

Application Related Information

Application: Application Verified
Grad Program Applying To: MES

Iteration Name: 202510_GR_G
Program Name: MES

Recommendation Information

Recommended By: James Courtright
Recommenders Institution: Clingendael Institute
Waive Access to Recommendation Ltrs: I choose to waive my right to review this recommendation.
Recommendation Form Submitted: ✓

Recommenders Title:
Contact Name: Samuele Forti
Recommendation Waiver Choice:
Recommendation Status: Received

Received Date: 03/06/2024 05:00 AM
Recommendation Type: General
Recommendation Entity ID: 1024000117502818

Recommender Assessment: I recommend this applicant.
Recommender Form: Letter of Recommendation
Recommendation Owner: Josephine Bernier

Recommender Form Questions

How long have you known applicant:	Applicant ability as self-directed learner:
Time since last contact with applicant:	Applicant as productive member of group:
Relationship with Applicant:	Applicant most significant strengths:
Ability to complete rigorous grad program:	Responsibility/reliability:
Communication Skills - Oral:	Communication skills - written:
Service Orientation-sensitivity/empathy:	Ability to work independently:
Ability to handle stress:	Ability to think critically:
Ability to analyze/problem solve:	Ability to think creatively:
Openness to feedback:	Potential for leadership:
Ability to work in a team:	Personal/professional reflection:

Description Information

Description:

Form URL: <https://evergreenstatecollege.radiu>

Other Information

Created Time: 01/31/2024 09:49 PM
Modified Time: 03/06/2024 05:00 AM

Created By: Josephine Bernier
Modified By: Josephine Bernier

James Courtright
Research Associate, Clingendael Institute
Dakar, Senegal
jcourtright@clingendael.org / +221 77 528 0361

Dear Evergreen application committee,

It is my privilege to write a letter of recommendation for Sam Forti for the Master of Environmental Studies program at Evergreen University. Over the past 15 years I have known him, I have seen Sam develop his innate love for our environment by working hard to learn practical skills, exploring other ways of living with our environment, and sharing these lessons and values with younger generations. If accepted into the program, he would bring real world experience to the classroom during his time at Evergreen and later make the world a better place with the skills and knowledge he gains.

I first met Sam in 2008 at Denison University. He was a sophomore who had just moved to The Homestead, an intentional living community of twelve students in a forest just off campus. That evening he showed a group of us around the Homestead's wood cabins, solar panels, and wood fire oven. As we suggested completely impractical renovations to the Homestead, Sam engaged with us, patiently walking us through the problems with our suggestions, while never making us feel foolish or dimming our curiosity. As I got to know Sam through visiting the Homestead, it became clear that even though he was a recent addition to the community, he had quickly earned people's respect through his work ethic, positive disposition and endearing wit. As he took on more of a leadership position in the community he encouraged younger residents to explore their passions through their mandatory "semester projects" while diffusing conflictual relations between head-strong fellow leaders.

We kept in touch after graduation as he began a career in environmental education and experiential learning with Coyote Trails School of Nature. Building on his experiences at the Homestead, he took on mentoring as a full-time task, instilling values of environmental awareness and finding clever ways of helping otherwise difficult students. After a few years of working in the United States, Sam took his career abroad, working in challenging settings in Hong Kong, Thailand, Tanzania and Costa Rica. His natural curiosity and humility allowed him to develop meaningful relationships with likeminded people in these vastly different places.

During this period, I got to spend about a month with Sam when he came to visit me in Senegal where I was serving as a Peace Corps volunteer. He quickly picked up enough of the Pulaar language to make some basic jokes, endearing him to my Senegalese host family and work partners. During a hiking trip through rural areas in the country's south, he took particular interest in how people in small villages used their forests and rivers. In a tiny community near the border with the Republic of Guinea he pointed out how people were rotating their livestock and farming areas to ensure the forests were healthy, the soil fertile, and the herds alive. I was impressed with his intuitiveness and ability to apply lessons he had learned in other places to the unique context of Senegal.

After a few more years working in experiential education, Sam and I got to connect again working for a small Gambian-run non-governmental organization, the African Network Against Extrajudicial Killing and Enforced Disappearances. While this work might have seemed like a departure for Sam, he was keen to spend more time writing and, as always, interested in learning more about another part of the world. While summarizing testimonies from the Gambian Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (investigating the 22-year authoritarian regime of Yahya Jammeh) Sam immersed himself in an unfamiliar world and taught himself a new set of research skills. He was particularly effective at drawing out the important parts of confusing hours-long exchanges between prosecutors and perpetrators for a wider audience.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic grounded the world, Sam has invested in local community in Bellevue, WA. He has continued his interest in serving the public by working first as a communications assistant, then later coordinating community services for the municipality. After years of leading young adults in exotic locations, Sam put some of the same skills to work building and leading teams of adults in local government. While some people grow cynical dealing with these kinds of bureaucracies, he has grown into a more supportive and generous person to both his partner and his friends and family.

Sam Forti would be an excellent addition to the environmental studies program at Evergreen University. He brings to the program and his peers a diverse set of experiences in conservation and environmental education in the United States and around the world. He has a commitment to justice and serving the public with matching real-world experience in public administration. He is a gifted communicator, able to deftly summarize confusing information for wider audiences as well as navigate interpersonal dynamics to lead teams of people. Today many of these qualities appear intrinsic to Sam's personality, but those of us who know Sam have seen him build and develop them. He would be an excellent addition to the Evergreen community.

Sincerely,

James Courtright

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Courtright", with a stylized, flowing script.