Amy Troung:

I feel like a lot of students have leadership potential, but they don't realize it until they realize it. Student voice is so much more powerful than students think. I have my classmates complain about something, and they feel like they can't get it changed because of fear, but luckily we have student government that hears the issues and needs of student concerns. My classmates have been intimidated by faculty and staff, not knowing what they will think, because they're seen as a higher power, I guess. But that's not the case at all.

Christina Barsi:

Hi, I'm Christina Barsi.

Sun Ezzell:

And I'm Sun Ezzell, and you're listening to The Magic Mountie Podcast.

Christina Barsi:

Our mission is to find ways to keep your ear to the ground, so to speak, by bringing to you the activities and events you may not have time to attend, the resources on campus you might want to know more about, the interesting things your colleagues are creating, and the many ways we can continue to better help and guide our students.

Sun Ezzell:

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

Speaker 4:

And I know I want to achieve my goals, and I know people here are going to help me to do it.

Speaker 5:

She is a Sociology major, and she's transferring to CalPoly Pomona! Psychology major. English major.

Sun Ezzell:

I'm transforming part time into full time.

Speaker 6:

I really like the time that you spend with Julie about how to write a CV and a cover letter...

Christina Barsi:

Or just finding time to soak in the campus.

Speaker 7:

To think of the natural environment around us as a library.

Christina Barsi:

We want to keep you informed and connected to all things Mt. SAC. But most importantly, we want to keep you connected with each other. I'm Christina Barsi, Mt. SAC alumni, and producer of this podcast. And I'm Sun Ezzell, Learning Assistance Faculty, and Professional Learning Academy Coordinator. And this is The Magic Mountie Podcast.

Christina Barsi:

Hi, and welcome back to The Magic Mountie Podcast. In this episode, Sun Ezzell talks with Mt. SAC student, Amy Troung, who shares with us her journey at Mt. SAC while she was preparing to transfer to UC Davis, what it meant to lean into available resources, groups, and clubs on campus, and how powerful the student voice actually is in creating tangible change to better serve the student population. Enjoy.

Sun Ezzell:

Well, good morning and welcome to the podcast. Amy Troung, Inter-Club Council Co-chair on Associated Students Executive Board, and Associated Students Representative to the Faculty Academic Senate, and soon to be Mt. SAC alumni. Welcome.

Amy Troung:

Hello, thank you for joining me here Sun.

Sun Ezzell:

Thank you for taking the time right before finals week to talk with The Magic Mountie Podcast. I was wondering if you could tell us a little bit about your educational journey, what brought you to Mt. SAC, and what your experience has been like?

Amy Troung:

I am a first generation, low-income student. So I went to high school where gaining a four year education, private or public, is highly regarded, especially when the majority of my high school population were first generation. There wasn't a community college stigma to it, but I was more focused on attending private or public universities. So my first choice was UC Davis. I almost attended there in August, went to the freshmen orientation and everything, but it turns out that the tuition was very high. So I had to resort to the community college, which was surprisingly last of my choice. So attending there, I didn't have high hopes. I just was trying to navigate through Mt. SAC for two years, and then transfer out to UC Davis again, once I have the appropriate amount of financial aid to attend.

Amy Troung:

But honestly, I didn't have a plan in the beginning. I just joined as much student support programs on Mt. SAC, as much as I can, because I know that I can't navigate through community college, especially when I'm not familiar with it. So I joined the ARISE program, which is a student service program that serves for the Asian American Pacific Islander student community at Mt. SAC. And then I joined the Bridge program, along with the political science club, and I joined the honors program. I applied my first semester, because I heard of it, and then got in my second semester at Mt. SAC. Through my academic journey, I stuck with my major, which is history. The professors, there are very amazing. They debunked a lot of your centric perspectives in our history learning, and unpacked all the complex layers of historical events. That's just not based on victories, but also defiance against authoritarian governments, for example, or ordinary people that have used their voice.

Amy Troung:

Even when the bigger people try to diminish them, and brought change into their own communities, and ultimately their nation or the global world. So that has been my academic journey until I joined Associate Students, in which I volunteered. I am put in over a hundred hours, actually, my record. And I have helped Inter-Club Council representatives with any of the problems or situations that they need, like funding problems, or how to fundraise, and how to gain better leadership skills as well. So a part of the academic journey is helping other students connect and network with their professors. I'm encouraging them to go attend the writing centers and whatnot, because I know personally, I've had trouble figuring out what resources to use, just like them, because sometimes first year students don't really understand or know what resources are available to them for free. And now I'm going to graduate after three years of attending Mt. SAC, and then I'm going to transfer to UC Davis with a full ride.

Sun Ezzell:

Wow. Congratulations, that's so fantastic.

Amy Troung:

Thank you. Thank you.

Sun Ezzell:

So part of your work with Associated Students and clubs has been creating some online community spaces. And I thought that was so interesting what you've been sharing, the Faculty Academic Senate about community spaces, created by students for students. I was wondering if you could tell a little bit more about that work.

Amy Troung:

So it's been a really difficult transition for some RCOs, also known as Recognized Students and Organizations, because they've expected a lot of field trips out of campus, and on-campus club meetings. I'm really proud of these student leaders who have put all of their energy and activism onto Zoom, onto Discord chat. And it's been really wonderful working with them, especially... I've been working really closely with SAGA, Sexuality And Gender Alliance club, Political Science club, Muslim Student Associations, and oh gosh, there's a lot of clubs, Eagle too, Eagle. I've promoted the spaces for them at Associated Students meetings as well, so our AS leaders can attend these meetings, and it's really empowering to see students create a public forum, or a public discussion, with other off-campus leaders. I know for one instance, MSA partnered with Philosophy club and Political Science club for a interfaith webinar, where the MSA club president, Mohammed [inaudible 00:07:45] invited five, I believe, five major world religion leaders.

Amy Troung:

So it was really empowering to see all the communities of different faiths and different backgrounds come together and just discuss about religion. Oh yeah, and then SAGA, Sexuality And Gender Alliance, wanted to discuss more about the issues going on on campus that affects minority communities, so they partnered up with MEChA and MSA to discuss about that in a club seminar, in which I attended as well and inputted. And they input a lot of problems that they see on campus and created a discussion dialogue about that.

Amy Troung:

And I brought that into the Academic Senate actually, and Lance, the vice-president for this semester, reached out to me asking me if I could have an input on FLEX Day, which is a day for staff and faculty to gain knowledge about certain topics or anything going on on campus. So I'm going to bring a lot of those issues that we discussed on the clubs seminars to the FLEX Day, invite those student leaders back onto the board for FLEX Day. Yeah, we're just creating a lot of spaces for other students to express their concerns through a respectful and open dialogue with each other as well. And so far everyone has been really, really supportive of each other.

Sun Ezzell:

That's great. Thank you so much for all of your support of the clubs, and helping with the FLEX Day as well. I think that most powerful part of FLEX Day is always when we get a chance to be in dialogue with students, and hear from students about your experiences. So thank you for that.

Amy Troung:

Oh yeah, thank you. I've actually participated and spoke, used my student voice to speak out on two FLEX Day events, one last semester and one spring semester last year. So it was really great to see how staff and faculty get empowered by student voices and their concerns for the campus. It shows the professors and the staff that students really do care about the campus, and that addressing the problems of the student needs is what faculty and staff needs to put their attention on and change, in order to progress.

Sun Ezzell:

Absolutely, and I always feel like I see my fellow faculty listening to students in a different way maybe, than we do when we're in the classroom, when we're at FLEX Day or when we're at a conference and we have the opportunity to hear from students and be in dialogue with students. That's really important work you're doing. Thank you.

Amy Troung:

Thank you, Sun.

Sun Ezzell:

I was wondering if you would share a little bit more about what that transition has been like? We sort of skipped over it, but the transition from being on campus to being online. What was that like?

Amy Troung:

That's a good question, because I've done the majority of my classes online, hybrid online and not on campus. So it wasn't a really big change for me, to be honest with you, because I'm always on my PC, but the difference in environment has been very, very melancholic and sad, because I'm not able to see other student leaders and talk to them face to face as easily as I would during my office hours, during the time where I volunteer for Associated Students. And honestly, the transition from the environment is difficult. My learning has still been the same. The internet has a vast amount of resources, so I was able to utilize that. But connecting with students has been harder, more difficult than ever because there's a lot of students who do not have internet access. And if they do, it's barely any access at all.

Amy Troung:

Yeah, I'm really thankful for student services, especially with Audrey. She is the president of the Student Services, or Student Life. So she has been devising up laptop distribution, and Mountie meal resources for other students, and providing internet access as well. It's pretty amazing work how she, and the equity programs, have done for their students. So I'm really thankful for that, so they can alleviate or diminish the adversities that some students may face at home. So although it's been difficult, it made me really happy to see that staff and faculty do care, and are actually putting in the work for their students.

Amy Troung:

Yeah. Although it's difficult not being able to see everyone, I try the best I can by giving out resources to other students through email and through social media, especially when everyone is on social media more times than ever now. And they're getting all their information and advertisements through posts. So it's pretty amazing to see how everyone is still connected online, but it's much more difficult now because of the problems that students face at home, like WiFi connection problems, or lack of having a laptop.

Sun Ezzell:

They're really disconnected without those devices. So at the beginning of our conversation, you shared that your intention had been to go to UC Davis, and then you ended up at Mt. SAC instead. And I was just wondering, you've been so involved on campus. How do you feel like it turned out? What are some of the things that you'll be taking with you when you transfer?

Amy Troung:

Oh gosh, I think the power of student voice is such an undermined tool that not much students have figured out, student voices and concerns on campus is so powerful that they can, with much support from the student government, they can be able to have the power to change something on campus for it to progress. I think student voice is so powerful, and I think I'll be able to research more into the student government at UC Davis. I don't know if I would be able to join student government, but yeah, using the skill of networking, and that I learned from Associated Students, along with figuring out what problems and adversities are on campus, and figuring out a solution for it, is one of my improved traits that I developed over the years. So I'll be able to bring that onto UC Davis. UC Davis is a progressive school. So they're famous for their political activism, because they're literally next to Sacramento, the State Capitol. So I wouldn't be surprised if I were to be more involved in those forms of progressive activism. Yeah. That's what I'll be bringing along with me.

Sun Ezzell:

You're doing so much right now, and there's so much going on in the world, and you've been so active and busy on campus. What are you doing to take care of yourself?

Amy Troung:

Good question. Honestly, I have had series of burnouts, to be honest with you. I'm pretty empathetic with other people, so hearing the issues going on right now has been tiring me out. And a lot of my friends have reminded me to take care of myself. So I've been trying to focus more on that, by attending meetings, attending workshops as well, and keeping in the loop of my own skill. Like today, we're having a Fri-YAY art creative workshop just to relax. I have been taking care of myself by drinking water lately, and doing simple tasks one at a time. It's a huge issue for students, especially when they have anxiety or anxious burnouts, because of class and everything that's going on. The virus and the protests have been an extra layer of complicated issues.

Sun Ezzell:

I'm glad you're giving yourself time to pause and have some water and do some art. I think when you do a lot of planning and facilitating and hosting, it can really be relaxing to participate, like you said, in something yourself, and just relax into that experience. So I'm glad that you have that as well.

Amy Troung:

Thank you, Sun. Yeah, a lot of people forget to take care of themselves and get really burnt out, but sometimes it's okay to ask for help, or get the help we need by just pausing for a bit, and knowing that there's still time to be taken care of.

Sun Ezzell:

Well, I was wondering if there were any online community spaces that you wanted to tell a little bit more about, or recommend that other folks maybe tell their students about or check out if there's students listening to this podcast.

Amy Troung:

If faculty and staff are listening to this podcast, or any student, please follow us @mtsacas, @mtsac\_interclubcouncil on Instagram, because we post majority of our activities online. Other resources, if you type in Mt. SAC clubs on Google, you'll click on it, and see there's a list of current activated clubs with their emails on it. Students can have the ability to email the club advisors, or the club email, saying that they're interested in the club, and clubs are more than willing to accept other students because they need students more than ever in student participation. And also, encourage your students to join Associated Students. If they want to create impact on the campus, and give resources, and provide help for other student leaders, I feel like a lot of students have leadership potential, but they don't realize it until they realize it. I encourage students to apply for Associated Students. Application is every semester. There's more information on that on mtsac.edu/as.

Sun Ezzell:

Great. Thank you so much for sharing all those resources, and if there are any resources that you'd like us to link to on the podcast page, we can do that as well. Absolutely. Well, thank you so much for taking the time and energy to talk with us today for the podcast, and huge congratulations on your graduation and transfer to UC Davis. And I hope we can stay in touch. I'd love to check in with you, in a year or two and see how things are going for you.

Amy Troung:

Oh yeah. I would love that. Thank you for interviewing me and taking the time out of your day as well, your morning. This has been very peaceful. I think this podcast has been a way to... is a form of self care, if you will. So thank you for this opportunity. I really appreciate it.

Christina Barsi:

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