

Dear Evergreen State Admissions committee,

As I prepare to take the next step into my academic journey, I reflect on the experiences that have made me who I am and inspired me to pursue a career in environmental studies. Growing up in Rialto, California, I faced challenges that instilled resilience and gave me a drive to excel. At eight months old I moved to Rialto with my grandparents, while my mother who was a single parent in the U.S. Army, would be deployed on multiple occasions. During my time with my grandmother, my mother received a Purple Heart after getting injured in the line of combat. Those early years with my grandparents, and the eventual transition back to living with my mom when I was nine, taught me how to be adaptable and persevere. My mother's determination and sacrifice made me feel I had a legacy to live up to, while my grandparent's unconditional support inspired me to be nice to everyone and to excel in my education. My grandmother last summer sadly passed away from cancer, which has been the most heartbreaking loss I've ever experienced. Despite the emotional toll, I am still dedicated to excelling in school to honor her memory through my hard work and success.

My professional experience has further solidified my passion, especially for community engagement. Over the past two years, I worked as a shift lead at Miso, a Korean fusion restaurant, which I am entrusted with running independently. Working at Miso has honed my multitasking abilities and attention to detail. It also taught me the importance of customer service and community, serving local people and having conversations with customers has deepened my connection with the local people of Olympia. My tasks include prepping food to managing inventory to helping with social media posts, and these experiences have strengthened my work ethic while also teaching me the importance of collaboration and problem-solving.

In addition to my job at Miso, I also had the privilege to intern with Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) Fish and Wildlife, where I was able to engage in real hands-on ecological work. This internship was a turning point in my professional development by allowing me to do my part in conservation efforts, like bluebird and western gray squirrel surveys. I also participated in preparing fields of Scotch broom for

burning, applying herbicide to holly-infested fields, and other restoration projects that taught me how ecological management works. This experience not only taught me about local fauna, but it also gave me a better understanding of the interconnectedness of ecosystems and the role of human intervention in preserving biodiversity.

Before my job at Miso, I also served my community as a vendor at the Olympia Farmers Market. This experience allowed me to talk with local vendors and residents regularly, which gave me a deeper appreciation of the culture in downtown Olympia. I built connections with the community, which not only enriched my perspective but also showed me the importance of fostering relationships to drive meaningful change. The market became a symbolic microcosm of broader environmental and social systems I want to impact through my work.

Mushroom hunting has also become one of my favorite hobbies because it allows me to connect with nature while exploring the diverse fungal species of the Pacific Northwest. This hobby has fueled my passion for mycology and provides me with hands-on experience in identifying fungi's ecological roles. Each hike always makes me appreciate nature more because of the intricate relationships between fungi, plants, and animals. Mushroom hunting is a personal and professional aspiration that constantly drives me to delve deeper into the fascinating world of mycology.

Academically, my time at Saint Martin's University has helped me grow and inspired me to pursue a postgraduate education. As a senior in the Environmental Science program, I have learned about the intricate balance between human activity and natural systems. My senior thesis, examining the impact of atmospheric pollution on lichen species, shows my dedication to addressing environmental issues. By using lichen as bioindicators I aim to contribute research into the larger implication of pollutants and their ecological consequences.

Beyond my work, my personal experiences have shaped my vision for the future. Growing up in a military family taught me the value of service and sacrifice while living in Olympia impacted me through its culture and community. The lessons taught to me by my grandmother showed me the importance of loving yourself along with loving nature, as she inspired me with her aspiration for birds and plants. All

of these influences have fueled my drive to protect and restore the environment, and to ensure future generations can experience the same inspiration that I have found in nature.

Pursuing a Masters of Environmental Studies at Evergreen State College would mean I get to experience the culmination of my academic, professional, and personal experiences. The program's interdisciplinary approach aligns with my belief that environmental challenges require a holistic perspective. I am drawn to Evergreen's emphasis on community and hands-on learning, which is similar to the values that have guided me thus far. Through this program, I want to deepen my understanding of ecological systems, refine my research skills, and develop solutions to environmental issues.

Looking ahead, I aspire to pursue a career in mycology, exploring the fascinating world of fungi and their critical roles in their ecosystems. My experience with environmental science has highlighted the importance of fungi for nutrient cycling and ecological restoration. Through the Masters of Environmental Studies program at Evergreen State College, I am strengthening my expertise in mycology and can develop innovative solutions to environmental issues. I am committed to using my education and experiences to drive positive change and contribute to the growing understanding of fungi's potential to help the environment.

Thank you for considering my application. I am very excited about the opportunity to contribute and grow with the Evergreen community.

Sincerely,

Tyler McGuire