

**Evergreen's Master of Public Administration Program: Statement of Purpose**

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Education is a priority in my life. I have always enjoyed and thrived being in environments that prioritize learning and personal growth. I am a first-generation Cambodian-American and grew up in a bilingual household speaking English and Khmer. I found myself naturally becoming my parents' translators and interpreters and learning to navigate the world together as a family. My parents are survivors of the Khmer Rouge Regime and they have passed down their resilience and work ethic to their children. If you ask my parents what it means to be resilient, they will not know how to answer. To them, their childhood was all about survival. It was either to survive or be killed by communist soldiers, starvation or exhaustion from forced physical labor. As their child, I have taken it upon myself to be their embodiment of resiliency. If there is any purpose in my life, it is to push myself to become the best version of myself in honor of my parents' resilience and sacrifices. Like my parents and many other Cambodian refugees, it is a miracle that they all survived and were able to flee their war-torn country in hopes of a new life.

I learn for all the young children and people who were robbed of a life due to communists. I learn for the young refugee families who migrated to the U.S. who had to drop-out of school in order to work and earn money to support themselves and their family. I learn so I can help underrepresented populations and communities who do not have an advocate who will fight for their public health and safety. I learn so I can pass on this knowledge to others and the next generation.

I chose to pursue a career in public service because I want to serve others with humility and compassion, the way my parents and others have helped me. Though there are other fields of work where I can embody those same values, I chose public service as a way to give back to the

communities who have helped me become the person I am today. Throughout my higher education, I have been fortunate with a multitude of mentors, advisors and role-models who have guided and supported me along the way. I have always been a student that received good grades, honor roll mentions and received academic achievements. During my studies at Green River College and Highline College, I found myself in a repetitive pattern of memorizing information long enough until it was time to test. This was an ongoing cycle of memorizing information rather than retaining it. This pattern and way of learning worked well for me and I excelled in it, but I knew something was missing.

It was not until I began my studies at Evergreen Tacoma in 2017 that I was awakened by a new pedagogy that I have not experienced before in my academic life. The interdisciplinary curriculum and group-based community learning challenged my traditional mindset of how school is taught and how students learn in the classroom. Evergreen Tacoma was a nurturing and challenging learning environment that allowed me to grow my critical thinking and to view the world from multiple lenses. Evergreen showed me how different aspects of the world are all interconnected. From learning about the life of Mozart and the circadian rhythm in one of my early classes in Evergreen's Tacoma Program, I was able to find interconnections between art and biology in ways that I never thought of. My undergraduate studies at Evergreen were the best years of my higher education as I graduated from Evergreen with tools and knowledge that I will carry for the rest of my life. Evergreen's Tacoma Program prepared me for graduate school and I am looking forward to the MPA program and bringing forth the tools and knowledge I have gained from my undergraduate studies and building upon that in the MPA program alongside my peers.

I am currently employed at the Washington State Criminal Justice Commission as a Human Resources Consultant. This small government agency is responsible for training and certifying recruits to become peace officers. The agency has grown in staff exponentially in the last few years. With growth comes changes and new policies and procedures that need to be put in place, such as creating new job classifications to meet the needs of the agency. I left a previous state agency where I found myself burnt out with not many opportunities to grow and promote. In my current role, I have a greater influence and the ability to contribute more during this growth period for the agency. Pursuing graduate studies in public administration will provide me with the tools and knowledge I will need to better serve the commission and grow with the agency. In the near future, after graduating from the MPA program, I would like to see myself in a role that involves working directly with the legislature on policies for the growth and development of the police academy. Evergreen's Tacoma Program emphasized that in order to better influence change in communities, it is critical to start by understanding what policies are in place and how those policies got into place and who supports them. My goal is that by pursuing Evergreen's MPA program, I will have the knowledge, tools and experiences necessary to contribute towards the positive growth and development of future law enforcement and the public health and safety of Washingtonians.