Pursuing a Master’s degree at the Bren School for Environmental Science and Management is a chief goal in my life which I’m ready to be fully committed to. After researching the program and requirements to graduate, I know I will not only gain new knowledge and experience in my field, but I will be attending one of the best environmental science programs in the country. I feel the MESM program has the most to offer in terms of academic excellence and innovation and is by far my first choice for graduate school. The group thesis attracted me most to the program because it is unique to other environmental studies and environmental science programs across the nation. I will be able to apply my project directly to real-life situations, stay motivated, and gain knowledge that I may not gain from an individual project. The overall program appears to be one of the most challenging and rigorous from other institutions I have considered. I also like how faculty and advisors are involved with their students on a constant basis. Although other schools may not require as much for an equivalent degree, I want to attend the Bren School because I know I will be learning the latest and most crucial issues concerning the state of our environment.

I chose a career in environmental science because I have always had a strong connection to nature and a deep desire to maintain our resources in a way that will guarantee sustainable use of ecosystems while ensuring economic security. Although I am ecstatic about the somewhat recent “green” wave by media and the public, my concern and desire to continue a paradigm of sustainability will not fade and is an enormous facet of my character. Environmental science is one of the most important fields that should be focused on for the prosperity of current and future generations. Furthermore, I know I have more at stake in completing my Master of Science degree because I do not have the means to make another attempt given my financial situation.
This was part of my motivation in completing my Bachelor of Science degree and truly helped me to persevere through times when I wanted to give up. My Bachelor of Science degree in environmental science with an emphasis in environmental communication gave me the basic tools and prior knowledge needed to succeed in a rigorous graduate program. Because I focused on environmental communication, I feel I should turn more of my attention to applied science, research, and politics in order to become well rounded in all subjects pertaining to the environment. Classes such as Ecology of Managed Ecosystems, Environmental Biogeochemistry, Earth System Science, and Environmental Law & Policy, amongst others, will allow me to obtain that aspiration.

I chose Coastal Marine Resources Management as my specialization because it is one of the critical aspects of earth system science and provides many of the resources we have today. I am fascinated by marine ecology and oceanic processes and this will be my motivation to successfully finish my work in this specialization. I feel I should focus on areas of environmental science that I am most interested in and know the least about. Because I am lacking life experiences near coastal areas and other aspects of the subject, I know I can greatly improve my understanding and ability to qualify for employment in this sector. After looking over the classes offered in other specializations, I found a personal interest in almost all of the classes offered in Coastal Marine Resources Management. The location of the Bren School also provides a unique daily reminder of the need for future professionals in coastal marine resources management while many institutions cannot. I know I will fit nicely into the community and look forward to the exciting and unique opportunity to make essential and lasting connections with my advisors, peers, and faculty at UCSB.
A Master’s degree at the Bren School for Environmental Science and Management is exactly what I want. Based upon the program description and list of classes, I am certain that Bren is an excellent fit for my career goals and growing skill set. I feel the MESM program has the most to offer in terms of academic excellence and innovation and is by far my first choice for graduate school. The group thesis attracted me most to the program because I will be able to apply my project directly to real-life situations and it is unique to other environmental science programs across the nation. I want to attend the Bren School because I know I will be learning the latest and most crucial issues needed for my future career. (give 1 – 2 specific examples)

I chose a career in environmental science because I have always had a strong connection to nature and a deep desire to maintain our resources in a way that will guarantee sustainable use of ecosystems while ensuring economic security. I decided on my future career in this field my senior year of high school after taking an Environmental Biology and Marine Biology class through Rio Salado College. I not only was fascinated by the subject but I wanted to spend the rest of my life contributing to environmental science and all of its aspects. My concern and desire to continue a paradigm of sustainability will not fade and is an enormous facet of my character. Furthermore, I come from a background of limited means. I have sacrificed a great deal to obtain an education. Along the way, I have been fortunate enough to develop resourcefulness, self-motivation, focus, and determination that I think will serve me well in graduate school.

My Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Sciences with an emphasis on Environmental Communication gave me the basic tools and prior knowledge needed to succeed in a rigorous graduate program. In particular my program at NAU focused on all aspects of
ecosystems at a variety of different scales and from the perspectives of not only the natural and social sciences, but also the humanities which I think will be a good match for the core courses in Bren’s graduate experience. I’d like to balance out and build upon my undergraduate training with more in-depth opportunities for applied science, research, and politics that are key to developing scientists at Bren. The core courses are particularly intriguing for me because they introduce perspectives that I hope will deepen my skills in the field and broaden my understanding of how to effectively demonstrate the relevance of resource management to the larger community.

If admitted, my plan is to focus on Coastal Marine Resources Management as my specialization because it is one of the critical aspects of earth system science and provides many of the resources we have today. My experience to date has been in Fundamentals of Environmental Science in which the basic principles of marine ecology were discussed, Environmental Policy in which I studied NEPA and critiqued the 2004 EIS report on the Bering Sea Aleutian Islands Crab Fisheries, and Atmosphere & Hydrosphere in which some marine chemistry was studied. I am fascinated by marine ecology and oceanic processes. It is my plan to live on a coast and work primarily in marine resources. I think my background in Biology, Chemistry, and GIS (applied in ENV 230-Fundamentals of Environmental Science Lab, ENV 280 Atmosphere & Hydrosphere Lab, and GGR 239-Intro. to Geographic Information Systems) will be useful in helping me adapt to the study of coastal marine resource management.

Thank you very much for taking the time to evaluate my application. I am excited about the possibility of graduate study at Bren and look forward to contributing to the cutting edge work in science, management, law, economics, and policy concerning environmental research and community outreach.
WRITING YOUR STATEMENTS: SOME PRACTICAL ADVICE
Y. Evie Garcia, PhD

Examples of Wording/Approaches that need strengthening/change

- Pursuing a Master’s degree at the Bren School for Environmental Science and Management is a chief goal in my life which I’m ready to be fully committed to.
- Although other schools may not require as much for an equivalent degree, I want to attend the Bren School because I know I will be learning the latest and most crucial issues concerning the state of our environment.
- Furthermore, I know I have more at stake in completing my Master of Science degree because I do not have the means to make another attempt given my financial situation.
- I feel I should focus on areas of environmental science that I am most interested in and know the least about. Because I am lacking life experiences near coastal areas and other aspects of the subject, I know I can greatly improve my understanding and ability to qualify for employment in this sector.
- Because I focused on environmental communication, I feel I should turn more of my attention to applied science, research, and politics in order to become well rounded in all subjects pertaining to the environment.
- I know I will fit nicely into the community and look forward to the exciting and unique opportunity to make essential and lasting connections with my advisors, peers, and faculty at UCSB.

General

- Make every sentence count.
- Avoid repeating yourself or speaking in generalities.
- Include specific examples to back up what you say about yourself and their program.
- Stay away from talking about what you lack. Instead, talk about what you have learned and how you hope to build on that. Talk about the perspective, environment, and skills in which you have been trained and how you see that as enriching your work at the program to which you are applying. That’s something you bring to the table.
- Instead of talking about not having the means to make another attempt, you can say something positive, like, I come from a background of very limited means. I have sacrificed a great deal to obtain an education. Along the way, I have been fortunate enough to develop resourcefulness, self-motivated, focus, and determination that I think will serve me well in graduate school.
- It sounds kind of funny, but it might help to think of grad school applications sort of like starting a relationship. You are trying to establish a relationship with the grad school and the principles of a good match are similar. If someone wants to date you because they just want to be married and pretty much anyone will do, or say that they want to date you and make the relationship work because they don’t have many resources to put into finding another relationship if this one fails, it’s not very appealing, right? You want to know what about you appeals to a potential match and that there are specific things the person values about you. You want to know that it’s a good match and that you have lots in common and that your past experiences will make
the relationship more rewarding. Programs assume that students are fully committed to grad school. When you mention that you intend to be fully committed, it makes one wonder if you think there is any other way to go about it. Going back to the relationship metaphor, it's like saying to your fiancé, "and I intend to be fully faithful to you"--as if that's a bonus instead of an expectation for everyone. It makes the reader kind of wonder why you wrote it.

- If you are changing fields, you really are going to need to make a good case for being accepted to that program. If that is a popular area, you may be competing with people who have a lot of experience in that field from undergrad and have a proven commitment to that field of study. Being new to that area of study, you have to give the program a good reason for taking a risk on training you. I say risk because they want people who are committed to staying in the field as a lifelong career and will avoid people who sound like they want to study out of what might be a passing interest or to round out their education by living in a new place for a while. You will really have to demonstrate how it fits into your career plans. You will also have to show how the things you have learned in other environments help you to take a fresh view of the new field. That’s one of the intriguing things about you!
- You will likely need to do 4-5 drafts but each time will be closer to the mark!!
- You should also consult with your professors as they are the best resource for your field.

Sample Outline

1. Start out with a strong sentence like-- A master's degree at the Bren School for Environmental Science and Management is exactly what I want. Based upon the program description, list of classes, and my conversation with Drs. Jones and Parnell, am certain that Bren is an excellent fit for my career goals and growing skill set.

2. At the end of the first paragraph where you say, "I know I will be learning the latest and most crucial issues needed for my future career," I think it would be helpful to give one or two examples of how their program is relevant and cutting edge. Maybe look at the website for any awards they've won, novel programs they mention, or community partnerships. You could add it on after a comma, with "such as...." or add another brief sentence that starts with "For example,.... "

2. Spend your next paragraphs demonstrating the good fit:

   I chose a career in environmental science because I have always had a strong connection to nature and a deep desire to maintain our resources in a way that will guarantee sustainable use of ecosystems while ensuring economic security. (Then say something about an experience that impacted your choice--briefly and showcases your experience, skill or commitment)

3. Then, sell yourself, what you learned and what you bring to the program in terms of different perspective, different training approach, a technique that will be useful, etc.:
My Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Science with an emphasis on Environmental Communication has given me the basic tools and knowledge needed to succeed in a rigorous training program. In particular, my program at NAU (give an example to back up your statement, focused on X and Y, which I think will be a good match for Bren's Z graduate experience).

4. Then:
I'd like to balance out and build upon my undergraduate training in environmental communications with the opportunities for applied science, research, and politics that are key to developing scientists at Bren (or something to that effect). Classes such as Ecology of Managed Ecosystems, Environmental Biogeochemistry, Earth System Science, and Environmental Law & Policy are particularly intriguing for me because they introduce perspectives that I hope will deepen my skills in the field and broaden my understanding of how to effectively demonstrate the relevance of resource management to the larger community.

5. Then:
If admitted, my plan is to focus on Coastal Marine Resources Management as my specialization because it is one of the critical aspects of earth system science and provides many of the resources we have today. My experience to date has been in A and B (describe the environments), which I have loved. However, I am fascinated by marine ecology and oceanic processes. It is my plan to live on a coast and work primarily in marine resources. I think my background in (list 2-3 skills that are transferrable) will be useful in helping me adapt to study of coastal marine management.

6. Thank you very much for taking the time to evaluate my application. I am excited about the possibility of graduate study at Bren and look forward to contributing to the cutting edge work in (be specific with examples) that Bren faculty and students are producing.
SO, YOU WANT TO GO TO GRADUATE SCHOOL?

TIPS FOR WRITING AN EFFECTIVE PERSONAL STATEMENT

“Admission to our department is very competitive, and essays make a big difference. After two days of deliberation we’ll be trying to cut the top ninety students down to fifteen. They all have straight-A averages, high GREs, and all the recommendations say, ‘This is the best student I’ve had in twenty-five years.’ All we’ve got left to go on is the statement of purpose and papers they’ve written. That’s why the statement of purpose is so important—it’s where the student has a chance to establish a personal voice, to appear unique in a situation where everyone looks the same.” From Getting What You Came For: The Smart Student’s Guide to Earning a Master’s or Ph.D., by Robert L. Peters, Ph.D.

Before You Start Writing: Some Things to Consider

✓ What is it they’re asking for? Whether you’re asked to provide a Goal Statement, a Statement of Purpose, or a more specific form of an autobiographical essay, insure that you have a clear understanding of what the institution wants from your essay.
✓ What length of essay is required? Some want essays no longer than 300 words; others want at least 500 words. Anything over three pages is too long. If no precise length is specified, one or two typed pages is a good length/
✓ What is most important for the admissions committee to know about you? The admissions committee wants to find out whether you are prepared for graduate study, able to do it well, and are focused. They want to know you’re committed to this subject, how you got interested in it and what you hope to get out of graduate school.
✓ What do you regard as your most unusual, distinctive, unique, and/or impressive quality?
✓ What events or experiences in your background might be of particular interest to the admissions committee?
✓ What special qualities or skills do you possess that make you think you’ll be successful in graduate school and/or the profession to which you aspire?

After You’ve Written a First Draft

✓ Did you give it time to cool before you’ve looked at it again?
✓ Does your opening paragraph capture attention?
✓ As a whole, is your statement interesting?
✓ Is it well written?
✓ Is it positive and upbeat?
✓ Does it sound like you?
✓ Is it an honest and forthright presentation of who you are?
✓ Did you answer the questions asked?
✓ Did you inadvertently omit relevant information?

Before You Submit Your Letter

✓ Revise.
✓ Show your essay to someone else for comment, preferably your academic adviser.
✓ Revise again.
✓ Eliminate all grammar and spelling errors.
✓ Print on top quality paper.