Zacharie Straley

MiT program application Personal statement (Before having classroom observation hours)

As an aspiring high school biology teacher, I am passionate about fostering curiosity, critical thinking, and a deeper appreciation for the natural world in future generations. My educational journey, enriched by interdisciplinary coursework and hands-on experiences, has provided me with the knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm necessary to inspire students to explore the wonders of biology.

At The Evergreen State College, I immersed myself in a curriculum that spanned environmental science, chemistry, psychology and advanced biological sciences. Through my studies, I developed proficiency in organismal biology, microbiology, and organic chemistry while also cultivating a profound understanding of the human mind and multicultural perspectives. This interdisciplinary foundation has equipped me to connect diverse concepts in engaging and meaningful ways for students.

Laboratory and fieldwork have been the cornerstone of my academic growth. Whether observing mitosis under a dissection microscope, quantifying microbial populations using PCR techniques, or identifying fungal species in the field, I have honed my ability to collect and analyze data rigorously. Designing experiments and conducting site descriptions fostered my attention to detail, problem-solving skills, and adaptability. These experiences not only deepened my understanding of scientific methods but also instilled a commitment to inquiry-based learning that I aim to bring to the classroom.

My capstone research project exemplifies my dedication to the scientific process. Collaborating with a team of peers, I successfully secured a grant to investigate the medicinal properties of a previously unstudied mushroom species. This project challenged me to think critically, work collaboratively, and communicate complex ideas effectively—skills that are invaluable in teaching.

In addition to my academic pursuits, serving as a teacher’s aide for a course on psychedelics allowed me to explore pedagogy in a unique context. Supporting students in understanding the intersection of biology, psychology, and society was both rewarding and enlightening. This role sharpened my ability to facilitate discussions, provide individualized support, and create an inclusive learning environment. It also reinforced my belief in the transformative power of education to expand perspectives and encourage lifelong learning.

My passion for biology extends beyond the laboratory and classroom. I am deeply committed to making science accessible and relevant to all students. By integrating hands-on activities, real-world applications, and interdisciplinary connections, I aspire to ignite a sense of wonder and possibility in my future students. Whether guiding them through the intricacies of cellular processes or the ecological dynamics of an ecosystem, I aim to cultivate not only knowledge but also an appreciation for the interconnectedness of life.

Pursuing a graduate degree in education represents the next step in my journey toward becoming a high school biology teacher. I am eager to deepen my understanding of educational theories, develop innovative teaching strategies, and gain practical experience in diverse classroom settings. With my academic background, teaching experience, and passion for inspiring others, I am confident in my ability to contribute meaningfully to the field of education and empower students to explore the fascinating world of biology.