

Personal Statement – Evergreen MES – 3/1/25

When I was a child, I read in a National Geographic article that our global food production must double by 2050. I was stunned and this dire situation inspired me to learn about what I could do to help. The more I read, the more I understood that our sustainable use of global resources is integral to the functioning and future of our world. It became very clear to me that there was nothing else I wanted to do with my career but spend my time preserving our environment in order to protect every person who relies on it.

My belief in this cause guided me throughout my education and early career. I attended the College of the Environment at Western Washington University, where I earned a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science and a certificate in Geographic Information Science. In addition to the academic knowledge necessary for both graduate-level education and early-career opportunities, I developed my skills in critical thinking, writing, and collaboration. I used my Honors capstone project as a space to conduct an undergraduate thesis, exploring my interest in regenerative agriculture policies and programs in Washington State. I also served multiple years as president of Bellingham Rotaract, where I saw firsthand how community service projects can inspire people to make changes in how they interact with the environment.

Before my senior year at WWU, I participated in the Sustainability Pathways Fellowship. Located in the Methow Valley, this program was both a class and paid work experience. During the Campus Planning Studio, my cohort addressed complex sustainability issues for local community organizations. Class discussions fostered an atmosphere where we learned from the perspectives and backgrounds of both our peers and instructors. My paid fellowship with the City of Okanogan, where I developed a consultation report on the town street trees, gave me experience in field data collection, professional writing, and GIS project leadership. From this employment experience I feel very prepared for the learning environment and expectations of Evergreen.

As an intern at Walters Ag Research, I built upon my field work skills while conducting private consultation research. My team provided pesticide recommendations based on product efficacy for blueberry and raspberry growers in Northwest Washington. I gained experience in trial preparation, monitoring, and assessment. I also regularly engaged with both the industry and academic spheres of the agricultural community to further a shared understanding of best management practices. By working directly with growers, I got to see what logistical and financial factors go into the choices they must make for their operation. My time spent with the agricultural community has inspired what I intend to focus my graduate classes and thesis towards.

My goal is to pursue a career where I can combine my passions for food systems and local governance. I am interested in many pathways that would fulfill my interests and match my skill set, including research, field work, GIS applications, or environmental policy. My recent experience searching for an entry-level industry job has influenced me to seek a graduate degree.

With six months of experience, a solid practical skill set, and a bachelor's degree, I've found that I still do not yet qualify for many entry-level jobs on today's market. The one to two years of experience that most jobs now require can often be substituted with the subject matter expertise that comes from a master's degree. I see myself at Evergreen as the next step in continuing to pursue a career where I can make a meaningful difference for environmental issues.

I am specifically pursuing the Evergreen MES program for multiple personal reasons. I grew up in Olympia, attending Evergreen volleyball camps almost every summer and going to basketball games with my dad. I value my history with this city, and because I intend to build my future in the Olympia area, Evergreen would provide a wealth of localized professional connections through internships and networking opportunities that I would like to take full advantage of. I also appreciate that I can afford the MES program because the evening class format would allow me to continue my part-time job in downtown Olympia.

The Evergreen MES program also provides the learning structure that I have been searching for. I appreciate how the program balances academic freedom and faculty guidance, allowing its students to pursue a thesis based on their own interests and career goals. Other reasons I am excited about the MES program include support from graduate-focused faculty, the core series that I could mold to my subject interests and future thesis, and the small class sizes that would allow me to learn from my cohort and what each student brings to the program. I look forward to opportunities to improve my technical skills, such as the drone course series and updating my GIS certification to the graduate level. I also intend to build on my undergraduate research at Evergreen and gear my thesis towards my interest in Washington State agriculture and environmental policy.

I am a strong candidate for the Evergreen MES program. I bring my education, practical skills, and a drive to meet the future challenges of this industry. I care about the environment because I care about people and that passion will not wain. There is so much more work to be done and I want to do it. Evergreen will help me get there.