

I graduated from UMW three years ago, having taken two GIS courses. Since then, I have been working for a global public health NGO. I know that I have far more to contribute to the field and believe that I can best achieve that through completing the MSGA at UMW. The explosion of mapping related to the Covid pandemic helps us visualize the spread of the virus, but there are many other ways that we can analyze the spatial data of disease. This is knowledge that I know that I can acquire in the program and use in my public health career.

At the present, my job involves finding research relevant to the programs that my NGO supports, such as maternal and child health, malaria prevention, and WaSH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) project. WaSH programs, in particular, can benefit from more complex spatial analysis that would assess water source access, proximity to latrines and domesticated animals, residential location, and disease outbreaks. WaSH is a rapidly growing area of global public health and there are multiple approaches to the implementation of it. What is generally lacking, however, is the incorporation of spatial data and using maps to determine how communities can most benefit from WaSH. Once I earn my degree, I am certain that I will be able to contribute to the increased efficacy of WaSH program design.

I believe that my interests align most closely with Dr. Yin, who has expertise in using GIS to analyze health outcomes. In particular, web-mapping technologies might be an important skill that I could acquire and then use in support of WaSH projects. I have spoken to Dr. Yin about my interests and he agrees that they align well with the goals of UMW's MSGA program. I am excited by the opportunities for returning to UMW and acquiring a set of skills that would enable me to take my career in a meaningful new direction.

(321 words)