

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing to enthusiastically recommend Michael Pazen for the Environmental Science Master's Program at Evergreen State College. As the Senior Corps Operation Manager at EarthCorps, I have had the privilege of working closely with Michael during our 2024 year and can confidently attest to their exceptional abilities as a Professional-in particular as a leader who encompasses both hard and soft skill sets pertinent for continuing education.

At EarthCorps, Michael worked as a Crew Leader. Primary duties consisted of leading a crew of five to go out into our local communities on a variety of environmental restoration projects. Our restoration projects encompass different types of work, including but not limited to, trail restoration, herbicide application, manual removal, etc. Michael worked in a variety of Washington ecosystems such as riparian, forest, wetlands, grasslands, desert, etc. Many hard skills Michael worked on included using a variety of tools in order to meet restoration goals, Plant ID to ensure removal of non-native plants and avoid removal of native species, ensuring a culture of safety, and understanding thought processes behind determining project goals and needs for restoring our local environments. Michael worked closely with Project Managers to come up with solutions to daily logistical issues and project needs. A skill that will be valuable to Michael's potential and promise for advanced and original work. Michael's mastering of these skills are a result of their hard work ethic, and professionalism within our organization.

At EarthCorps, we believe in intersectional environmentalism. Environmental justice is at the forefront of our vision, mission, and values. As a result, Michael participated in a multitude of EarthCorps workshops that included a variety of environmentally just topics. Topics include, cross cultural communication, assessing/addressing values of white supremacy in professionalism, conversations around inclusivity/privilege, and how social justice and the environment intersect to name a few. Michael often played a huge role in driving these conversations and promoting out of the box thinking. A valuable skill in continuing education.

In addition to hard skills, Michael has grasped and continues to improve on their soft skills. Michael is a highly skilled and dedicated leader who consistently goes above and beyond to support and inspire their crew. Environmental work can be a lot, physically and mentally. Having a leader who understands what it takes to boost moral, ensure folks feel supported, and is a team player is incredibly important. Communication, being a team player/role modeling, rapport building, and ensuring a culture of inclusivity and safety are all tools Michael utilizes to help in this realm. Michael is a natural communicator who excels at building strong relationships with colleagues. Michael's ability to balance ensuring project goals are met out in the field, and provide space for meaningful rapport building when appropriate, as well as provide space to foster positive crew culture has led Michael to create meaningful relationships with not just their crew, but their whole cohort and staff. On the staff side of things, Michael worked closely with staff and their crew in bridging communication across both groups, which is an integral part of the Crew Lead role. Michael continuously presented logistical solutions to daily program needs and collaborated immensely with other staff to advocate for their crew and provide a space that continued to work towards eliminating barriers and setting crew up for success. Collaboration,

Communication, meaningful rapport building, etc. are all skills that attest to Michael's well rounded professional character and will play a huge role in Michael's scholarly potential.

In short, I cannot recommend Michael highly enough. Their commitment to their continued learning in leadership and environmental work is evident. They would be an asset to any educational institution, and I am confident that they would thrive at Evergreen State College.

Sincerely,

Chris Linder  
EarthCorps- Senior Corps Operations Manager  
[Chris.linder@colorado.edu](mailto:Chris.linder@colorado.edu)