

Cami De Silva
The Evergreen State College
Statement of Purpose

I am applying to The Evergreen State College's Master's in Environmental Science program to continue my pursuit in a career of research and outreach in the marine biology field. The study of ocean sciences has always been a passion of mine, and I am eager to continue my education by including policy and research focused curriculum. The unique learning environment is what first led me to look at Evergreen as the place to complete my master's degree. The ideal location for environmental studies, as well as the continuous positive reviews of the MES program, has only strengthened my decision for attending Evergreen State College.

Very shortly after completing my undergraduate degree in the winter of 2019, the COVID pandemic hit. I had hopes of beginning my master's studies within a year or two after graduating. However, the pandemic created such apprehension about the future that I had felt as though I lost the motivation for my career goals. After moving to Washington, I took some time to gain experience in a biology-related field. Living in Western Washington gave me the chance to explore the region and start gaining inspiration from the nature around me. The past four years have allowed me to truly understand where I want to see my career lead me, and I finally feel well prepared to begin this next step in my journey.

During my undergraduate studies, I was able to conduct an independent research project with the University of Fairbank's College of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences. Through BLaST Grant funding, the study allowed me to evaluate 74 water samples taken from Southeast Alaska and identify the different forms of phytoplankton present. The main priority was to look for the presence of paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) producing phytoplankton, primarily *Alexandrium* spp. Through this study, I identified 64 different species of phytoplankton, and determined that 74 percent of the samples studied had the presence of *Alexandrium* spp. A scientific poster for my project was displayed at the 2019 meeting in Sitka for the American Fisheries Society – Alaska Chapter. Overall, my experience on this project enabled me to see the benefits, and fulfillment, of being able to follow a project from the collection of samples all the way to the presentation of the data gathered.

Throughout my time in Alaska, and for a few summers after I moved to Washington, I made an effort to gain some work experience in the science field. I worked as a creel technician with both the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, I have been able to experience the importance of policies within our fisheries. Working with the public daily, it gave me the opportunity to see policy in action. Learning how regulations are determined, and seeing how they affect fisherman, has helped me understand the importance of finding the balance between those making policies and those who are having to abide by them.

After completing the MES program, I hope to obtain a wildlife biologist-related job that will allow me to continue studies on marine mammals and their environment. I not only hope to find

a career that I truly enjoy, but one that can make changes to benefit the environment that I dwell in. I look forward to attending The Evergreen State College. I believe I will be successful in this program because I am eager to continue my studies, and I am excited to share the experience alongside others with similar goals. I am confident that the MES program will open the door to my long-term ambitions, educational, and career goals.