

February 29, 2012

The Evergreen State College
MPA Financial Assistance Awards Selection Committee
2700 Evergreen Parkway NW
Olympia, WA 98505

Dear Selection Committee:

Please accept this letter and application in consideration for the Evergreen Alumni Association Graduate Award, Graduate Endowed Fellowship, and the John Walker Scholarship. In response to the criteria outlined for each award, I believe I meet the qualifications in the following manner.

I am a non-traditional student of Mexican-American decent who returned to college after delaying my education for several years to raise my daughter as a single parent. During the years I spent as a full-time student at Evergreen and held a full-time job, I worked tirelessly to reach my long-term goal of being the first in my Hispanic family to obtain a bachelor's degree. The interdisciplinary program structure allowed me to tailor my education thoughtfully each year to include a business and political science focus that most closely matched my longevity as a state employee and public servant. The narrative evaluations unique to Evergreen provided a more in-depth insight to my academic profile and gave testimony to not only the hard work produced in my studies, but also gave rise to my personal growth with each year I had accomplished. My education experience at Evergreen helped me grow personally and professionally within my work family. My bachelor's degree from Evergreen has provided me with a high-level of confidence, greater responsibility, and intellect to continue my work in state government. I am better able to serve my employer to the highest degree possible with new ideas, enhanced writing skills and effective communication. A master's degree in public administration would enhance my work in state government and take my learning to a much higher level.

My recent academic experience at Evergreen this past fall is the main reason that led to my decision of pursuing the Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree program at Evergreen. My education included an internship with our local Dispute Resolution Center (DRC) of Thurston County. This was a great compliment to my studies in Human Resource Management at Evergreen. The experience included 40 hours of professional training in mediation alongside volunteering as an observer in employment and family cases. The internship concluded with an essay exam and an apprenticeship and practicum in mediation. Conflict is fundamentally a part of business and is inevitable due in part to different communication styles, learning styles, lack of understanding of cultural diversity and, from my point of view, lack of effective management in business. By my willingness to understand my own style of communication, my awareness of ethnocentrism, and my developed respect for cultural diversity and differences allows me to get to a place of harmony in both my work life and my social relationships. As a new apprentice working in mediation, I can extrapolate from my own past experiences, not to appear superior to

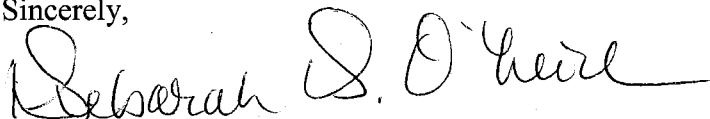
others in conflict, but to gain an understanding and truly listen to the underlying needs of those in conflict. Through my volunteer work and apprenticeship, I can provide a capacity of empathy to others both in the workplace and within my community that brings new possibilities and the hope of change.

I am proud of what I have accomplished thus far, but I'm not finished yet. My 25 years in state government, life experience, and volunteer work have been valuable and have led me to the point in my life where I feel a strong desire to continue to develop myself to my full potential. The completion of my graduate degree has been a long-term goal I have had for several years. I would love to continue to study and research more deeply narrowing my focus in leadership and management in public and non-profit administration. I want to be the voice of the people, particularly in the Hispanic and Latin community. I see myself as a leader that values fairness and equity but also see the long-term vision of transforming lives. I want to be an advocate for the Latin population in the area of human resources, conflict resolution, and in higher education. The MPA program is a good fit for me with my long history in public service with the Washington State Higher Education Coordinating Board and my newly-established volunteer work with our local non-profit, Dispute Resolution Center of Thurston County. Once my degree is completed, I will be the only one of four children in a Mexican-American family to accomplish an advanced degree.

Evergreen is as much a part of me as I am of Evergreen. The college has been my "second home" over the past four years. The Evening and Weekend Studies Program has made my dreams of completing my undergraduate degree a reality. I had considered seriously the University of Washington-Tacoma campus and a private on-line out-of-state university for my graduate studies. I am convinced that The Evergreen State College is the best place in the south sound to pursue a master's degree in public administration. I believe I can accomplish a great deal more in my community before my work years are over. With the growing cost of higher education becoming less of reality for many, I feel fortunate to have opportunities of competing for financial assistance awards. With assistance from the college, I hope to continue my goals of developing myself professionally and intellectually, setting an example for my daughter, and using my education to contribute to my community and the workplace. I believe my education will open doors for me that in the past have been closed.

Please consider my application and resume in support of my continued commitment and dedication to my studies at The Evergreen State College. I am a non-traditional student over 30 bringing life experience and work experience to the classroom. I promise to work hard and remain worthy of this opportunity to attend Evergreen.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Deborah S. O'Neill". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Deborah" being the most prominent.

Deborah (Diaz) O'Neill