Dear MES Thesis Fund Committee,

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

I am requesting the full amount of the MES Thesis Fund at \$1,000 to off-set the cost of my MES thesis research. My thesis research is to create the first high detail maps of marine mammal distribution and abundance in the southwest Puget Sound. These maps will also show seasonal variability and human disturbance information. This involved surveying for two and a half weeks aboard a small vessel in spring, fall, and winter. Completing three laps of the survey areas during school breaks for each season. Luckily, I was given a very good deal an old, small, live-aboard sailboat cutting the cost of chartering a vessel substantially. What I know about my results thus-far is that they have been groundbreaking in detail and show previously undescribed seasonal movement and behavioral patterns in harbor seals of our local region.

Unfortunately, boats can get very expensive very quickly, especially when using old and used equipment. The costs of surveying aboard a private vessel are for the most part unpredictable, thus my prospectus estimates do not reflect the actual cost of the survey. While surveying in the summer the main engine broke down, twice, causing my vessel to go adrift and for 911 to be called to rescue myself and my crew. Fortunately, I was able to save the vessel on my own both times but a new engine was needed to be purchased. A similar fate fell upon the dinghy motor during windstorms in the winter, also snapping the oars. These costs were unmanageable by myself but necessary for my own survival and the survival of the thesis. I have accrued around \$3,278 in debt from this project alone.

Cost-saving measures were pursued fully to pad the expense of the project. All of the food and some other items were donated by friends and family. Sails were utilized when conditions were right and an electric motor was installed on the dinghy to improve fuel efficiency. Annual state parks moorage passes were purchased in advance to cover the cost of utilizing moorage buoys and docks. Much of the equipment that accompanied me throughout the survey was purchased used or borrowed from donors. These measures alone greatly reduced the cost of the survey as a whole. I do not have any pending expenses or grants to add and the data collection portion of my research is complete.

Thank you for this wonderful opportunity to aid students in their research. Best Wishes,

Kevin Soster

Kevin Lester