Continuing Students Who Applied for Financial Aid

Karimot Afolabi

Katherine Allowatt

Keegan Curry

Hillary Foster

Meara Heubach

Alex James

Meerea Kang

Katrina Keleher

Paris McClusky

Albert McConathey

Jacob Meyers

Diane Nelson

Tracey Scalici

Bethany Shepler

Paula Smillie

Gavin Tiemeyer

Brooks Fellowship

Criteria: Awarded to a student who has experienced personal struggles (i.e. single parent, caregiver, health issues, financial hardships etc.), is a military veteran, is an AmeriCorps alum\*\*, or is a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer. This award is also based on academic merit; merit determined by required Merit Essay and MES faculty input.

\*\*AmeriCorps alumni who applied for aid: Katrina, Meerea and Diane

Essays:

Kale McConathy:

I have a personal and unique struggle within the MES program's cohort. I am stubborn and have an unbending drive to succeed, but this undercurrent of stubbornness is driven by my own physical limitations. I am afflicted by an inherited disease which makes my limbs progressively weaker throughout my life, driving me to legitimize myself in a cohort that publicly measures its impact on nature by its extreme physicality within what is typically declared wilderness. I am part of a severely underrepresented demographic within environmental studies in that I have a life altering physical disability affecting my physical mobility.

Paris McClusky:

My name is Paris McClusky. I am a first year, full-time MES student at the Evergreen State College. I also have a part-time job at the Olympia Food Co-op. To gain work experience in environmental fields, I need to leave my current job. With a full-time school schedule, I can only work part-time. My income from the Co-op supplements the money I receive from my federal student loan. I am applying for this scholarship to make my transition to environmental work less of a financial hardship, particularly if I need to begin by taking a low-paying, or unpaid internship.

Merit Essays (written for consideration for Emory Pyle - $500, Graduate Endowed Fellowship – total of $8000 to be split, and Director’s Sustainability Award - $1000):

Meara Heubach:

As an MES student, I have grown professionally while supporting the personal growth of other students. Through the MES blog, I discovered the Washington State Recycling Association’s student guest scholarship program. After winning the scholarship, I encouraged another classmate to apply, and she won the following year. A few months ago, I formed a team of MES students to compete in a national solid waste competition. I also encouraged UW undergraduates to create their own team. Now Evergreen and UW have two of the ten spots in this year’s competition. My qualitative and quantitative research skills have also grown. I have used the qualitative skills I developed in Kathleen Saul’s elective to create surveys for my current job. As an intern this summer with Bellevue Utilities, I used statistics from RDQM to determine the sample size and sampling methods for a waste cart audit I conducted. I even developed my statistical skills well enough to become the next TA for RDQM, despite my background as an American Studies and Spanish double major. After eight years as an ESL teacher, I am successfully transitioning into work in solid waste education and policy. My summer internship supervisor recommended me for my current position with Renton’s Solid Waste Utility, and I am confident that my strong academic skills, assertive pursuit of professional development opportunities, and new grounding in interdisciplinary solutions to environmental problems will lead to a rewarding and distinguished career.

Paula Smilie:

At the beginning of my second year part-time MES student, I was enrolled in the Advanced GIS course. I felt confident about my basic knowledge of GIS and got to expand my skill. I am excited about the doors that have opened for me because of my enrollment of this class. My internship for winter quarter so far has brought my GIS skills to the test. I am working on mapping out jellyfish patches found in Puget Sound and am starting to explore analysis I can do within GIS. Having a hands-on experience with a department like Ecology for my internship has given me incite to collaborative work and a peak into the possibilities if one is willing to put in the time and effort. I feel this has been a great jump start to thesis research and I can see how this can develop into something I can really get my hands into. I am also an AmeriCorps alumni and would like to be considered for the service award for 2018/2019 year.

Jacob Meyers:

I approached graduate school in the same way I approach everything else in life – with enthusiasm and zest. I quickly learned, however, that working while being a full-time student was going to be more challenging than I anticipated. And yet working in prison has helped me maintain perspective and stay positive. Meanwhile, I’ve made a concerted effort to engage and befriend every one of my classmates because I know creating an inclusive and supportive community is important for promoting a positive learning environment. I am consistently reminded that the biggest impact we can make is on those in closest proximity. It’s the people we interact with everyday – whether that’s in prison or on campus. And despite feeling overwhelmed at times in the Fall, I made it through and received exemplary evaluations from faculty. This quarter I am auditing an MPA class in addition to my full credit load for MES. I knew learning about the interconnectivity of government, non-profits, and community organizations would be extremely helpful as I want to pursue a career in those fields. Furthermore, I discovered I can handle an even more strenuous workload and still succeed. What’s more, my roommate told me how my work ethic inspired him to get a second job – it was both a humbling and gratifying experience. Another classmate told me how through my consistent effort and dialogue, she went out and purchased a reusable mug and how this message spread to her husband and family – the people we interact with everyday.

Bethany Shepler:

While finishing my degree in Oceanography at the University of Washington, I took courses on sustainability and did research on restoration of the Elwha River post dam removal. After I graduated I decided to continue my education at The Evergreen State College where upon acceptance, I attended an event designed to welcome incoming students to the MES program. There I learned Sustainability in Prisons Project (SPP) was hiring. I have spent my life passionate about social justice, criminal justice reform, and environmental activism. To discover a program that combined my greatest passions felt unreal. Before SPP, I had long since given up on finding any program that combined my passions and decided to pursue a career in which I would work towards sustainability and positive environmental action as opposed to fighting for people’s justice. The MES program sheds light on the intersectionality of environmental concerns, social and cultural influences and interactions, and how interconnected activism in the various fields is. My time at Evergreen and SPP has shown me that environmental activism, social justice, and racial justice are not mutually exclusive in any way, but actually are closely associated. In light of this realization, I have decided to pursue a career as a defense attorney and fight for the justice of marginalized individuals. The MES program will help prepare me for law school and a career as a defense attorney by continuing to teach me to think in systems about intersectionality and finding innovative solutions to challenging obstacles.

Karimot Afolabi:

In the last quarter, the technical paper presentations and essays have enhanced my verbal and written communication skills tremendously. These are critical skills required in attaining my goal in life. I have adequately understood the concepts of traditional ecological knowledge, cultural landscapes and gross primary production which are vital in making changes in a community or society at large. Being an International Student studying with different nationalities in various groups during seminar, workshops and project has not only fulfilled my desire to have global perspective on environmental issues but also enhanced my intercultural relationship. I had a better understanding of working in a group and how to contribute more effectively in the various roles I had been assigned to. My Fall Quarter evaluation is an attestation to my academic progress which is positive and very encouraging. My professional goal in life is to pursue a PhD degree with focus on environmental pollution and practical ways of mitigating this menace especially for developing countries. An MES degree will pave the way towards achieving this goal. I believe that knowledge is power; a knowledgeable person is a powerful person that could potentially trigger changes with regards to abnormalities of the society. My hopes and dreams will never be a reality if I cannot complete my MES degree due to financial burden. It will be a lifetime achievement when each person in my community understands the risks of polluted water, poor waste management and refrain from these acts.

Katrina Keleher:

Throughout my career as an MES student, I have grown as an academic, as a professional, and as an individual. The MES program has provided me with skills and tools to not only understand complex environmental challenges, but also to work towards solutions to those challenges. As I started out in the program in the Fall of 2017, I was unaware of the trajectory of growth I was about to experience in MES. As a strong critical thinker already, I had no idea my awareness of environmental issues was so confined to the particular lens I had grown comfortable with. As a capable writer already, I had no idea I would learn to make my arguments so much stronger with refined, narrow theses. And as a skilled communicator already, I had no idea I would grow not only an active participant in conversations, but also as an active listener. Now, in the second quarter of the MES program, I approach environmental challenges through a suite of new, intersectional lenses that consider ecological, social, cultural, historical, and economic perspectives. I am fully confident that by the time I graduate in June of 2019, the skills I have developed and enriched through the MES program will set me up for a successful career in natural resources management (and, as an aside, teaching). If that new MES student in Fall of 2017 had known how much she would grow during her time in the program, she would be surprised, and most of all, proud.

Gavin Tiemeyer:

My interest in sustainability, and a desire to earn a living wage doing more meaningful work, led me to the Masters in Environmental Studies program at Evergreen. My biggest take away from the program so far is an expanded definition of sustainability which now includes equity as part of environmental studies. Equity—as in people’s right to a healthy and functional environment—opens up new and exciting opportunities in which I can utilize Evergreen’s interdisciplinary model in innovative ways. It is important to me that I match academic aptitude with real-world experience, so this summer I plan on pursuing an internship at either Recology (a municipal waste and recycling organization) or through Seattle’s Office of Sustainability & Environment. My education goals also include the ability to communicate complex environmental issues in a way that is both accessible and engaging Like most MES students, my life consists of a delicate balance between academics and employment. Like most MES students I pay for school through a yearly government loan. A positive way that I have reframed taking out loans is to think of the debt as an education tax in which I intend to pay forward by giving back to the community. I humbly seek out scholarships as a way to mitigate the long term financial impact of carrying student loan debt into the future. I consider receiving scholarships a responsibility and an honor, as I share the goal of trying to make the environment a healthier and more equitable place for everyone.

Hillary Foster:

Having completed my first quarter at Evergreen, I’ve seen myself grow as a student and person. This first course has expanded my knowledge to include different perspectives regarding environmental science through various readings and seminars. These lessons have expanded my perspective of ecology and environmental conservation. The most influential part of this quarter has been the ability to discuss conservation in ways that are not considered traditional and discuss issues that go against the norm. I believe this first experience at Evergreen has broadened my perspective in dealing with environmental issues to one that is more open-minded to exploring alternate avenues of conservation. My academic skills have improved greatly. The essays required assisted with honing my persuasive writing skills and pushed me to think critically about topics that I wouldn’t normally have written about. I have improved my time management skills by balancing the different reading and writing assignments. I found myself working on assignments well before the due date to ensure I stayed on top of my work. I believe my research skills and ability to synthesis research in general has improved as well. Through seminars, I have improved upon my communication skills by successfully expressing my views and opinions on readings to my peers. My collaboration skills have also improved by working in a group with students from different disciplines. The flexibility of the MES program has made it possible to collaborate with Cascadia Research Collective for my master’s thesis, an opportunity that would have been difficult elsewhere.

Alex James:

Six months ago, I closed one door to open another. The opening of this door lead me to Washington State in pursuit of graduate studies at The Evergreen State College. Over the respective months, I have engaged with a wide variety of literature, conversed within a systems thinking setting, and have written a collection of novel pieces, all of which, have amalgamated into a greater appreciation for our environment, social equity, and need for sustainable action. The continued support of program logistics coupled with interdisciplinary interpretation have provided me with a growing confidence. This confidence has lead to the personal and academic accomplishments I have experienced while in MES. For example, my commitment as the MES Student Association coordinator has enhanced my ability to assimilate and plan student-lead events, my work as the Conservation Nursery Coordinator for the Sustainability in Prisons Project has encouraged my capability as an environmental educator, and my recent participation in the WOHESC sustainability conference has equipped me with the tools necessary to pursue a career in eco-management. My first five months of graduate studies are an accolade in regards to the life-changing decision I made to pursue this path and to those that have provided their support along the way. As an MES student, I know that my journey does not end with the acceptance of a degree, rather, my MES education will guide a life-long journey that will lend support to any goal I choose to pursue.

Keegan Curry:

I don’t know what to say. I would be lost without MES. This program has given me a renewed sense of intellectual confidence and curiosity that drives me to push personal and professional boundaries every day. And through MES, I have had the honor and privilege of coordinating SPP’s Taylor’s Checkerspot Butterfly Program. I fell into the butterfly coordinator position almost by accident, but my interpersonal skills and analytical brain turned out to be a perfect fit. I am hooked on this job—it has given my life direction and connected me with a community of like-minded colleagues. And more importantly, I see the positive effect my work has had on incarcerated people. I am a natural educator, communicator, and mentor, and through SPP I have realized that prison is one of the best places I could be applying these skills. While the butterfly rearing facilities at Mission Creek and Oregon Zoo have been successful, managers have struggled to keep up with the sheer volume of data collected. Without slowing down to process this data, we may be losing vital information about Taylor’s checkerspot biology. For my thesis, I intend to organize and examine ten years of captive rearing data. I have already begun this research in partnership with incarcerated technicians at Mission Creek. With guidance from SPP, WDFW, Oregon Zoo, and the MES faculty, I hope to spearhead a collaborative scientific project that will provide learning opportunities for prisoners and contribute meaningful knowledge to the Taylor’s checkerspot recovery effort.

Meerea Kang:

In my Statement of Purpose, I wrote of three interests I wished to pursue in my studies: environmental justice, sustainable living, and mycology. Although I’ve yet to finish my second quarter, I’ve had the chance to study all three! Within a week of starting the program, I landed a dream internship with Seattle Public Utilities in their Environmental Justice and Service Equity Division, where I assist with groundbreaking equity work to shift the Utility towards becoming an anti-racist, multicultural institution. With this experience, I’m able to relay concepts and theories acquired in my Environmental Justice and Energy Regimes elective to actual practice. The Ecological Social Sustainability course has taught me the multi-dimensional frameworks to sustainability and subsequently inspired me to start volunteering at GRuB, a local nonprofit that creates innovative food solutions to benefit the community. For the candidacy paper, I’m researching the potential for medicinal and entomopathogenic fungi to treat Colony Collapse Disorder in honeybees. While reading epidemiological surveys is outside my comfort level, I sought to challenge myself to become a better environmental studies interdisciplinarian. Following the MES program, I intend to volunteer for the PeaceCorps to offer humanitarian aid to people born without the many privileges I take for granted. A program I am especially interested in is the Food Security Volunteer in Nepal, which focuses on nutrition-sensitive agriculture for women and children in rural communities. The MES program is retrofitting my theoretical toolkit, and I look forward to applying my knowledge to assist others in need.