

Kaitlyn Beekman: Statement of purpose

My name is Kaitlyn Beekman and I am applying for admission to the Master of Arts in Communications program at CU Denver. I received my bachelor's degree in environmental studies and political science in 2011 and have spent the past seven years working at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) in a variety of capacities. Most recently, I've been working as a communications project manager, and am interested in using my professional experience and educational background to help organizations and government agencies communicate effectively with the publics they serve. Specifically, I'm interested in ensuring that communication around health and environmental risks are accessible and understood by everyone, regardless of language, literacy, or location. I hope to take advantage of the expertise of Larry Ebert, Tamara Powell, and Matthew Kaskavitch in this program, and develop my career to address health equity and environmental justice problems through effective communication. My educational and professional experience have highlighted the importance of effective communication in developing an equitable society, and I believe the Master of Arts in Communications program at CU Denver will help me contribute to that society.

During my time as a communications project manager at CDPHE, my environmental studies coursework has proven valuable. As my environmental studies courses largely focused on how to effectively engage with communities on a local, regional, and global level in a way that would affect change, I've found my degree to be very advantageous. I've been responsible for developing and building programs that align with the department's strategic goals, developing plans surrounding immigrant and

refugee engagement, developing marketing and educational materials, facilitating meetings with town councils and water utilities, and coordinating aid during emergency situations. I've also been involved with the health equity/ environmental justice collaborative (HEEJ) at CDPHE and have worked to ensure that all programs, communications, and educational outreach are accessible to all Colorado residents. I have considerable strategic communication experience in my work history, but the Master of Arts in Communications program at CU Denver would help me develop the skills I need to make a meaningful change in the way in which we communicate risks and opportunities to the public.

Ideally, I would like to develop my career at the intersection of environmental communication and risk communication. I'd like to use strategic communication tactics to facilitate communication between communities, industries, and government agencies, and create behavior change, either in the form of industry standards, policy, or personal choices. My ultimate goal is to work in an organization that affects positive change in the world of public health and/or the environment. I believe that the Master of Arts in Communications program at CU Denver is uniquely aligned with my goals for several reasons.

First, I believe that the combination of the research-focused component of this program and the graduate certificate in strategic communication would greatly help me learn to examine communications in our world and gather a better understanding of communication theory. I'm interested in building skills in rhetorical studies and examining why communications succeed or fail, how to define the audience, and build trust with an audience. Combining these skills with a strategic communication certificate

would help me to influence and develop strategic plans for organizations and ensure my work is aligned with an organization's overall goals.

Second, I am interested in this program because of the variety in coursework and faculty and staff experience available at CU Denver. The Society and Environment track and the Sustainability minor both contain classes that specifically apply to my career interests, and would help me further develop my environmental communications knowledge base. Larry Erbert's work with the National Park System is of particular interest to me, and his background specifically applies to my interest in how we develop, disseminate, and understand messages about human interactions with the environment. In addition, Tamara Powell's work with medical education for health equity and community partnerships overlaps with my interests, and directly relates to my goal of ensuring that environmental communication is examined through the lens of health equity. Lastly, I hope to take advantage of Matthew Kaskavitch's extensive social media experience to analyze new and sometimes underutilized communication channels, and how to use these channels to better communicate risks to all populations.

I believe that my previous environmental studies coursework and communications work experience will help me to succeed in this program, and that the Master of Arts in Communications program at CU Denver will be integral to achieving my career goals. I'm happy to expand on any of my coursework, work experience, or goals if needed. I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for your time,

Kaitlyn