

Building a Better Campus Community

By Alex Greanias

"Leaders help others achieve purpose in the face of uncertainty." This is the maxim of Dominic Frongillo, environmental activist and five-time delegate to the United Nations. Frongillo recently shared his experiences on building better communities at the 2016 Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) annual conference. AASHE is a non-profit organization whose mission is to "inspire and catalyze higher education to lead the global sustainability transformation." Earlier this October, I had the privilege of attending this year's AASHE Conference as a student member and heard Frongillo's words in person.

Frongillo's career started when he became the youngest person to serve on the Town Council of Caroline, New York at the age of 22. He then founded Elected Officials to Protect New York, a collective of 850 local lawmakers that helped win New York's statewide ban on fracking. Dominic Frongillo has demonstrated success in helping large groups of people create change. But what about students like you and me: Are we capable of making a difference here at UCCS? Frongillo's presentation was targeted to his audience – students. Frongillo chose to speak at a student summit because he believed that if there is anybody who can make that change possible, it is the students like you and me at colleges and universities across the country and here at UCCS. According to Frongillo, there are three ways to help others achieve purpose on our campus community:

1) **Get connected!**

"The threat that 'we are separate' is the greatest danger to human life."

Communities are comprised of a united group of individuals. The first step to changing our campus (or our city, state, or nation) is to do it together. Only then can we make the change that we want to bring to UCCS. Talk to your professors, your classmates, and others who share the same passions as you do. Start on small projects and take opportunities to share your innovative ideas with others. Get in touch with our Office of Sustainability and find the resources you need to turn your ideas into impact.

2) **Be the change you want to see.**

"If we don't move beyond our campus, all of our work will be undermined."

Continue to learn and grow outside of the classroom. Be an example to others at your work, with roommates, at home, and on your days off too. Don't limit yourself to only make a difference at school. Society needs thoughtful and passionate individuals like you to change the way we live our lives. Use reusable water bottles and grocery bags. Turn off the tap when you brush your teeth and hit the lights when you leave the room. Reuse and donate clothes and other items you have no need for. Save valuable time, energy, and money by practicing sustainable behaviors in your daily life.

3) **Start now.**

"We can all be leaders of change."

You don't have to be a five-time delegate to the United Nations to inspire others. You can influence, lead, and encourage other people to change our campus without serving on a town council. When you have an idea that could improve our infrastructure, curriculum, or some other aspect of our campus community, talk to your professors or engage a staff member who can help you implement it. Ask the departments on campus for their suggestions. Submit a grant proposal and get funding from our [Green Action Fund](#) Committee or [Student Government Association](#). To find out more about how you can personally change UCCS, check out <http://www.uccs.edu/~sustain/>.

A sustainable future starts with you. If you want a better community that supports and motivates campus to improve environmentally, socially, and economically, you have to connect with others. You have to live the way you want others on campus to live. And you have to take action today in order to make a difference tomorrow. You are capable, ready, and willing to change the way campus interacts with others. Continue to push the envelope and encourage others to join you in making a more sustainable world!