

Some children get snow days; I had fire days. Growing up in Southern California the threat of disasters was well known and widely feared. Mandatory evacuations due to forest fires, destroyed homes due to flash floods and irreparable environmental damage due to years of relentless drought. This experience greatly contributed to my interest in disaster risk reduction and environmental research. While studying disaster risk reduction at Western Washington University I was inspired by the impact preparation and mitigation strategies can have on the overall detriment and consequences of disasters. My career aspirations are to work in the field of disaster mitigation, preparation and recovery; the demand for which is drastically increasing due to the harmful impacts of climate change. I believe the Evergreen State College Environmental studies program would provide the necessary foundation to achieve my professional goals. I believe that this program will provide me with the tools, skills and knowledge needed to allow me to contribute meaningfully to the field and enable me to pursue a career in disaster risk reduction.

Climate change is the one of the most significant disasters because of its impact to people and ecosystems across the world and impacting every aspect of life at all levels. Environmental degradation caused by a rise in global temperature has had an especially significant impact on marine ecosystems, exacerbating the effects of disasters worldwide. Unfortunately, the science supports that we will continue to see an increase in the frequency and intensity of these disasters. Our planet is 71 percent water meaning that marine ecosystems are going to be impacted the most from the effects of climate change. We will see a drastic increase in marine related disasters and their intensity. In the past few years, we have already witnessed more intense droughts, flooding and tropical storms, not only causing physical damage but severe economic, emotional and social impacts as well. According to the National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) in 2020 and 2021 the US experienced the most disasters per calendar year in the past decade with 2020 having twenty-two separate billion-dollar events and 2021 having twenty separate billion-dollar events. Disasters are not only becoming more frequent and more costly, but they are also becoming more catastrophic and deadly. The twenty disasters of 2021 caused 688 direct or indirect fatalities which is drastically higher than anything we have seen in a decade. Therefore, it is essential that we, as a community and as professionals, mitigate disasters to the best of our ability and to be prepared for when they strike.

The impacts of natural hazards are so serious and threatening because they are relatively unpredictable and are detrimental to entire communities. The social, economic, and environmental impact of disasters to communities, especially those of minorities and low-income peoples, can, and have been, disastrous taking years to recover from, if ever. Ecuador and Switzerland have succeeded more than any other country in the world in making their communities more prepared for, and protected from, disasters. These countries have invested time, money, and resources in reducing disaster risk and are reaping the benefits of their investments. Living in Western Washington we have witnessed the impact that flooding, droughts, and winter storms have had on our area and have seen and experienced the importance of knowledge and resources in the ability to recovery quickly and effectively.

My undergraduate education in environmental studies, disaster risk reduction and environmental policy coupled with field experience surveying wildlife in Colorado along with my passion for being part of the solution, makes me an ideal candidate for the Environmental studies program. I have a diverse background of knowledge that would make me an excellent addition to your team. My experience has taught me that commitment, critical thinking and effective communication coupled with a cultural and contextual understanding are powerful tools to enact change.