My love for nature. My love for humans. My want to leave this world knowing I fostered a greater awareness among my fellow beings.

These are the intrinsic reasons that brought me where I am today-- a Masters of Environmental Studies (MES) student at the Evergreen State College.

But I suppose I should tell you how it all began…

My name is Heather Irene Kowalewski. I grew up in Dover, Arkansas, population 1400, a typical small town where I spent my free time getting into trouble and exploring the nearby Ozark Mountains. After high school I continued onto college, because that’s what you do, right? At this time I knew little of the environmental movement. However, that all changed one fateful day at an on-campus viewing of *An Inconvenient Truth.* The light came on: we were doing WHAT to our world!!!! That was it. I had to do something.

The next years were a whirlwind of experiences: I led the campus environmental coalition for three years —initiating recycling, organizing environmental awareness events, and lobbying against proposed coal plants; I became involved in a United Nations youth-based education program centered on climate change awareness; I immersed myself in my environmental biology curriculum; I became involved in biofuel research projects; and I spent my summers pursuing marine studies, first off the New Hampshire coast, then on San Juan Island, WA. I graduated in the summer of 2009 and this past year I served an AmeriCorps position organizing youth programs based on sustainable agriculture and the natural world. Through these experiences my love for nature and finding ways to tread lightly on our planet has continued to blossom.

An interesting shift occurred as my experiences accumulated. I evolved from believing in an environmental movement, to believing in a sustainability movement. A movement that involves justice on all levels: ecological, social, cultural, economical, health—a global human transformation. And that’s where Evergreen comes in: The MES program at Evergreen recognizes these interconnections. I, like the MES program, prefer to approach these issues from the lens of the environment, however it is all towards the goal of creating a sustainable human society that works in harmony with the environment.

The first MES core class investigates the Pacific Northwest region in all definitions of place so students can examine where and who we are in context of the environment. Electives allow students to step outside this broader conceptual lens to explore specific areas of interest. This combination sets the stage to move forward to pragmatic applications based on the theories and philosophy of modern day environmentalists.

My current interests include sustainable agriculture models, environmental education, community organizing, and social justice. Only through the formation of sustainable community components will we ultimately evolve into a sustainable world. The possibilities on how to focus my energy are quite endless. I see the MES program allowing me to push the boundaries while simultaneously giving me the support to find practical applications for my ideas. Ultimately I seek to combine my passions and strengths in a way that will benefit my life as well as the world.