

Dear Admissions Review Panel,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic interest in joining the 2024 Masters of Public Administration cohort at Evergreen State College. I have a personal and cultural interest in growing and maintaining the quality of public service in the state of Washington and in my cultural community: as a Cowlitz tribal citizen who has called this state home since birth, I consider it my responsibility to my people and ancestors to advocate for our voice to be heard in discussions of public policy and law. My personal and professional backgrounds have uniquely prepared me to study Public Administration with an emphasis on Tribal Governance. I want to take every learning opportunity to better equip myself to serve my community in a compassionate and efficient manner.

As an Admissions Counselor for American Indian/Alaska Native students applying to the University of Washington (UW), I have honed my ability to facilitate meaningful connections within Native communities across the entire state of Washington. I successfully led comprehensive outreach initiatives, established strong partnerships with Title VI and Tribal Education Coordinators, and advocated for equitable admissions practices on the division, institution, and executive level. Learning what happens in the background at a government institution has made me realize that, while the work I do is important and can make a difference: fundamental restructuring is needed in order to create lasting change. I had the privilege of conducting tuition exemption research for the University of Oregon in their admissions department, calling and researching multiple institutions with tuition exemption for Native American students and presenting my findings to the Assistant Vice President and Advisor to the President on Sovereignty and Government-to-Government Relations and the Director of

Admissions. This research resulted in the implementation of the University of Oregon's Home Flight Scholars Program, which honors promises made in treaties with the 9 tribes of Oregon to provide education and fiscal support to the original and current caretakers of the land colonially referred to as Oregon. This experience helped me draw the connection between the importance of front-facing, ground level work (ie, my recruitment efforts) and far-reaching public service change. I came to this challenge without much knowledge of the process, and would like to be able to bring my life experience to Evergreen to engage in study of how I can continue to make large-scale impact that will further benefit all Native people, and especially benefit my own tribal nation.

Evergreen is my ideal environment to pursue further education directly related to my passion for Indigenous access to resources and support. I graduated from the University of Washington in 2021, which would not have been possible without the strong Indigenous presence that the campus had. Between being an active officer in the First Nations legacy group and working at the UW Intellectual House, I was able to immerse myself in my culture while also obtaining a B.A. at a prestigious institution. Evergreen's House of Welcome and Indigenous community are a significant motivating factor for my choice to study there, and the campus sits on lands which are culturally significant to me as a Coast Salish woman. I had struggles during undergrad that I believe would have led me to drop out of college if I hadn't been close to my family, my tribe, and my ancestral lands. I hope to have this same support network as I continue my educational journey.

I would also like to address a few gaps in my resume: I took time off from working between May 2022 and February 2023. While I deeply enjoyed the work that I was able to do in the admissions

department at the University of Oregon, I experienced inappropriate conduct from a superior in the office and had to resign my position to protect my mental health. I spent my time away with my family, helping with our family fireworks stand on the Nisqually reservation and also taking time to read, go on camping trips, and rebuild my confidence in myself as a capable young woman. I had the opportunity to work for my alma mater and return to my home state in February of 2023 and agreed to take on a one-year project appointment as a Native American focused admissions counselor. This position was meant to be continued for a second year, but there were HR complications which made it very unclear whether the second year would be available or have funding. I advocated for myself for months without a solid answer as to whether I would be employed after February of 2024, but instead of having an answer I was told I would have a 1-month extension on my temporary appointment. I made a choice to decline the temporary extension and instead re-evaluate my professional goals, which lead to exploring graduate school opportunities. While I am once again in a period of unemployment, I have learned a lot about who I am and what I want to achieve in life while also taking the opportunity to travel and be closer to my partner. My tribe and family are the reason that I have been successful thus far, and I want to continue to work for them and make them proud.

I've reflected on when I feel I am doing my best and most impactful work throughout my professional career, and that is when I am able to interpret and implement public policy to directly impact student and citizen well-being on a micro and macro scale. I have my most experience with this through University Memorandums of Understanding with tribes which impact student rights and access to education, and I want to expand my knowledge with a graduate degree.

Public administration, policy, and tribal governance in the pursuit of advancing Indigenous sovereignty is my passion. I have dedicated my personal and professional life to the betterment of my land and my community. I am thrilled at the opportunity to continue that work by studying at Evergreen State College.

Sincerely,

Autumn Forespring