

When I completed my undergraduate degree at Evergreen, I didn't have a purpose, so this essay would have been more difficult. Nearly thirty years later, I believe I have now found my calling in public service, and seek to attend Evergreen's MPA program to serve the public better in my current role as Jefferson County Commissioner. I have built much of my current work on the framework that was my Evergreen undergraduate experience, and as I seek to develop my skills, it feels natural for me to use that same unique academic framework.

I did struggle to write a similar essay while applying to Evergreen's MiT program right after my undergraduate degree in 1993. Rejected for that program with the suggestion that I get more multicultural experiences, my wife and I moved to Busan, South Korea, to teach English as a Foreign Language. We developed a love for travel that we pursue still, and I also realized that teaching was not my purpose.

Returning to Seattle, I ended up in information technology during the late 90's and spent a decade developing communication and project management skills and an increasing frustration with working within the corporate landscape. With the birth of our daughter, I left the corporate world and eked out a living as an independent filmmaker - not necessarily making great art as I intended, but further honing my project management and collaborative skills and marrying that with a creativity I still strive to bring to my work.

My wife and I wanted to raise our daughter as close to sustainability as we could, so we moved out to Quilcene on the Olympic Peninsula where we built a house and a farm, and reopened the last gas station in Quilcene with a focus on local groceries and community. I spent a decade running four retail businesses on the rural Olympic Peninsula: the Quilcene Village Store, The Discovery Bay Village Store, Sea Change Cannabis, and the Disco Bay Detour. When you are running your own business you quickly develop the ability to take responsibility, and you really get to know your community.

Community led me to working with the Quilcene Fair for seven years, and winning an elected seat on the Quilcene School Board. While on the school board, it really started to click. I was starting to find my purpose. The connections between the policy I helped craft and the education my child received was tangible. So when I was approached by the retiring incumbent County Commissioner to consider running for her seat in early 2018, I jumped at the chance.

Running for office is fairly nerve wracking, but I built a good team and spent a lot of time knocking on doors. I credit the community I had already been building, and the goodwill received for developing the economy in a rural county. Taking my oath in late 2018, I felt my purpose had been fully realized. Four years later, I still feel like I'm in the right place, but I'm starting to understand what I don't know.

The intellectual curiosity, and focus on collaboration and communication I learned as an undergrad were a boon through many professional and personal challenges. When I thought about applying to an MPA program, Evergreen was the only program I was interested in because of its educational philosophy and the mission which closely aligns with how I approach public service.

As the chair of the Board of County Commissioners when COVID-19 hit our shores, I did my part to lead Jefferson County with an even keel and a positive attitude. We worked together and trusted our Public Health Experts. We amplified the science and focused on communication. Jefferson County has the highest boosted rate in Washington. Our public sector staff and electeds have avoided the discord that impacted so many other counties. I'm proud of how I led Jefferson County during COVID-19: collaboratively, creatively and always striving for equity.

An example of one issue during that time where I leaned on the framework I learned at Evergreen is an unsanctioned homeless encampment that grew at our County Fairgrounds, inside the city of Port Townsend. I convened a group of stakeholders including county, city, behavioral health agencies, housing agencies, Fair Board, neighbors, and residents of the camp itself.

Working together, we developed a plan to create a new type of shelter that allowed for the pets and outdoor spaces that were so critical to the residents of the camp. The fruits of that labor, Caswell-Brown Village, helped restore the fairgrounds, eliminate neighborhood nuisances, improved health and safety outcomes and significantly lowered the high utilization of emergency services, and developed a new type of housing facility that will eventually house an emergency shelter, transitional housing and permanent supportive housing on one campus.

I'm proud of this and other housing programs we've been working on in Jefferson County. We are also breaking ground on a new sewer in Port Hadlock which has been decades in the making and has received \$34 million in funding. We're looking to develop new models for forestry with a triple bottom line model locally and with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

In listing just a few of the exciting programs we have before us, I bring myself back to Evergreen. I've just started my second term and need to deepen my analytical ability to parse budgets and my ability to make and execute strategic plans. I want to study how best to convene community conversations to make sure the new urban growth area unlocked by our sewer creates an equitable development pattern. Our ability to create sustainable workforce housing is critical to our social fabric. I'm applying to Evergreen to deepen my understanding of these systems and issues. I want to develop my skills with that same academic framework that I've used successfully to this point. Your program will help me fight for equity everywhere, including public health, housing and the environment.