they should be making and it's almost always student driven. And the Environmental Club, and... In the larger national conversation about climate change, campus has been about divestment, and I think it's interesting. We've kind of... that's come up now and again. There was a request. You were actually...

[CROSSTALK]

AW: Why don't you talk about it?

DEM: So last year, we attempted to revive, it was the second revival of the divestment campaign, so for those that don't know what divestment is, it is the commitment of the school to take investment out of fossil fuel companies. And this is not done immediately, it's done through a gradual period so that the school can try to maintain the amount of money that they... from their endowment. It was a group of people that got together, we were forming this letter and trying to have a second push to create this movement. And it didn't get very far because we got a response back from the Vice-President of Finance, I believe, at the University. This was a while ago, so the details might be fuzzy. But the letter essentially stated that the school did not feel the need to push for divestment because they had already filled some requirement of being a good citizen in the state of Pennsylvania. So because they had fulfilled that commitment, they no longer needed to invest further in divestment. So once, think about being a student being told by one of the highest levels of bureaucracy that no... We're good. We don't need students anymore. It was very discouraging, it was near the end of the year, and we lost momentum on that movement. Who knows what could happen in the future, but that's where it stands today.

AW: I think every time we talk about some of these commitments or goals, the conversation ends up centering on we have a LEED certified building or we started recycling or

EL: Single-stream

[LAUGHS]

AW: Single-stream recycling, right? Or now we have trayless Tuesdays or... so there are these little bits and pieces, if you actually dig just a little bit below the surface, you find out that they're not

moving us on this path... towards the commitments we're making. But also what it does in the process of focusing all the attention on these elements and using these as measures of our sustainability is that people lose momentum.

JT: MmHm.

AW: Whether it's demoralization that happens with people who really are committed and want to see things happen better on campus. One thing I'm really excited about what just happened in the last two months, quickly, is that people have organized students, faculty, and staff together. Organized on this quickly. We've been talking about it for a long time, so ideas are pretty clear, right? And students, what's amazing to me is on this letter, out of 334 signatures--and people are still signing today--I didn't count today, but there are more signatures. So if you want to sign this letter, you can, just go on Google Drive if you are a Bucknell student or faculty or staff and search for statement about sustainability in Academic East. It's Open Access. Feel free to sign it if you agree with the sentiment. A lot of alumni--student alumni--and tons of students, more students than anybody else signed that letter. Cross-departments all over campus, majors, all different majors, well the majors weren't indicated, but we know. A lot of these students, right? And so, it's pretty clear that this is a wide and deep concern about sustainability, and students even more so than many of the rest of us in the faculty and staff, perhaps. That's really what I think should be guiding our vision for the future.

JT: So how might the campus actually begin to fulfill its commitment to become net zero? What are some of the, you know, very concrete ways to reach this current, begin to happen on such an established sort of infrastructure.

DEM: Buildings are a big part of it because... as many people have tried to introduce into this conversation--faculty in particular--if we're going to build a new building, we need to think about it. We always need to think very carefully before we build a new building because that introduces so much more load on our energy use and... Now we have nine new buildings recently and even if they're LEED silver, that still produces a big load. So we need to think about those kinds of things. I think just size and resource use and that kind of thing. We need to have more of a... just a conversation without a sustainability council of any kind for the last two years whether it be the campus greening council or the President's sustainability council, there's been no way to have an institution-wide conversation. So you've got great people all around the campus who want to move things forward. You've got the Bucknell environmental club, you've got faculty who bring this to light in their classes, and you have staff like the energy manager who is working tirelessly to conserve energy in whatever way possible, but unless you have an institution-wide conversation about it, you can't have a strategy and that's what we really need right now. We have a climate action plan that was created in 2010, hasn't been revisited and really recommitted to since that time, and that's what we need now.

AW: There are lots of little details in this process, too, part of the climate action plan and also part of lots of different student projects in classes and in research. A group of students worked with Dina through an environmental studies course last year, the year before to look at carbon offsets for travel. For student travel. And evaluated what are the potential option of doing that, and one idea that came out of that--I love that I'm sitting next to you speaking for you--[LAUGHS]

[CROSSTALK]

AW: I'm teaching the course now, so I'm thinking a lot about this, and Elaine's in the course, actually. So it is a project that... would be looking at energy efficiency investments in low-income housing in Central Pennsylvania. So instead of outsourcing--if you will--to a company that supposedly does carbon offsets somewhere else and maybe they're just re-foresting and de-foresting land area. But it's actually something that is contributing in terms of the social justice aspects of sustainability in our communities and where some of our students come from as well this would be a really... a great way of doing something here and the students could run, and design, and plan that would really help us deal with the necessary transportation of students getting to here and travelling home that really needs to be handled. So I mean transportation--other than buildings and infrastructure--transportation's another big one, right? Also thinking about the landscape and... That's another part of thinking about how we can reduce emissions and energy as well.

JT: So we'll take a very brief break for a Public Service Announcement and come back and talk about two things which have come on my mind hearing you all talk. One being the possible Bucknell farm and the other one being the possible College of Management new building. Yes. I do want to ask about that.

[INTERLUDE] CUT 55:06 - 56:11

JT: Welcome back, you're listening to Bucknell: Occupied on 90.5 WVBU Lewisburg. We've been talking for the past hour with several campus members here about a sustainability issues here on campus. Steve has had to leave us, but I still have Elaine, Dina, and Amanda in the studio with me. So yes, I would like to talk about two things. One positive, one maybe not so positive depending on who you ask. So let's start with the first of those, which would be ideas circulating for Bucknell Farm. So maybe those of you who have been here longer could talk about what I understand is the longer history of this idea and then maybe whether that's a possibility and what that might look like.

EL: Well as a student, I noticed that we lacked a farm to begin with. A farm is a great place to learn about sustainable agriculture, sustainable husbandry. It would really be a larger space for the school, for students to have larger research projects. I thought it was just a pipe dream, and I think I

was talking about the possibility of doing it, and it seems like a very doable project that I think we can really get done in maybe like the next year or so.

DEM: You know, it's something that Bucknell could easily do in our environment, and a lot of our peers even our benchmarking peers in places like Middlebury, Dickinson, Oberlin have these farms; they start as gardens. We have a campus garden, but we could easily expand to a farm and this is a great time to do it. But there's obviously faculty backing, there's faculty members who've put this proposal forward recently, and even now are looking for administrative fuel to get behind it and find a site that we could use, and sustainability is all about sort of this lifecycle process, and to grow something and consume something and then compost something on the campus and then turn it back into fertilizer to grow something again, that's a very, very powerful thing, and I think we could easily do that here. We have all the resources to do it.

AW: I think it may be pretty obvious we're breaking the Bucknell vernacular, too, by... and adding a little bit of creativity to what meets the eye on campus. I think there's... it seems like there's widespread faculty support for being able to use the farm, incorporate the farm in courses, right? The survey they went around, I heard very good things about the response to that, so it's really sitting at the administrative level, and what happens with the President's sustainability council as it moves forward, and of course whether or not the site or one of the site's is possible.

JT: I heard there is... maybe, let's back up. Where this would possibly be sited?

DEM: As far as I understand, there... this is in the very preliminary stages of discussion, but there are some good, different potential sites, and many people listening, or some people listening may have heard of Dreamcatcher Farm which is on the outskirts of Lewisburg and has always had a really nice, cozy relationship with Bucknell in terms of students offering their time there. It's been a community supported agriculture operation for many years that people in our community have invested in, and that may be one possible site that would be a little bit remote. There are other possible sites that might be right on campus or adjacent to campus, either on Bucknell-owned land or land that is contiguous to the campus but not owned by Bucknell. This is still really early in the conversation to talk about it. I wouldn't want to speculate too much, but there's a lot of potential there.

JT: Now, let's switch a little bit, so we're talking about the campus being on this building boom, and there being nine buildings that've been constructed, and I was curious to hear... one or two of you mentioned that Academic East is going to be the end of that building trend, when it appears that the school of management transitions to a College of Management there will be--I'm not sure how many--but there will be buildings associated with this transition. So perhaps we could talk about the buildings that will be associated with this and what the implications of that are for sustainability and the campus's commitment to climate change.

DEM: I'll say something right away, as somebody who has served a number of different planning committees for buildings, you always hear that there's never going to be another building built, and all of a sudden there's one and you have to do it now, and you have to get your input in yesterday. So you can't ever take ever take your eye off the ball in this particular situation. So obviously we have Academic East, which is the building in conversation right now, but also at the faculty meeting this week, it was announced that there are some building projects which were planned for the next year to two years that are going to be delayed. Two affinity houses will be constructed. At least one, perhaps, two. At least one to replace one of the fraternities that was taken down.

[CROSSTALK]

AW: Turning into the Humanities Institute. Two I think, and one is being turned into a new building. So two affinity house, wherever they go, to whomever will live there. The library extension, which is to create an entrance to the library facing this new quad which is facing the river. So those plans, infrastructure, projects, that were going to be started over the next year to two years, that would've been in the works have been put on temporary hold because of larger financial considerations. And then, so that's Academic East, two affinity house, library extension which is a significant rebuild, so that's four. And then the... what has been discussed is the new Management slash Art building. So Art and Art History have long needed a new building. As you know, their building sits.... it straddles a creek. Not the best or most sustainable building. So they need a new building. Desperately. Desperately needed one for a long time, but it's been hard to apparently raise money for this. Whatever that conversation, I'm not part of. But in the announcement of the creation of the College of Management, there was announced that a building for Management--they're currently in Taylor Hall--and Art and Art History would join them. They have... my understanding is that in the College of--sorry in the School of Management--they already had a charrette process in which they brought in a firm to work with them on initial ideas and a design.

JT: Them... them being the Management side of the

AW: Yes! Sorry, I wasn't clear on that.

JT: OK.

AW: I'm not sure where that ended in terms of what [INAUDIBLE]... that happened sometime in the last few years, I'm not exactly sure when.

JT: Does that seem about right?

DEM: Yeah. I'm not sure it's what we all would've asked for, for a charrette, but it was a step in the right direction.

AW: So that's, right? Nine buildings since 2010, one major remodel, the Academic East, two affinity houses, library extension, and Management. Fifteen buildings? That's a lot.

DEM: Plus we've done renovations.

JT: Yeah. That's quite a few.

AW: Yeah. I think I got a little off topic.

JT: No, no.

AW: Is that right?

JT: We're good, we're good. So, I'm wondering, we're sort of coming to a close of our interview, but I'm curious to hear how the three of you think that... the campus organization and response around planning issues regarding Academic East, how that compares to, let's say, campus response to what happened on this own, this radio station a year ago, right? Do you see there's being major discrepancies, do you see there's being parallels in the way these things are playing out, like what is your sense of both of these things as instances of campus politics?

EL: And so, I consider myself a student activist, I consider myself very involved. I've sort of watched a lot of different student movements come and they go, and that is my main concern with events that happened on WVBU. We had a large campus response. Something that I think was desperately needed, but the conversations that happened after kind of dwindled, I think by the end of the semester. And then we had alcohol become our big issue, and then... maybe this year will be the year of sustainability, but my main concern is that we will talk about it this semester, perhaps on a large-scale, and then we will stop talking about it.

JT: MmHm.

EL: I think what's different about this particular instance is we're talking about something that's really large, something that's really visible, people can't unsee this, and it's also connected to the President's climate commitment. So that's something that's written in stone. Something that I... you can constantly refer to and try to hold the President accountable. But how powerful that is, I don't know either. We write a lot of words down on various material, and I don't know if we look back on them and try to connect ourselves to those words. So... I'm skeptical. I don't know. I don't have any answers, but I hope for the best.

AW: I guess I would say that this conversation, just in the last two months, this now public conversation about sustainability and infrastructure. Gives me some hope that in addition to the conversation, the mobilization by students, and others on this campus over the past year dealing with racism. That something maybe is shifting, I hope it remains, I hope that all of us remain attentive to these issues. I would say that in the previous five or so years we didn't see as much conversation. Certainly about racism, we didn't talk about it. And so, I know... I've waited for that conversation to continue this year, and it seems to have been lost. I really hope that it isn't lost among those of us who keep bringing these issues up, and we need to keep doing that. And so there's a shift in the way in which decisions are made on this campus and how difficult moments are handled, and cracked open, and remain open for conversation. That has to shift. But that, I think, is gonna require all of us faculty, staff, and students to continue to demand that that changes. To change the culture of activism on this campus.

JT: MmHm.

AW: Conversations... I mean, I think your radio show does this, and there are other instances of that on campus and continue conversation, I hope remains. I'd say that... probably there are parallels in the responses to these issues.

JT: MmHm. MmHm.

AW: With one of the kinds of issues that people could talk about getting behind. The way it's framed, so it doesn't seem to be as a big or [INAUDIBLE] or as challenging, and it clearly is to make it actually happen in reality.

JT: MmHm.

AW: And I think in those ways, it has different kind of feeling of the conversation. I think people who tend to care a lot about really changing our campus, to meeting our climate commitments, are

concerned about social justice. And really think about what our responsibility is as an institution of higher education in leading the future and addressing those issues from a global scale and a local scale, and we need to start on our campus. So I think those issues are deeply intertwined and many of us care deeply and very similarly about those types of issues, together.

DEM: I'm really glad that Amanda brought the term social justice. Social justice is so important in and of itself, and we can't really lend all the import to that in this conversation, but I would also say that social justice is also very important to the issue of sustainability, because you don't want to sustain something that's unjust. We want to sustain everything that's good about our quality of life for future generations, but we wouldn't want to sustain a system that's unjust and that's just how those two things mesh together so importantly. The other thing, I'd just really like to say is that I don't think we should adopt a scarcity model

JT/AW: MmHm.

DEM: where we say that we can only pay so much attention to the greater good at our university, so we can only...

JT: Right. Right.

DEM: we have to choose between social justice and sustainability--environmental sustainability--like climate commitment and that sort of thing. No, I mean, we use our very fertile conversations and they're intertwined, and they have synergy with each other and we can work on all of them at once.

JT: I think that's a great point, like, I like that you put it in terms of scarcity and [INAUDIBLE] [LAUGHS] what's the opposite of scarcity [LAUGHS]

[CROSSTALK]
[LAUGHS]

AW: Abundance

JT: Abundance, there you go, there you go. [CROSSTALK] Thank you, that's what I wanted. The plenitude. So maybe one thing I should bring together both Elaine and you were talking about in different ways, what do you think are the various features either of campus culture or administration that have actually mitigated against either causes continuing from one semester to

the next or people being able to...[LAUGHS] participate in multiple critical conversations at the same time.

EL: I think if we knew the answer to that then we might be able to solve those problems. [LAUGHS] I think a lot of it is the students feel like they're -- I mean, I'm going to speak from the student's perspective -- students feel like they're so wrapped up in so many other things that they don't want to spare some time to talk about these issues and talk about these issues broadly. I think that having those difficult conversations is very rare on our campus, and there's not a lot of engagement in that. And I think it starts with having those conversations, creating awareness, because if you don't talk about it, you pretend like it doesn't exist, which I see a lot.

[INAUDIBLE]

DEM: You said that really well, Elaine, and there are always opportunities to have conversations on a campus like ours, I mean, I think that we have so many resources, so many forums available to us. One of the issues tends to be that student enthusiasm burns hot, but then it also... Students come and go, and we have very great student advocates who come and then they make it... they make a big change and then they graduate. So... not to beat a dead horse, but we need things like our councils, whatever they are, or our committees where we have a lasting place to have conversations and follow up and keep pace with the conversation over time, because if it's up to a student organization, the leadership is always waxing and waning and that's just the way it is and that's the way it should be, probably. But it's up to us who are more permanent members of the campus to kind of keep those issues alive.

JT: So I really appreciate the three and -- well, four including Steve -- of you coming into the studio tonight to talk about these issues.

AW: Thank you for having us, much appreciated.

EL: Thanks

JT: I will put on a little bit of music and be back in a few minutes. Thank you all.

