Michael Joseph

MPA Statement of Purpose

When I started at The Evergreen State College in 2013 as an undergraduate, I had an interest in sustainability and functionality. Over the course of my studies, that interest has flourished into a passion and fascination for the "how" of making systems work in political and social settings. Throughout various projects and assignments, I realized that policy played a major role in every stage when instituting new programs or initiatives. From attempting to construct an outdoor shelter at the Organic Farm, to creating a solar panel installation on the Tacoma Evergreen campus, policy shaped and formed the potential for change. A goal of my studies is to learn how to help set ourselves up for success (in terms of having the ability for joy, community, and actualizing common goals together). An understanding of policy will help in navigating those areas with connecting fields. While finding ways to prevent discrimination and negative targeting with harmful policies. Evergreen's five foci and the MPA's Mission both align well with these personal and professional goals of mine. Being able to pursue an MPA at an institution that holds these values high while providing a collaborative community appeals greatly to me. This has become especially true as I've entered a new role in the campus' Center for Climate Action and Sustainability as assistant director.

In 2013 I enrolled in the Green Materials: Arts, Science, and Construction program. Over the course of the Winter quarter, we group-designed various projects that would give back to the community. My group had decided to construct a 250-foot square outdoor picnic shelter that would house the Organic Farm's cob oven. We spent time researching the permit process, gaining approval from the Campus Land Use Committee (now Space Land Use Group), and

navigating the various hoops. In the end due to zoning, timing, and the farm being out of code, we weren't able to construct our project in Spring. Rather we added our energy and research with other groups from the program, to construct a drying shed for the Longhouse, and equipment for the CRC workout areas. The learning from our project allowed us to help go through the channels and eventually construct each product.

In another program "Worlds of Waste" I continued studying policy and regulation around the waste and water infrastructure. From positive initiatives by various foundations and nonprofits, to negatively impacting programs overseas, I was able to get a big picture of the potential yield and damage policy could do. In another program "GIALO: Greece & Italy a Literary Odyssey" we studied ancient Greece and early Rome. Along with philosophers and politics of the city-states. Again I saw how the public could benefit or be damaged by even the most well-intentioned individuals. That year I began working with campus housing's Residential and Dining Services (RAD), as a Resident Assistant. I began cross-applying my observations on policy and the people. Seeing the importance of how policy was constructed and folks' interpretation of it. A large role I took was interpreting, explaining, and even helping create housing policy to achieve conflict resolution. Understanding the root intent of the policies helped bring residents to an agreement quite often. Helping both parties achieve their liberties while respecting each other's boundaries and personal rights.

In my last two years at Evergreen, I took several programs including "CIRL: Civic Intelligence Research Lab" and "Energy Systems & Climate Change". Both sets explored the ideas of humans in communities and how we function and survive. I wrote papers on non-profit

organizations, new initiatives in local and international cities, and drafted theoretical programs that would address issues our community identified. As a sort of capstone project, a group of my peers and I finished writing grant proposals, sitting in negotiations with campus Facilities, and getting our designs permitted to install a $135,000 solar array system on the Evergreen Tacoma campus. It was projected to yield 15% of the energy costs annually, and according to readings by the end of our year, managed to reach 12% of the building's energy costs. This project strengthened my passion for integrating policy with my work. Later I met several MPA and MES students from Evergreen at the annual Washington Oregon Higher Education Sustainability Conference. Connecting with them on their work and ideas solidified my interest in pursuing my Masters at Evergreen.