

Dear Graduate Admissions Committee,

I am thrilled to apply for the Master of Environmental Studies program at Evergreen State College. With a diverse background in food service, carpentry, and teaching, I am eager to combine my experiences and knowledge to create a positive impact on the environment and inspire others to do the same.

My professional journey began in food service, where I found immense satisfaction in the tactile, hands-on aspects of preparing food. However, it was during my time in the culinary industry that I became fascinated with the concept of "mise en place" - the importance of preparation in executing tasks efficiently. This realization sparked a deeper understanding of the significance of preparation in all aspects of life and learning.

Recognizing the remarkable connection between food service and construction/carpentry, I enrolled in the Carpentry program at Bates Technical College to transform my passion into a steady career. While valuable, I soon realized that hands-on work in the trades provided a faster learning pace and more applicable skills. Embracing experiential learning, I sought carpentry work in Seattle, learning quickly through observation and thriving under pressure.

During my apprenticeship journey in commercial carpentry, I developed efficient installation methods, embracing authenticity and open communication. However, I also discovered a significant gap between installers and engineers/architects regarding building science knowledge. This gap often led to issues related to energy efficiency, fire-rating non-compliance, and air filtration. It became evident that there was a need to bridge the divide between sustainable practices and the trades.

Motivated to fill this gap, I completed a degree in Sustainable Building Science, deepening my understanding of the intersection between building science, environmental studies, and sustainability. This education provided a solid foundation to actively contribute to the education and training of trades workers. I sought out opportunities to volunteer at Sawhorse Collective, an organization dedicated to fostering confident, community-oriented youth through carpentry and craft.

During my time at Sawhorse Collective, I collaborated with professional carpenters and architects to guide high school youth in creating much-needed community projects. Witnessing the transformative power of teaching and inspiring young minds ignited a passion within me to become an instructor and nurture future generations of skilled tradespeople. I am committed to providing a more enriched approach to experiential education at the intersection of building science and sustainable built environments. In addition to my work with Sawhorse Collective, I dedicated my time to volunteering at the South Seattle Tool Library, a volunteer-run organization that provides a lending library and small workshop space for members to borrow over 2500 tools for various projects. As a volunteer, I worked diligently to secure a thermal camera donation and created a user guide to help members understand its applications in building efficiency and energy conservation. These experiences reinforced my commitment to sustainable practices and

highlighted the importance of grassroots efforts in empowering individuals and communities to make a difference.

During the pandemic, I volunteered with the Low-Income Housing Institute (LIHI), participating in the construction of tiny houses for individuals facing homelessness. Guiding volunteers and utilizing a blower door to test envelope designs, I witnessed the positive impact of energy-efficient housing on vulnerable populations. This experience deepened my understanding of the interconnectedness between sustainable practices, social justice, and community well-being.

Teaching at Seattle Central College's Wood Technology Center further fueled my passion for education and shaping environmentally conscious professionals. As an instructor, I shared my knowledge and experiences with future tradespeople, empowering them with the necessary skills and understanding of sustainable practices. The intersection of building science, environmental studies, and sustainability is crucial for addressing the environmental challenges we face today. By educating trades workers in these areas, we can bridge the gap between what is planned and what is produced, ensuring that sustainable principles are embraced throughout the construction industry.

As I reflect on my journey and the knowledge gaps I have encountered, I am motivated to address the lack of sustainability and building science curriculum within apprenticeship programs and trades installers in general. I firmly believe that sustainable practices should not be limited to planners and managers alone. It is essential for trades workers and installers to understand and embrace sustainable principles. This is a proven approach to bridging the gap between what is planned and what is produced. My goal is to collaborate with my union and other organizations to develop and implement comprehensive training programs that prepare trades workers for the next two decades, making union carpenter labor an integral part of energy-efficient retrofits and upgrades.

In addition to my dedication to the trades and sustainability, I am genuinely passionate about education and inspiring others. Since deciding to pursue higher education, I have had so many amazing opportunities to share my enthusiasm and passion for building science. I am excited about the prospect of joining Evergreen's academic community, where I can contribute my unique experiences and perspectives while learning from the diverse backgrounds of fellow students.

Thank you for considering my application. I am eager to contribute to a more sustainable future where environmental stewardship and social equity go hand in hand. Together, we can make a significant impact on our environment and inspire others to do the same.

Sincerely,  
Gillian Williams