January 10, 2020

MES Thesis Fund Committee

The Evergreen State College

Olympia, WA 98505

To the MES Thesis Fund Committee,

Please accept the following materials as my application for a MES Fund award for 2020. I received credit for Case Studies and Thesis Design in fall of 2019. I expect to graduate in Spring 2021.

The goal of my thesis is to determine factors that motivate the agricultural decisions of cacao farmers in Valledupar, Colombia. I have proposed to collect data via 30-50 surveys and 2-5 in-depth interviews with cacao farmers in agricultural areas near Valledupar, Colombia. I will use this data, along with existing information on tropical farmers, to determine ways that governments, non-profits, and industry organizations can design aid programs and regulations to benefit small farmers and allow for the continuation of, or transition to, sustainable agriculture. An important goal of this research is to ensure that appropriate financial compensation is given to farmers based on the quality of cacao they produce. I will travel to Colombia the first week of May and conduct interviews and surveys through the first week of July.

I understand that the maximum amount of requested funding allowed is $1,000; however, since the estimates of my costs are likely to change, I have included multiple expenses related to the completion of my data collection. I am requesting $1,000 to cover travel expenses and equipment costs for data collection, as listed in the attached budget. Thank you for considering my application.

Sincerely,

Kelsey Foster

Master of Environmental Studies Program, The Evergreen State College

**Budget Justification**

Kelsey Foster

**Travel**

I am requesting reimbursement for roundtrip airfare to Valledupar, Colombia, as well as transportation costs within Colombia which includes bus and taxi fare. This funding will enable me to travel to speak directly with cacao farmers in the region. Given the remote location and low income of many small-scale farmers, direct contact is difficult and highly unlikely through companies or websites. Compensation of bus and taxi fare will allow me to travel directly to cacao farms and gather as many survey participants as possible.

**Materials and Supplies**

I am requesting funding for the cost of printing surveys for data collection. I plan to survey 50 farmers but will take 30 extra copies in case additional opportunities for survey collection arise. Surveys will comprise the majority of my data and the funding of printing costs will allow me to collect survey data.

**Equipment**

I am requesting funding for the cost of a voice recorder. This equipment will be necessary for my interviews, which will be conducted in Spanish through a translator.

I do not request any other equipment or items. I do not have any other pending funding requests that would apply to the items requested here.