ACADEMIC STATEMENT
The Evergreen State College - Olympia, Washington 98505

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Having always thrived in interdisciplinary learning communities, The Evergreen State College seemed like the natural choice when I returned to the college pathway in 2016. I had taken a break from school to find myself and my passions, and to find out what really inspires me. I considered the 'Big Questions' obsessively. On a quest for truth, I explored art, nature, community, and solitude. Along the way, I was constantly reminded of my dream to become a teacher, but did not understand in what way I could satisfy both my curiosity and my desire to shed light on truth for others. Evergreen has brought me clarity in this matter. My AA was spent building a solid liberal arts foundation with a focus on communication, but through Evergreen I have discovered my passion for science and for sharing the joy of understanding scientific concepts with others.

While in the Math in Geology program, I realized that, despite my aptitude and capacity to learn and adapt quickly, I had been afraid to pursue science. I developed a working growth mindset in my first quarter, and grew significantly on a personal and academic level. I worked on collaborative research about radiometric dating and mercury cycling, and actively participated in a very strong learning community. Through the remainder of the program in the winter quarter, I pushed myself further. I participated in extra research so as to learn how to use the mercury analyzer. I solidified my understanding of pre-calculus concepts, and developed a strong background in physical geology and soil processes. This program opened me up in many ways, and allowed me to reach a level of comfort within the sciences which I had never known before.

My next program, Astronomy and Cosmologies, gave me a whole new perspective on science and storytelling. I developed deep insights into the greater story from which not only all scientific exploration, but the human experience, emerges. Exchanging ideas and sharing knowledge through seminars, peer review sessions, and a group project allowed me to strengthen my communication and facilitation abilities.

During this quarter, I also spent a significant amount of time preparing for a summer undergraduate research fellowship (SURF), including receiving Evergreen certification to operate the inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometer (ICP-MS) in order to get accepted for this competitive opportunity studying phosphorus cycling in Mt. St. Helens forest soils. Through this research, I began learning chemistry, lab techniques, instrumentation, trouble-shooting, and an incredible amount of patience for myself. I presented to the Evergreen Foundation, which makes funding for the SURF possible, and participated in a poster session, for which my research partner and I presented our findings and made recommendations for future work. Following this project, I realized that I needed to develop my background in science further.

During Integrated Natural Sciences, I was able to build a solid foundation and improve my abilities to support my learning community while filling the position of teacher's assistant for the geology and soil science components of the class. The program combined historical geology, soil science, general chemistry, and general biology, which allowed for each discipline to be learned within the context of the others. My ability to interact with lectures, workshops, and labs from different angles bore a strong understanding of the fundamentals of natural sciences, from which I pulled from greatly as I continued on into my final year at Evergreen.

Environmental Analysis was a program which allowed me to tie all of the pieces of my previous studies together. I used my previous interest in phosphorus to study the distribution of this limiting nutrient in meromictic lakes, learning analytical techniques and more instrumentation. I also developed the skills necessary to design and execute projects from fieldwork to final paper by researching the role of fish as transporters of mercury from marine to stream ecosystems, my capstone project. Environmental Analysis allowed me a great deal of freedom, but this came with an incredible amount of responsibility to create and meet deadlines, troubleshoot problems, and network with local organizations and citizens.

Throughout my Evergreen experience, I gained invaluable insights into how to work well independently and as a part of a community, manage my time as a full-time student while working, and appreciate my strengths in forging connections between concepts. While many of the 'Big Questions' still remain unanswered, I have built myself a toolkit for exploring concepts in global environmental change and sharing these techniques with others.