

Veronica Suzet Sandoval

February 22, 2025

### **Statement of Purpose**

Growing up in a multicultural family, I was exposed to both the challenges and opportunities of navigating two distinct cultures. My father, an immigrant from Jalisco, Mexico, instilled in me the value of hard work, yet his view of what was “acceptable” for me as a woman limited my imagination. As a young girl, I dreamed of becoming a biologist, engineer, or forester, yet these dreams often clashed with traditional gender roles. My parents, who both lacked formal education, struggled with financial hardships, which culminated in their separation when I was still young. Despite these challenges, my mother’s resilience and love allowed me to continue dreaming.

The freedom I found in exploring our yard sparked my curiosity about nature, but it was the discovery of a trash-filled ravine across the street that truly ignited my passion for environmental stewardship. I began cleaning up the area, only to realize that the destruction humans leave behind often reappears. This early encounter with environmental degradation fueled my desire to protect both my family and the natural world around me. This experience led me down a path to obtaining an undergraduate degree in biology. Now, as I come closer to graduation, I have come to the realization that I want to further my education. The Evergreen State College’s innovative, interdisciplinary approach to environmental education is the perfect match for my passion, ambition, and motivation to create solutions for sustainable practices.

My undergraduate studies in biology and environmental studies provided me with a solid background in ecosystem dynamics, where I explored topics like marine biology, botany, environmental justice, and chemistry. Through these academic experiences, I was able to apply them in real-world applications. I am currently conducting a scientific experiment that explores the effects of polyphenols extracted from *Ulva lactuca*, a seaweed native to Puget Sound estuaries, on the distribution and spread of *Escherichia coli* in freshwater. This project has further solidified my understanding of environmental challenges and the importance of innovative, interdisciplinary solutions.

When I took on the role of a restoration crew member with the Washington Conservation Corps, I honed skills in teamwork, environmental impact assessments, and communication, which will be invaluable as I continue my studies in environmental sustainability. The position led me to volunteer with the Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group, where I was able to assist with their annual summer chum run. I was able to see firsthand how species monitoring and protection were instrumental in restoring an endangered population. Following my term with the WCC, I had the opportunity to become a stream team intern at the Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group. Throughout my time there, I gained experience in stream surveying, species monitoring, and working on projects aimed at reducing the environmental impacts of development. It was an enlightening experience that pushed me to pursue a degree designed to foster skills in environmental sustainability.

The Evergreen State College's emphasis on collaborative learning and practical applications in the field is exactly what I am looking for. I am excited about the opportunity to delve deeper into land-use policy and sustainable urban design, and I believe that this college's

focus on both theory and practice will allow me to make meaningful contributions to the field of environmental conservation. Another aspect of the program that I find compelling is the opportunity to pursue a certification in Geographic Information Systems. I have always been keen to pursue not only a master's degree but also a certification in GIS to further my understanding of risk assessment and data analysis.

Upon completing my master's, I aim to work in conservation, specifically focusing on restoration and how to minimize environmental impact. I hope to contribute innovative solutions to urban and rural sustainability. The combination of my academic background, practical experience, and passion for environmental justice makes me eager to further my education at The Evergreen State College. I am confident that this program will help me develop the skills and knowledge to address the pressing environmental challenges of our time. I am eager to join the dynamic community at The Evergreen State College and continue developing as an environmental steward.