**Michele Boderck**

After two quarters in the MES program, I could not be more happy with my decision to attend Evergreen. My previous education was very traditional but I feel that I am getting so much more out of my schooling now and becoming a better student, employee, and citizen. With a hard science background, social science seemed like a whole other unrelated world but this program has helped me to see that it’s all intertwined. Learning to integrate social concerns into other sciences has helped me to grow not only as a student, but also as an informed citizen with an ability to see problems in new ways. MES is also immensely helpful with my career goals, as the connections I have made seem hopeful to lead to further opportunities after graduating. While the core faculty is excellent, I also appreciate having adjunct faculty who are working in the fields they teach. My experience thus far is that they are always more than willing to help in any way possible, whether by providing advice or a paid internship opportunity. Coming to Evergreen started as an unsteady step in my life but now I can’t believe I ever had doubts. MES is so much more than I expected and I know I will look back on this time as a crucial turning point in who I am. After two quarters of gaining interdisciplinary experience and professional contacts, I look forward to seeing where else this program will take me.

**Joseph Burgess**

Although I am only in my second quarter, I am eager to share and apply the interdisciplinary knowledge and progressive momentum of the MES curriculum to an international career. I have gained valuable new perspectives through analyzing core environmental issues from economic, social, cultural, and historical frameworks. The MES program has already induced my removal from my comfort zone; I have become comfortable speaking in public and have enhanced my ability to work in groups. Our interdisciplinary group project on the Columbia River Basin’s Water Storage issue is something I hold in esteem. However, what I am most proud of is the trajectory I have been on since entering the MES program. I plan to apply my MES degree to assist marginalized communities with water, sanitation, and hygiene infrastructure. Through interfacing with professors and colleagues, as well as through curriculum, I have established an independent contract for spring quarter to learn the skills needed to perform a summer-long program evaluation of an NGO in rural Nicaragua. This project not only prepares me for post-graduate work, it allows me to do firsthand research for my thesis. In only a quarter and a half, I have streamlined the trajectory of my time in graduate school. MES has truly enhanced my capacity to meet my professional goals and make a difference in the world.

**Allison Wyatt**

As an MES student still in year 1, I have already felt that I have made great strides academically and am looking forward to the future challenges that the program has to offer. I consider the work on a research project first term, as well as my candidacy paper (work in progress), two of my greatest accomplishments thus far. In gCORE, I was fortunate to participate in a project in an area of interest to me that highlighted the interdisciplinary nature of environmental studies. That project, including the researching, writing, and subsequent presentation, was something I contributed a great deal of time and effort into, but I was excited to do so as it pertained to my interests academically and gave me a glimpse into how complex each environmental issue is. This complexity demands effective collaboration by group members and by professionals in the “real world.” Currently in ESS, I am completing my candidacy paper which has been a great challenge as it involves becoming very knowledgeable in a wide scope of topics. It again emphasizes the importance of critical and interdisciplinary thinking. Research skills, peer reviews, and communication are also critical components to success in this field. The curriculum and electives I have taken thus far have been extremely relevant to my interests and will absolutely help prepare me for the goals I have professionally: working in conservation and/or sustainability. Future courses as well as my thesis will continue to prepare me by expanding my knowledge, interests, and skills within this diverse and ever-changing field.

**Shanyese Trujillo**

As an MES student, I have gotten to participate in an internship with the Washington State Department of Transportation working with Geographic Information systems in conjunction with my advanced GIS course. One of the most rewarding experiences of this internship was the ability to take courses from ESRI GIS online. This internship allowed me to understand how to read and understand asbuilt roadway engineering plans, create right-of-way lines for future field use, and participate in several training courses for ArcGIS. I took six courses in all: 3D Analysis of Surfaces and Features Using ArcGIS, Deriving Rasters for Terrain Analysis Using ArcGIS, Image Processing with ArcGIS, Managing Lidar Data in ArcGIS 10, Managing Lidar Data Using Mosaic Datasets, and ArcGIS for AutoCAD. In regards to personal growth, I have struggled with my writing but with encouragement of wonderful faculty, their constructive criticism, and our awesome writing center assistant, Chelsea I believe my writing has improved. This by no means it is perfect but I am excited to continue to improve. This program has also allowed me to pursue my own academic interests by examining nanomaterials. This is the topic of my candidacy paper and is additionally the subject that I will be attempting to work with as I apply to Ph.D. programs this summer.

**Joshua Carter**

As of this moment, I have nearly completed the second quarter of the MES program. I have accomplished many things so far, including doing an outstanding job on a group project about microplastics in the ocean, finding volunteer opportunities and forming connections with my fellow cohort members, and determining the path that will bring me the most success, both academically and professionally. Though I haven’t even been in this program a year, I’ve definitely grown as a person. Seminar discussions with my cohort, class lectures, and workshops have given me hope in combating the world’s social and environmental problems, and for the first time in quite a while, I feel it is possible to make headway on these issues. I believe my professional goals are well within reach. Currently, I do very well in this program academically; learning has never been a problem for me. Applying that knowledge has always been a greater challenge to me than initially acquiring it, and I am starting to do just that by applying for internships and part-time jobs related to my career goals, volunteering for non-profit organizations, and exploring opportunities and possibilities for my thesis work. I am confident I have what it takes to succeed in this program and make a real difference.

**Sarah Keon**

Besides my academic accomplishment reflected through my positive evaluations for my courses in the MES program, a personal accomplishment that I achieved is development of a more definitive plan for my thesis paper and my future career path of becoming a professor. Through the program, I had gained an interest in prairie restoration and the application of sustainable agricultural methods to facilitate a transition period that will ease restoration. To collect data for my thesis paper, I had spoken with Dr. Hamman in prospect of conducting research over the summer on the effective use of grazing for prairie restoration through the Center for Natural Land Managements. I will also be interviewed soon for the recently opened Conservation Nursery Research Associate position at the Sustainability in Prisons Project, where I hope to learn more on seeding and cultivating in-risk native prairie plants in nurseries prior to incorporating them into the land. Although not everything is set in stone, I am making the best of my efforts to take steps toward the right direction. In addition to an MES degree, I am realizing that field experience will provide me an advantage in pursuing a doctorate degree. Therefore I am doing the best I can to seek opportunities that will provide me such experience. Despite sacrifices that may have to be made on the way, I believe that education and experience are worth the investment.

**Caroline Collins**

Even before entering the MES program, I knew that I wanted to work for a nonprofit organization dedicated to watershed conservation. I was already passionate about the subject of watersheds and, upon finishing my Ecology degree, had taken two graduate classes entitled: Watershed Management and Field Methods for Evaluating Watersheds. Moreover, nonprofit work had always appealed to me because of its focus on mission and purpose. Already in my first year of the program, I have tailored my MES experience to perfectly fit my professional objectives. During my first quarter, in gCORE, I focused my technical paper on the ecological impacts of dams and dam removal as a potential for river restoration. In my elective, Conserving and Restoring Biodiversity, I further researched the impacts of dams on riparian biodiversity. I received positive feedback from my instructors in both classes, and my technical writing skills greatly improved. Most importantly, my passion has grown stronger and my vision has become clearer. Building on previous knowledge, and utilizing what I have learned this quarter in ESS, I am focusing my candidacy paper on the projected impacts of climate change on riparian biodiversity. I am currently taking Nonprofit Management to become more familiar with the kind of organizations I want to work with, and I’ve planned all my future electives to stay in line with my vision. My MES degree will allow me to fulfill my dream of becoming a watershed ecologist with a local nonprofit so that I can use my passion and knowledge to bring about meaningful change.

**Amory Ballantine**

For gCORE’s interdisciplinary project, I wrote a technical paper on the meaning and application of “transportation justice,” using a local transportation initiative as a case study. I presented my work at the National Association for Ethnic Studies’ annual meeting, my first contribution to an academic conference. My workshop proposal was then accepted for the 4th annual Public Sociology conference. Through that conference, I met a graduate student who told me about a call for submissions to a book on “ecofeminist intersections,” which may become my first published work! Through MES I discovered critical geography, made connections with geographers across the country and internationally, and was prepared for advanced research in a Ph.D. program. I wrote my candidacy paper on environmental impacts of the biometric border, applying critical ethnic studies to environmental studies. This paper was accepted for presentation at the Critical Geographies Mini-Conference in Vancouver, CA and at an immigration panel at the annual Association of American Geographers’ meeting this spring. I am currently studying the qualitative methods I hope to use in my thesis research on settler colonial geographies in the Port of Tacoma tide flats (Puyallup land; Superfund site; location of a private immigration detention facility; and home to oil refineries receiving BNSF oil-by-rail). I am excited about the research I am doing in the MES program and its contribution to local social justice efforts. MES has opened many professional doors for me and helped me pursue my dream of teaching and doing research at the doctoral level.

**Jessica Harpe**

I am currently in my first year at the Evergreen State College in the MES program. I have fallen in love with the campus, faculty and my cohort. I do feel like we have bonded over our short time together and I am looking forward to seeing what my cohort will accomplish in the future. The faculty here is outstanding and they each bring a variety of knowledge and skill to the program. Upon completion of the program, I would like to attend and Environmental Law school and have signed up to taking the LSAT this summer. I have just submitted the first draft of my candidacy paper to my faculty advisor for review. I am researching urbanization impacts on nutrient loads to streams and that impact on hyporheic nutrient storage. I do plan on continuing this research as I begin my thesis work. I would like to look at how impervious surfaces contribute to nutrient fluxes in the Puyallup River and how those nutrients are stored in the interstitial water in the banks next to the river itself. Working 45 hours a week and attending school full time at night has been stressful. I have been working overtime in order to keep up with my bills as well as pay down my student loans. I would love to have the financial freedom to work less and focus more on my studies especially as I move to start working on my thesis. Thank you for your consideration and please do not hesitate to contact me.

**Natalie Sahli**

In the MES program, I have gained an extraordinary amount of interdisciplinary knowledge, excitement and focus. When I joined the program, I had a vague determination that I would be analyzing dynamics of shellfish and disease, wondering of a practical space for my niche. This niche, in just five months, has morphed and expanded, taking on an entirely new vision. Instead of asking questions on a molecular scale, I have learned to analyze problems from the perspective of history, society, and the earth. Instead of asking “what?” I am asking more “why?” and “why not?” I am beginning to see the value in action and change, and pushing against current paradigms to solve pressing problems. I believe this knowledge and excitement is what has resulted in my desire to focus and to pursue change on a larger scale. I am still curious about disease in shellfish, yet I now see a greater and more encompassing threat to marine species in anthropogenically induced climate change. Though larger social changes must be made to remedy the climate change, science-minded individuals, such a myself, have the chance for creative innovation as a means of adaptation. My particular contribution to remediation will take place in realm of ocean acidification. I am currently developing a thesis project that will assess the effects of macro-algae growth on aqueous carbon concentration. My long term goal is to use the research of others, and my own, to justify the implementation of macro-algae farms to sequester carbon from the Puget Sound. Various local organizations, such as the Puget Sound Restoration Fund, are looking into this technology for remediation purposes. After the MES program, I hope to have the experience and connections to assist in introducing this new type of aquaculture into the area. I am so grateful to the MES program for supporting my acquisition of knowledge and the manifestation of my new found passion. I am excited for where my education will lead me.

**Daron Williams**

My first year in the Graduate Program on the Environment has been an amazing adventure that started with a class in Fiji. I witnessed the struggles of the Fijian people in the face of climate change, and interviewed the chief of the first village to be relocated because of sea-level rise. This experience brought the real, present danger of climate change into focus, and I came to campus with a renewed sense of urgency. Though in my first year, I started designing my thesis research project, which focuses on changing land-use practices to improve water supply for climate adaptation. I was granted a field site at the UW Pack Forest, and I have applied for funding to purchase equipment to test my hypothesis. I presented my research project at CONFORWest 2015, where I won the “Most Interdisciplinary” research award. Deep change demands thoughtful direction and coordinated action. To that end, I have consistently strived for excellence both as a student and as a leader among my peers. I have worked to contribute fully in lecture and in the seminars, and taken advantage of opportunities to tap into my professors’ perspectives. I was chosen as a MESA coordinator, where I organize opportunities to engage other students in environmental issues, and I was hired as a restoration intern with Capitol Land Trust, where I independently design and implement restoration projects. As my adventure enters its second year, I will continue to embrace the education, research, collaboration and leadership opportunities it will bring.

**Sarah Krock**

My major accomplishment in the Evergreen MES program was the group project in which we investigated the invasive New Zealand mud snail issue in Olympia’s Capitol Lake from several different disciplines. I received positive feedback in my gCORE evaluation regarding the presentation and papers including “The final paper and presentation showed superb collaboration and integration of multiple disciplinary perspectives.” While the group project is only one example of accomplishments made as an MES student, it was the highlight of the course, and the accomplishment of which I am most proud. Participating in seminar is an area where I have shown growth, as well as where I intend to exhibit further growth. My gCORE evaluation stated “During seminars, she listened attentively to her peers and posed interesting comments and questions. Although she did contribute to the seminar, she could further benefit from being even more of an active participant during seminar—her prompts reveal that she had many interesting insights to share.” While I am not very outspoken in seminar, I am an active participant and listener/learner, which I feel is a valuable skill, and I will continue to pursue growth in this regard. The completion of my MES degree will give me the capacity to reach some of my professional goals by developing the skills necessary to become a better interdisciplinary collaborator, communicator and problem solver. These skills will provide me the opportunity to further advance my career and become a more well-rounded and engaged citizen of the community.

**Madeline Goodwin**

The interdisciplinary approach of the MES program has expanded my academic horizons with support from diverse and knowledgeable instructors, while my cohort has given me insights into my own professional strengths and weaknesses. I’ve been able to tie my personal interests in ecology, policy, and education into group projects, student-led seminars, and other assignments, while gaining a broad pool of relevant knowledge and useful skills for the future. Workshops, role models, and development opportunities have shown me that I can successfully follow my passions rather than restricting myself to a narrow area of focus. As an MES student, I have performed well on tests, written excellent papers, and presented project findings. My verbal contributions have generated discussion and garnered positive feedback. I have enjoyed the intellectual challenges and interdisciplinary dialogue. In leading seminar, I was able to experiment with my teaching style, with eager participation and enthusiastic responses from my classmates. I am interning with Thurston Climate Action Team in a position specifically for MES students, and I volunteer at the WET Center and USFS and teach an environmental impact class online. These varying opportunities have given me policy, education, and data-crunching experience while a student. I anticipate completing the MES program with skills and background necessary to contribute in environmental policy or education, fields which generally require graduate work. The program is preparing students for a changing world. Based on my experience thus far, I believe that I can be one of the leaders of that change.

**Anna Rhoads**

The Master of Environmental Studies graduate program has been a challenging yet rewarding experience. The program has required me to establish strong work ethic and develop analytical critical thinking skills to produce work that I am proud of. While I have received positive feedback on class papers and exams, I find that my accomplishments so far in this program are more particular than my academic success in the classroom. One skill that has improved throughout my experience in the MES has been my writing abilities. I feel that my overall writing style has developed since my first argumentative essay in the gCore program. I feel more comfortable forming thesis topics for my papers and reading for key arguments throughout texts. Another skill I have improved has been my group project interactions. I have learned how to work cohesively and manage time appropriately while working in a group so we could deliver a successful project. Also, I am typically a quiet student, and feel that I learn best from listening to my peers and faculty. I believe that I have been an active listener and a terrific note taker in my MES classes. However, I see it as it as a small victory every time I said something insightful in seminar and group discussions. While I am still indecisive with what I would like my upcoming thesis work to address, I know that MES has provided me with the necessary skillset to produce a noteworthy thesis.

**Rhianna Hruska**

The Master of Environmental Studies program has allowed me to expand my knowledge of the environmental field. I did not previously have an academic background in biodiversity, restoration ecology, political ecology, and many other subjects covered in the classes I am taking, but now I have a core understanding of these disciplines. I have also improved my writing and communication skills through these classes. I have signed up for internships with MES credit to gain work experience to prepare me for a future job in the environmental field. Along with an improved skill set, I have been attending environmental conferences that allow me to network with professionals and learn about current research or projects being implemented throughout the United States. I want to work in Washington, DC for a government agency or environmental non-profit as a career. Washington, DC has a highly competitive atmosphere and from my experience interning for the Smithsonian Institution Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in Santa Cruz, CA, all of the staff had either a Masters degree, Ph.D., or they were a post-doctoral researcher. The MES degree would open doors for me to apply for jobs in agencies where higher education is a prominent criterion for these positions. I want to gain a few years of professional work experience first, but I aim to apply to an environmental Ph.D. program and the thesis I write in the MES program will enhance my application to a doctoral program.

**Joshua Christy**

Through the MES program, I have grown to appreciate the complexity of the environmental questions of today and my greatest accomplishment is creating work that analyzes this complexity and is not satisfied with simplistic solutions. Writing a paper about plastic bag ordinances helped me to do this. While researching, I saw an ordinance would influence everything from the plastic industry workers to sea turtles. In application then, my paper was not “for” or “against” the ordinance, but instead highlighted under what circumstances an ordinance should or could be adopted. As the complexity of environmental issues became clearer to me, so did the need for long-term solutions. A desire to work towards these solutions can be seen in my career goals. I hope to participate in creating long-term solutions by helping to generate knowledge. Beyond any piece of information I can learn from the MES degree, I really hope to gain insight into the MES approach to creating participation in a college setting. This in itself will help me advance my professional goals to become a professor. Evergreen’s MES degree is not about being a passive recipient of knowledge, but it is about helping others to become active participants in its generation and application. Participating in the seminars, seeing different approaches to lecturing, and learning about student collaboration have all helped me build capacity to actively approach knowledge. These will help me in creating an active learning environment as a future professor.

**Paula Cracknell**

We are approaching times of uncertainty as we move forward into the Anthropocene. The future of planetary biodiversity looks grim without concerted human intervention, the type that my graduate education in the MES program trains me to implement. The skills and conceptual tools I am learning to employ are practical and effective, ranging from bioremediation and adaptive management, to communication and building coalitions of stakeholders. While participating in group research, I’m learning how to organize the collective intelligence of a diverse group, whose members possess varied goals, skills, and approaches. I am interning with a conservation ecology effort as a field researcher, and the communication skills I have learned in MES contributed to my success in the position and the harmonious relationships I enjoy with my coworkers. The most dramatic improvements to my skill set from the MES program are patience and flexibility. I can approach a dead end in my work and not see it as a failure, but as an opportunity. I understand the wisdom in turning around, abandoning familiar ways of thinking, and opening myself up to viewpoints that previously seemed counter intuitive. Breaking these kinds of personal hurdles is exactly what is needed for the future. It’s not easy. While the spark to pursue conservation ecology came from within, my education is my motivator and muse. As my coursework pushes me farther than I knew was possible, I am astonished to find a resilient and energetic source in myself to meet the challenges of the future head-on.