

Statement of Purpose:

Imagine getting on a plane to an unknown country. Some documents, a little bit of money, and a few changes of clothes. I had no idea what was in store for my first trip outside the country. Teaching English in Vietnam was an experience that lit a fire in my heart. Though the local children learned English quite quickly, they made sure to get a laugh from my struggle learning Vietnamese. Those who know me characterize me as willing to venture outside my comfort zone and help those in need. Growing up I was not always an extrovert. In fact, I did not know I wanted to travel until after my trip to Vietnam. I grew up in a poor military household. My family stuck to a rigid schedule during the week. However, our parents helped cultivate our creativity when they could. We went hiking, camping, and fishing. Adventuring outside allowed me to indulge in my passion for the environment.

I graduated from Washington State University (WSU) in 2019 with a degree in Science Communication. My capstone project was a combination of research and community service. We focused on behavior change with recycling on campus. We theorized students had a desire to properly recycle but lacked knowledge on how to recycle. The goal of the project was to isolate variables that affect behavior change with successful recycling. To start, my group established a baseline knowledge with a survey. To do this we recruited fifty student participants. The results of the first survey showed the student population was confused about proper recycling knowledge. In the weeks between the first and second survey we held two experiments. The first experiment was an increase in digital signage at high traffic areas around campus. The second experiment was an increase in visual signage posted at trash and recycling containers on campus. After the second survey was complete, we found evidence to support our theory. For both the first and second survey, we conducted a correlation test between two variables: attitudes and

behaviors toward recycling. The results from the second survey showed the students' attitudes to have a positive correlation with their recycling behavior. This supported our theory that students had developed a dissonance between their attitudes and behaviors towards recycling. Cognitive Dissonance Theory is the discomfort a person feels when there is a disconnect between that person's behavior and attitudes or values. While the students wanted to successfully recycle, their knowledge was lacking and thus, their behavior followed.

While I was in school, I worked for the Office of Environmental Health and Safety or EHS. I also was the Communications Chair for Environmental Sustainability Alliance (a club on campus). Though I worked, coordinated club meetings, and was a full-time student, it was not exhausting because working on environmental topics is my passion. I filled several roles while working for EHS. I evaluated water quality and sewage sampling as well as created digital signage and implemented innovative programs for students. My most notable project was the creation of the Green Cougar Awards. I created a conference, hosted by EHS. A conference in recognition of faculty, notable students, and organizations on campus for their environmental distinction. I had a budget, hired catering, coordinated voting for the nominee's and helped run the ceremony.

Volunteering at the elementary school had to be my favorite volunteer event while attending WSU. I designed an interactive game night where we educated students on waterway health. We discussed species living in local rivers, proper waste management techniques and ways they could educate others. We painted a river and placed cutouts either in the river or in a trash can next to the river. Overall, the turnout was only around twenty students and their families. While I cleaned up, there were many students and parents thanking my team and me. They stated how impactful and thoughtful the event was.

Earning a master's degree from Evergreen State College would give me the ability to further my passion for community understanding of natural systems. Additionally, Evergreen is in the heart of policy change in a beautiful state. A master's degree in Environmental Studies will establish my theoretical knowledge with regards to complex natural and societal issues. I find my passion in trying to improve Washington State and the state of living for communities around the world. Traveling around the globe and seeing the best and worst of times has shown me that we may speak different languages, but our goals and struggles are often similar. I see myself working for a nonprofit foundation, understanding complex issues, and empowering people that have a desire to do more. What sets me apart is my cheerful outlook and desire to create sustainable change in our environment and in the lives of those around me.