



UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
Seattle, Washington 98195

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

Dec 27, 2024

Masters in Environmental Science

To the Admissions Committee:

I am writing to strongly support Lauren Greenleaf's candidacy for your Master's Program in Environmental Science. I had the pleasure of knowing Lauren since she was enrolled in my WQ 23 Advanced Expository Writing (Engl 381) class, which focuses on writing essays in the form of narrative arguments. Lauren asked me to write a letter of recommendation for her because this class crystallized her interest in public-facing science writing, as well as honed her editorial and prose abilities. While I am unable to comment on her science qualifications, I can testify that in my two decades of teaching, Lauren stands out as being in the top 1% of students as a communicator and thinker.

Unfortunately, all the essays that Lauren wrote that quarter got deleted, but both she and I remember well what she accomplished in building these essays, particularly her final project. Her final project further developed a topic that she had wrestled with earlier—how her desire to go to college in a big city worked with her desire to stay close to the outdoors. Early in the quarter, a writing experiment of hers surfaced a moment from the previous summer when she almost opted to stay working on a horse ranch instead of returning to Seattle in autumn quarter to finish out her final years at UW. At that moment, she could not really articulate why it felt so hard to return to school. But through developing and editing successive drafts, Lauren finally hit on where the dilemma stemmed from: the disconnect she felt between cerebral science studies and the embodiment of being outdoors. Her final project turned out to be a gorgeous combination of storytelling and research that reconciled her academic interests, love of the outdoors, and desire to advocate for and protect the Earth. This reconciliation hinged on her realization that as both a scientific communicator and storyteller, she can advocate for the outdoors and effect the cultural changes necessary for people to develop sustainable relationships with the environment. Lauren is a strong candidate for a program such as Evergreen's, as the interdisciplinary nature of the Masters seems like it would make it possible to go deeper into science, conduct lab work, as well as develop as a writer and communicator.

Though the polished version of the final project is lost, both Lauren and I remember it well for the deep realizations and structural innovations that made the essay work so superbly. It brought into sharp focus what animates and motivates her as a thinker, doer, and writer. And I witnessed multiple instances all quarter on how Lauren brings these same qualities of attention to helping

other people develop their work as well. I noticed that classmates were particularly thrilled to be placed in a group with her, since they knew she possessed the skill to see what they're writing could become and how they might achieve it. When giving written feedback to peers, Lauren used her own strengths as a writer to help her peers generously imagine possible ways to get through their own writing challenges. It was clear to me that she saw that to be a good writer, one must also be a good reader, editor, and listener.

Lauren is motivated, insightful, and committed to sinking deeply into discomfort in order to figure out how it can help us all be creative in working through intractable problems. I would be happy to answer any further questions you might have about her. I can be reached at msmliu@uw.edu or (206) 368-9700.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michelle Liu".

Michelle Liu
Teaching Professor
Associate Chair
Department of English
University of Washington