A Student Review

As many in the Environmental Science department know, there was a global climate strike on Friday (9/20). While many people participated in this event, we were curious about what stopped others from doing so as well. Through a series of interviews, we got a closer look at what the boundary between knowing and caring could be.

The reviews from the student body that attended the event were generally positive. Students who went to the on-campus event acknowledged that we are already an environmentally conscious community, however, we cannot stand down and say that what we are doing is enough. The only way to create the change we need is to live in a state of discomfort. Climate Change and Climate Justice are upsetting topics; that does not mean that we can ignore them. Skipping class/work is uncomfortable because we paid money to be here and we are giving up a day’s pay. That is why students that both attended and did not attend agreed that it was a privilege to be able to make these sacrifices in order to stand in protest. Those who attended the event felt a sense of community and that their calls-to-action were not a cry into the void. Even though we were not able to march into Meadville or create change then and there, it was important to the community to know that they were not alone in the fight and that they had a strong voice. This symbolic event was especially necessary for the youth who showed up. At each location they were the majority of the protestors. This is because it is generally younger people that have not given up on the issue and who care about the lives of those who will be immediately impacted by climate change. Because many youths cannot vote and do not have a say in the world we live in yet, this event was important to them so that they could use their voice to stand up for what they believe in. As well as a large number of youths, the crowd in Erie had more people from older generations; which makes sense because it was in the city and not on a college campus. All of the young people who saw this took it to heart because they know that the older folks are
not going to reap the benefits of climate action and they are not going to be hurt by climate change. For a large majority of the older generations, they brush this issue off to the young people because they feel that it is not their problem. And it isn’t, it has been passed down to us. That’s why it meant so much to see the older generation striking on our behalf. However, there is still a disconnect between those who know and care about the issues, and those who do not know or do not want to know about them.

Through interviews with some non-ES students who did not attend the strikes, it was undeniable that they did not think the strike was necessary and felt that it was a waste of time. They saw the events on campus as being self-serving and that they did not “[have] any particular effect, other than making people feel happy about themselves.” This is due to a breakdown in communication and planning of the event. The students that said the strike was not necessary and that they would not be attending this protest also stated that it was not well advertised to them and that they needed more information and a clear call-to-action before they invested in it.

As these strikes continue to grow, we have to ensure that we are not reaching out solely to those who are already invested in the issue. Each strike only represented a small portion of the community they were reaching out toward. The more people that get on board with the movement, the easier it will be to show our representatives and officials that we will not stand for “business as usual” while the ecosystems around us suffer.

**Green SOC Leads the Charge**

On September 20th, millions of people around the world came together to protest a global lack of action being taken against climate change. An estimated 4-6 million young people, students, adults and professionals stood in the footsteps of Greta Thunberg, the 16-year-old girl from Sweden who started the entire movement. While many in the Environmental Science Department on campus are familiar with her and the issue of the Climate Crisis as a whole, it’s important to make sure that everyone on campus is aware of what is happening.

On September 20th, this was the key motivation behind the Climate Strike that occurred on our own campus. Set up on the Gator Quad outside the Campus Center, over a hundred students gathered to increase awareness and demand change from Allegheny. This effort was spearheaded by the Green Students of Color, a student-led society that aims to connect Students of Color on campus with ways to be sustainable, interactions with nature and more.

The Green SOC worked together with Professor Eric Pallant, Students for Environmental Action and other sustainability clubs to make the Strike happen. According to Melissa Burnett, class of 2020, one of the reasons they felt it was so important to hold a Climate Strike specifically at
Allegheny was to provide accessibility for students who wanted to get involved. If not for the Green SOC, the nearest event would have been in Erie, which would have limited student participation from Allegheny. Setting up on the Gator Quad allowed the environmental clubs to spread awareness first and foremost to their fellow students. Melissa also communicated that the Climate Strike was held to actively combat complacency; studies have shown that while many are aware Climate Change is happening, they don’t know enough or are not sure how to get involved. The Strike provided both of those, giving students the opportunity to contact Pennsylvania lawmakers and demand change, and presented information about exactly what is happening. All in all, the Climate Strike was a huge success, and all should look forward to seeing the Green Students of Color at the DeHart Dinner and leading the charge on more environmental efforts on campus!

Editor in Chief: Alec Tolmachoff

Contributions Provided by: Sara Galley and Alec Tolmachoff

Contact Email: tolmachoffa@allegheny.edu