

Sam Miller's Statement of Purpose

Throughout my life, I have always found politics interesting and entertaining. Growing up in a large family, we tended to share views, debate current issues, and watch Meet the Press together every Sunday morning. My parents brought me to political events before I could even walk. Having politics and policy as a regular item on the menu at our dinner table and discovering - as I got older - that not all my friends had the same family experience or the same views and interest in politics that I did inspired me to dig deeper. That childhood experience inspired me to intern for Congressmen Derek Kilmer when I was sixteen and pursue a Political Science minor at Washington State University. Those experiences helped me get a job working for Sound Government Solutions, a lobbying firm based in Olympia with eleven clients, including two tribes. However, the political landscape in Washington State is so much more than theoretical policy debates and entertainment value; it's about creating an environment where everybody can live a better life. That is why I am honored to apply for the Master of Public Administration program; I have always found the political process intriguing and enjoyable, and I know that this program will help me gain an in-depth understanding of how public policy works in this state.

My college experience was interrupted after one year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many students went through the same situation with online classes, lacking participation and engagement between the professors and the students, which for me, led to an overall unsatisfactory undergraduate experience. These last few years were hard for everybody, and sadly it took away from my ability to experience college the way it was meant to be. I stayed home and worked through college online during the pandemic because some of my family members were high-risk. If I could go back and change anything, I wouldn't. Getting to spend

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time with family during the pandemic was valuable. However, I feel something was missing from my experience. This is one of the reasons why going back to school to pursue a master's degree appeals to me. Learning at a school where students can get to know each other, and their professors and not be a number on a Zoom screen excites me. Evergreen offers that opportunity. Washington State University is a special place; I wanted to attend a big school like that as an undergraduate. If I could tell myself two years ago that I would already be thinking about additional school, I wouldn't believe myself, but the intimacy and specialization of Evergreen are enticing.

Currently, I am working for Sound Government Solutions, a lobbying firm based in Olympia. Carrie Tellefson is the primary lobbyist, and she has built a very successful firm that organizations and people on all sides of the political spectrum respect. She has allowed me an amazing opportunity to pursue a graduate degree while continuing to work alongside her, which is why the flexibility of Evergreen's program seems like a perfect fit. I have worked two legislative sessions, one as a full-time employee and the other as a college intern. One was remote, and this last year was in person. The Washington State legislative session is demanding, but it has taught me how to work hard and deal with demanding situations. Due to the abundance of clients that the firm has, ranging from tribes to healthcare, auto manufacturer, and liquor-distributing companies, completing my first in-person session has given me the confidence to apply for this program. I am nowhere near a finished product, so I am pursuing this degree to further my public policy education. If I am able to attend Evergreen, I know that I will become a much more valuable member of the team, which is exciting. Being 23 years old and working with clients with more experience in this area is intimidating but also motivating. It

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motivates me because I am doing something I genuinely enjoy while knowing there is room for individual growth.

I have always been confident enough to share my opinion. That is one of my best leadership traits, but it hasn't fully transitioned into my professional work life yet. Nothing happens overnight, and I am fortunate to have my job. Being able to pursue an MPA from your program will help me achieve my career and life goals. I want to make a difference in my profession and can do it by lobbying about things I am passionate about. This past legislative session, we worked on behalf of our federally recognized tribal clients with agricultural interests in Washington State to secure funding in the Capital Budget for the creation of riparian buffer zones to enhance salmon restoration. That was an amazing effort to have been a part of, and while I played a minimal role, seeing the process up close has inspired me. Positive change can happen in Olympia, especially when people work together, and while wins don't always happen, it is important to work toward outcomes that help people. That is why I want to work in an around the government.

I don't know what the future holds for me, but I am motivated to become a leader in the public policy realm. I am a good candidate for Evergreen's MPA public policy program admission because I will work hard, treat people how I want to be treated, and have professional goals that Evergreen can help me achieve.