

Personal Statement – Master of Public Administration, The Evergreen State College

Growing up, politics and government didn't really interest me in my younger days. Perhaps it was the perceived lethargic pace at which policy moved or the institutional knowledge that is needed to understand the details of what was being talked about – I remember stumbling across C-SPAN while channel surfing at around 11 years old and being completely confused and disinterested in what was being discussed. Now as of 2024, I believe the role of government, politics, and policies which govern everyone living in the American society cannot be understated or ignored. That being said, it's not all intrigue and fascinating material in government, but I think time and life experiences have given me a new appreciation and perspective on how to view public administration – with the framing backdrop of lasting government decisions affecting lives, I still am able to find some interesting aspects within the mundane while relishing the more stimulating parts of legislature and administrative policies.

My thinking on political process changed when I was about 19 years old and was going to university at the University of Washington in Seattle. I still wasn't particularly active politically or thinking about politics in general, but at the time, my older brother told me, "You lose your right to complain about the system if you don't vote." I registered to vote the next day. After that, I only started to pay attention to politics in general when it came to the presidential election – the first time I voted was for Barack Obama during his reelection run in 2011 leading up to 2012. Despite my first time leaning into the political process at the time, I still didn't pay much attention to local government.

Fast forward to 2017, I left for Japan through the JET Programme and started working as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) for a local Japanese Board of Education in Yokkaichi, Mie. I started to get a taste of local government work and its impact on the community through my work as an ALT. Professional development for teachers, school lunches for students, English education promotion tied with marketing for tourism for English speaking visitors all fell under the Board of Education. Of course, there was a more to work towards as a Japanese speaking staff member but just the small portion that I witness and was a part of made me realize how local government heavily impacts the community it serves.

I returned to the US from Japan in 2022 and started to focus more on what was in my local voter's pamphlets and ballots. Going through and looking back the past 7 years of both international and domestic experiences has brought me some clarity on how important local government is - Schools, services, roads, law, prices, housing, and everything else in between are affected by local government. It's imperative to know what your local government is doing and why they're doing it – alternatively, if one's capacity is low, it's important to know people who know local government and can help you understand it.

The Evergreen State College is unique in my book. The absence of grades, interdisciplinary curriculum, a heavy focus on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) amongst some to name, sets it apart from more typical higher ed institutions around the US. What I like about Evergreen is its accessibility and willingness to help its students. There's a high acceptance rate and a large portion of Evergreen's student population come from below poverty line – an effort that is intentional on Evergreen's part. The cost of tuition is definitely on the affordable side with plenty of resources to find financial aid and scholarship support. I think it's a strength, and you can find diverse range of backgrounds and lived experiences within the student population.

I believe there various learning opportunities at the MPA Program. I've listed a few I can identify below which I am personally excited for:

- learn and be knowledgeable about who are making the decisions and how things are done.
- Be more action-based in my approach to any kind of work, whether it's government, non-profit, and beyond
- Gain experiences and perspectives from a broad range of people: my potential future cohort and MPA instructors, my community, and people outside my community.
- Take an active role in the local and state economy or political process
- Learn skills which I can take and have value in any other career such as project management, being able to measure goals and milestones, and speaking with and to others through presentation or person-to-person

I would have to say, I am most excited to learn from others, from both instructors and classmates, across all backgrounds and experiences. I recently took the MPA elective, International Administration, for Winter 2024 quarter. While it was an intensive course with several 8-hour days, I found it to be truly educational and rewarding. We truly had a diverse classroom with different ideas, knowledge bases, and opinions.

I wouldn't be fully transparent to not mention my financial and career intentions for working towards an MPA. Likely higher pay and positions are certainly factors I considered when deciding to apply for the program. Also, I am working with several Evergreen MPA alumni who have steered me to consider the MPA more seriously – observing their thorough work and

creative approaches to problems and solutions have only encouraged me more towards the MPA Program.

The journey to truly understand government, local or national, can be unending. Advancements in technology, changes in culture and climate due to increased diversity and population, the economy, and even pandemics to name a few can vastly change how a local government works and interacts with the people it serves. Nevertheless, it's crucial to understand the foundation of public administration and the different systems and dynamics between the government and the people and I believe I can get that from the Evergreen MPA program and more.