

Dear Admissions Committee,

My name is Jesse Pestana, and I am writing today to express my heartfelt desire to enter the Evergreen Master's in Public Administration Program for Fall 2024. I am deeply committed to the principles of equity, access and social justice, and I hope to use my degree to improve the lives of my fellow Washingtonians through a career of service.

While the prompt for this statement asks us to explore the professional, community and academic experiences that have drawn me to service, the truth is that my motivation is more personal. My journey towards this decision has been deeply influenced by the tragic loss of my two sisters, both of whom fell victim to drug overdoses in the past two years.

For those who have not witnessed it, it's difficult to convey the helplessness of watching a loved one succumb to addiction. There is an inevitability and an inexorability to the experience of watching your little sister self-destruct in slow motion and knowing that there is nothing to be done to stop it. I cannot begin to describe the misery of watching it twice.

Their deaths shattered my world, to say nothing of the families they left behind, and their passing continues to serve as a daily reminder of the failures of our state systems in addressing the pressing issues of addiction and access to critical services.

Through all of this, I try to remember that my sisters' stories were not unique. This is a common story, and it's becoming more common every day. The most powerful and lasting lesson of this experience was that access to drug treatment and mental health services amounts to life-saving care in many cases. This has instilled in me a profound sense of urgency in advocating for systemic change and striving to improve outcomes for others in similar situations.

Through these experiences, I have witnessed firsthand the inadequacies and shortcomings of existing policies in meeting the needs of the most vulnerable members of our society, and have arrived at the conclusion that most of these services are doomed to fail for one key reason: their success depends upon the ability of individuals in crisis to effectively self-advocate, to achieve and maintain a stability that for too many is an impossibly high bar. For individuals in such crises, I am acutely aware of the systemic obstacles to essential services that perpetuate cycles of marginalization and disenfranchisement.

An MPA will equip me with the skills and knowledge to challenge the status quo, push for evidence-based reforms, and break such cycles. I am drawn to the field of public administration because of its potential to address systemic inequities and empower marginalized communities. My focus lies with dismantling barriers to access, particularly in the realms of substance abuse treatment and mental health services.

My commitment to public service is anchored in my deep-rooted belief in the inherent dignity and worth of each and every human being, and the conviction that meaningful change can only be achieved through bold, transformative action. I am drawn to a degree from Evergreen because my experiences as an undergraduate left me with the certainty that the organizing principles underlying the curriculum will align with my values of building an equitable, diverse and fundamentally more just future.

I hope you will consider my application favorably. In reviewing my application materials and recommendations, you will find that I am well equipped to succeed in your program and will agree with me what I express my belief that I my participation will benefit the rest of the cohort as well.

Warm regards,

Jesse Pestana