**MES Thesis Fund Committee**

**The Evergreen State College**

**Olympia, WA 98505**

To the MES Thesis Fund Committee,

Please accept the attached materials as my application for a 2020 MES Thesis Fund award. I received credit for Case Studies and Thesis Design in Fall 2019. I have already started collecting data for the thesis work described in my thesis prospectus, and I expect to graduate in Spring 2020.

The goal of my thesis is to understand why three counties in Washington State chose to accept or reject landfill alternatives, specifically waste-to-energy (WtE) technologies, between 1991-2019.

I am proposing to analyze the data used by decision-makers to accept or reject landfill alternatives. This information includes but is not limited to cost-benefit analyses, environmental impact assessments, siting options and public comments. I will expand on this data to consider six factors: waste quality and quantity, economics, environmental assets, technological assets, political climate, and social attitude of each municipality. Along with existing data, I will conduct in-depth interviews with regional decision-makers and thought leaders to determine which factors had the most influence on the municipality’s decision. I will conduct one case study for each county and draw cross-case conclusions, which will be the focus of a summary report.

Results from my thesis will illuminate the decision-making process in these Washington State municipalities and can bring new factors into consideration for future waste-related decisions.

I am requesting **$388.83** to cover mileage expenses during data collection, as listed in the attached budget (see page 3). Thank you for considering my application.

Yours,

*Gretchen Helpenstell*

*Masters of Environmental Studies Program*

*The Evergreen State College*