

“We moved from being a part of nature to being apart from nature” notes David Attenborough as he witnesses the deterioration of our natural world throughout his decades long career as a broadcaster, bringing this world into my home and the homes of so many more. I never would have figured that his voice would resound with me years later as I navigate the possibilities of what direction I might pursue in life. The likes of David Attenborough, John Muir, Jane Goodall, have called on humanity to share their fight in understanding, protecting, and advocating for the Earth. The multifaceted problem of preserving land or animals or even our precious resources makes it a part of almost everything we do. This interwoven web of connections between everything in nature makes it all the more essential to comprehend. The interdisciplinary Environmental Studies program will allow me to do this academically and eventually contribute professionally.

The realization that I could contribute to this fight was brought on after much reflection, growth, and trial and error over the past few years. Sometimes when you are so set on a certain goal from before you even learn about yourself or your true interests, it is easy to miss the real passions taking root. For me, it was medical school and a job in healthcare that was constantly in my mind since I was young. Apart from expectations from parents, it seemed like the logical thing to do as it promised a secure future while I was able to do something I love: helping people. Even in college I was still set on a pre-med track, with the goal of going into Neuroscience. However, when I started to take classes in Earth and Environmental Sciences, things became a little more dubious. I began to see that my strength lay more so in those classes leading to me declaring it as a second major. Even though I was interested in the human brain, I looked back at activities I did and hobbies I enjoyed that indicated my true passions. As a child, I would always watch nature documentaries and read books about planets. In high school I was part of the Ecology Club where we learned about local flora and did some small scale burns and planting. In college, I was part of Terra Society where graduate and undergraduate students discussed research, issues pertaining to environmental sciences and did other educational activities. Throughout my adolescent and adult years, there was also always a fascination of being surrounded by nature and traveling often to places that offered such solace in beauty. It made me curious about the world around me while instilling a fierce desire to conserve it.

Despite the budding of these interests, I was still set on medical school. The pressure from my family increased as the pandemic hit and my father, the main supporter of the family, lost his job. They wanted both my sister (also in college) and I to be doctors so we can be comfortable in life but financially assist our family as well. Even though I always had to work throughout college and had felt a financial burden since the beginning, I started working two jobs to help out which really put a strain on me mentally and physically. This led me to reconsider what might be best for me but for others too, bringing forth my true passion for the environment and humans. Conservation of our resources and preservation of our diminishing lands became more pertinent to me with every natural disaster I would hear of, or every news story I would read about the decreasing mass of sea ice; what will be left for future generations? I delved into all the nature documentaries I watched, any conversation I would have with a Park Ranger at the parks visited, each article I read about new sustainability efforts being implemented. I started to acquire a better sense of self and recognize how I can utilize my skills.

Throughout my academic and professional careers, I have always had a strong work ethic. In my last two jobs, I have moved up in position by always working hard and wanting to learn more. My desire to learn has never faltered, as I am always reading scientific articles or watching documentaries to increase my knowledge about a variety of topics. This is also evident

at work since I have trained for four different positions within a year and half of being there. Additionally, working in an educational psychology lab during undergrad and other lab settings for coursework has given me some experience in data collection and analysis as well as some computer programming (QGIS, Anaconda, SPSS) which will help me in my graduate research/studies. Now that I have accrued an awareness of my passions and sense of self, I feel more ready to tackle my educational and professional goals. My goal for my graduate studies is to be determined, hard-working, and always willing to learn while keeping what is important in mind: having the honor to understand yet defend this beautiful natural world that gives so much to us.

Combining my environmental science and neuroscience majors from undergrad, I am interested in researching human-environment relations and how human activities have and will change our planet physically, climate wise, resource wise, etc. I am also interested in how our environment changes us (humans) too; looking back at my past experiences and considering how it shaped me, it is a fascinating topic to pursue. Even though there have been many adversities to face, I have managed to overcome them with my ambition and focus. I believe my individual experiences and opportunity to have worked with people of various backgrounds and ideas will contribute to the school's environment that harbors diversity, inclusivity, and curiosity. My values and beliefs align with the programs and will help me stay motivated, especially being in Washington, a place I am amazed by after visiting a couple years ago. I hope to learn as much as I can about the processes of how this planet runs and the social, political, economic web that is interwoven into the problem of protecting our planet, as well as its precious animals and resources so we can cherish it for generations to come.