

# Statement of Purpose

Gina Jarasitis

I am applying to The Evergreen State College's graduate program in environmental studies because I want to expand the scope of my life and launch into meaningful work in the future.

I am inspired by some of my earliest work experiences. As a teen, I participated in Explorer Search and Rescue. When there was a missing person in the forests of Western Washington, I would spring into action with my team to help find them. When I was just sixteen, I worked as a volunteer at Mt. Rainier National Park, at the Mt. Fremont fire lookout. I loved it. I care deeply about the people and the natural places of Washington State. I would have liked to become a park ranger or a fire lookout professionally. At that time, however, it was too far afield from the kinds of opportunities I was encouraged to pursue.

I graduated from Washington State University in 1989 with a bachelor's degree in Recreation and Leisure Studies. I had done two internships, one for the City of Kent, and the other for the City of Auburn, both in the Arts and Culture departments. I helped with events such as a hot air balloon show and a children's art festival. I didn't pursue this kind of work as a career because it didn't have the depth of meaning I was looking for.

I came to The Evergreen State College in 1993 to study art. I graduated with a BA in 1994. I spent five years being an artist, but artistic self-expression wasn't satisfying my search for meaning either.

When I became a parent in 1999, I finally found depth and meaning in my work. Later, after my son had grown up, I began to turn my attention to the environment. My ecological work was close to home because I was still holding down the fort as a parent, wanting to be available if needed.

Now I am looking towards the future. I am determined to get back out into the natural places I love. I want to help to understand and protect them. I'm excited about the GIS opportunities offered at Evergreen. I enjoyed orienteering and maps when I was a teen. I think I can combine my visual arts background with cartography and emergency response to do some important work surrounding wildfires.

Thirty years is a long time between degrees. This past summer I came back to school and took two challenging courses at Evergreen. They were prerequisites for MES: Statistics and Research Methods for the Social Sciences, and General Biology. I love both subjects, had a great time, and did well. Over the years I have learned how to learn, and it has only become more enjoyable. I am a person with a broad range of interests; my future pursuits will involve them all. That is why Evergreen's interdisciplinary approach makes so much sense to me.

Evergreen currently has a slogan, "your way to the world," I feel like this is especially true for me. My world has been my household for many years, but it is expanding rapidly. I am looking to the Master of Environmental Studies program to be my launch pad. I am ready!