



DORIS DUKE
CONSERVATION SCHOLARS PROGRAM
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

29 December 2024

To the Graduate Admissions Committee,

I am writing to provide my **strongest support** for **Prasadini Gross** for admission to the master's program in Environmental Studies at Evergreen. I have known Prasadini for over five years, after she became one of 20 fellows competitively selected for the interdisciplinary program in conservation and environmental justice, Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program (DDCSP) at the University of Washington. Our interdisciplinary program focuses on training a highly diverse group of students with the explicit goal of widening participation in conservation fields. The first summer is an immersive field tour of conservation and environmental justice work at many sites across Western Washington, and the second summer consists of an internship placement, which in Prasadini's case took place as a remote policy internship with Forterra in the Summer 20210 due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have been in close touch throughout her years in the program to the present day, and I feel I know her well. From all I know of her motivations and capacities, I am confident she would be an exemplary member of the Environmental Studies graduate cohort at Evergreen.

Prasadini was one of the shining lights of our program, impressing all of us on the DDCSP staff with her passion for environmental justice for both the welfare of communities long marginalized and traumatized, and for the welfare of the Earth itself. Prasadini has an exceptionally deep commitment to community service, and has chosen carefully a range of service roles that most fit her core interest in environmental and diversity initiatives. Prasadini's immense capacity for empathy places her naturally in the role of facilitator, seeking to find pathways to support the goals of the groups with which she works. she is a nimble thinker, and her interdisciplinary training in ethnic and environmental studies has helped her have a broad perspective, which often leads her to new insights that help move the group forward. Each experience has led her to take on new efforts, and she thrives on the collaborative nature of community-based service. In each activity she has undertaken, her first instinct is to approach planning process in a participatory manner, ensuring that all in the group were consulted, and felt ownership in the process. These characteristics, among others, suggest to me that she will become a highly effective and inspirational leader to others.

Prasadini especially impresses me in her intellectual capacities - she is a VERY interdisciplinary thinker, who happily encourages broadening of thinking and exploration of new knowledge within any group of which she is a part. As part of the DDCSP program, our scholars met a broad range of individuals involved in environmental conservation, and in the process, gain an appreciation for how people can influence and affect change from different organizational positions. Prasadini was particularly well able to analyze these positional differences and to think about how this could influence potential opportunities to advance different policy initiatives. This led to repeated rich conservation among the cohort. Conversations with Prasadini are always generative, and leave me feeling as though I have explored new terrain, and have found new light for my own next steps.

For her internship, Prasadini worked with Forterra to conduct a policy scan of local-state level policies that might help promote sustainable agriculture in Snohomish county that also supported BIPOC farmers. Originally, her work was intended to have her conduct many interviews among farmers to better characterize their needs and the alignment – or lack thereof – of food system policy in WA. The onset of the pandemic made it impossible to conduct such interviews in person, but she was able to incorporate some of this into her work with them. This effort required her to develop means to wade through varied policy frameworks, as well as diverse resources that indicated what BIPOC small farmers would require in support to better achieve financial and environmental sustainability. She is a very clear writer and speaker, and summarized this complexity in ways that were clear to audiences new the topic, as well as providing insights for those more familiar with the policy landscape.

One of the lessons Prasadini seems to have drawn from this work with our program is the centrality of social and environmental justice in land conservation, and that supporting diverse communities will necessarily entail protection and restoration of lands done in full partnership with all parties who live and work in these landscapes. It also will require innovation, at times reaching to re-invigorate ways of assessing and managing land from communities that have lived in these places for thousands of years, while using the insights for building resiliency and effective response to our changing climate.

After having an opportunity to work in a variety of positions, Prasadini is ready now to pursue more advanced training in policy analysis and community engagement, to weave that into her prior capacities to better address environmental justice concerns among low income and BIPOC communities. I think she is wise to have singled out SMEA as a strong program in which to grow new skills. From my own work in this field for over 30 years, I have become convinced that we can only make the kind of progress that is needed when we employ integrative, participatory, and community-first thinking, which is precisely the kind of knowledge and experience that Prasadini has been cultivating in herself, and seeks to continue to gain through her graduate studies. We need people with strong capacities for connection across culture, and support for others whose histories are complicated, and often impacted by historic trauma. These are areas where Prasadini absolutely excels. Growing her knowledge and training in participatory environmental justice work will be an investment that supports her to take on more substantial and impactful leadership roles.

I sincerely hope you will support her journey for graduate training.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,



Martha Groom

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