

Sara Ann Bilezikian Sustainability Fellowship Application

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I am applying for the Sara Ann Bilezikian Sustainability Fellowship because I have an interest in understanding the field of sustainability in public and nonprofit administration. Through the Master of Public Administration program I intend to study the interconnections between sustainability and disaster resilience.

My educational experience includes a bachelor's degree in Environmental and Engineering Geology with a minor in Disaster Risk Reduction from Western Washington University. The coursework for my minor incorporated discussions on ways to build sustainable and resilient communities. Disasters, though devastating for communities, provide opportunities to integrate sustainable, disaster-resilient practices in the recovery process. Disasters also expose public policy gaps and contradictions that directly lead to repetitive losses of lives and property time and time again. We cannot build resiliently without first understanding the role of sustainability in planning.

My professional experience involves working in the public sector on assessing hazard risk in communities to influence public policies. I previously worked with the Department of Natural Resources on a flood hazard reduction mapping project and with the Department of Oregon Geology on an earthquake risk reduction project. I currently work for the Washington State Emergency Management Division, where I am writing a comprehensive statewide disaster recovery framework.

This scholarship will provide me with an opportunity to gain the critical skills I need to be successful in pursuing sustainability issues. It will support my interest in learning how to motivate public administrators to think about long-term, sustainable practices in order to reduce hazard risk in communities.