

Gail A. Murray

Statement of Purpose

The Evergreen State College

Degree Objective: Master of Public Administration (MPA)

You might say I started caring about the public interest when I was 8 years old, answering the phone at the local Youth Resources Bureau, where my single mom dragged me to work with her. Noone lost their job and I learned how to answer phone calls and transfer calls to the appropriate parties. My reward was a submarine sandwich by the local lakeside; the same sandwich I seek out when returning to visit Western Massachusetts. I wish to unify the facets of my life. I am compelled to integrate my professional and life experience, my academic learning and future graduate work, in public policy and public administration.

In 2019, I decided to return to college while working as a national accounts manager. I was determined to fulfill my goal of earning my BA so that I could further my education and apply my skills outside of the corporate realm. After leaving my *Six-to-Five* I was better able to expand my writer's mind by dedicating myself fully to the coursework at Central Washington University's (CWU) online degree program in English: Professional and Creative Writing. At this juncture, I once again found a voice that could emanate from my authentic self. The challenge was how do I integrate my socially conscious, artistic and poetic side with my passion for detailed and productive work while collaborating with others?

Though I attended university online, my cohort and academic family became a part of my *pandemic survival plan*. I felt deeply connected with other students, faculty, writers and artists by paying deep attention to the message in their writing as they did for me. The trust and

relationship I built with my cohort aided my work on the editorial team for Manastash, Vol.32. I worked extensively with other editors to curate the Spring 2022 edition which focused on wellness and coping. I was also a contributor to Vol. 32 as my poetry and photographs were selected by committee and published. There is a deep sense of purpose in combining written and visual artwork in collaboration with other learners in a public college setting. I found myself thrilled with the idea of enriching the minds of fellow and future students. Consistent with this, I infused my approach to editing and writing with respect, understanding, and acknowledgement of the perspectives of multicultural and diverse contributors. I was engulfed in the momentous energies of collaboration on a wider scale. The energy was momentous in the way that the editorial committees and artists brought different points of view together in unison. We harnessed and promoted a publication that addressed the needs of the common good. This was a common good that respected difference, individual expression and how we communicate to others as equals.

I am deeply analytical, and in the formalized peer review process in all of my writing classes, I honed not only my writing skills but my *listening* skills. My cohort was diverse, creative and powerful. In the peer review process; I read works that were written by students living throughout the U.S. My student cohort at CWU consisted of writers from diverse ancestries and languages. The meaning of *the personal is political*, took on greater meaning when I read or listened to the contributions of my peers. While I immersed myself in close reading, research and voluminous writing and editing, I began to meld my business speech and acumen into my artistic process and vice versa.

My awareness and consequent opinion of U.S. society is that historically, artists and writers are forcefully categorized. I validated a hybrid and fluid approach to communication. I dove deeper

into reading about the MPA cohort and the three concentrations, and it has become clear that Evergreen's MPA program offers unique opportunities. I explored the informative MPA syllabi housed online, specifically, Larry Geri's draft syllabus for the course, *Foundations of Public Policy* and Dr. Doreen Swetkis' and Benjamin Feldbush's syllabus for the course, *The Context of Public Administration*. I gained a greater sense that the intersection of learning and past experience fits well with my plans for graduate work. Evergreen's MPA programs in Olympia also integrate prior learning and experience in a way that will allow me to synthesize my understanding and execution of public policy. I seek to engage in a program that bridges the gaps between my past and future work; my life and academic experiences. More than this, I look for ways to bridge gaps and divisions between people, policy and need. I aspire to better prepare myself to be an agent of change in practical ways that enrich and enable all people to engage in their higher purpose on a more even playing field.

Currently I am fusing my entrepreneurial spirit with my body of prior work with intention toward public service. I attend Small Business Administration/SCORE webinars as a way to interact with my business community which includes nonprofit, NGO and government agencies. These webinars and other SBA offerings inspired me to open my own Etsy shop which houses digital art. I am currently working with a religious group to establish their online presence. This necessitates research on land record databases as well as multiple news archives. The more I research, the more I learn about state and federal requirements for nonprofits. I observe how research, public policy and knowledge can fuel advocacy and more just outcomes.

In closing, I believe that Evergreen is the place to expand and fine-tune the type of storytelling that is integral to public service and advocacy. In this spirit, I respectfully request admission to The Evergreen State College's MPA program in Public & Nonprofit Administration and Public Policy. I look forward to leveraging my practical business and corporate experience in union with public and nonprofit policy and rigorous academic work to affect change and to advocate for the elderly, the veterans and diverse populations in need.