Last year, I had the opportunity to travel to Guatemala with Dr. Bowen. As a Geography major with a minor in Environmental Sustainability, I was eager to learn how one small NGO was working to combat deforestation. Everyone has heard of deforestation of the rain forest, but almost no one is aware that similar problems exist in the world's cloud forests. The threats are similar – population growth, expansion of agriculture, and illegal logging. One of the articles that we read was written by Ian Pope, a UMW graduate, who examined cloud forest deforestation in the areas that we visited. While I realize that I don't have the time or resources to return to Guatemala to conduct research, I want to learn more about the application of remote sensing techniques to deforestation.

Dr. Millones has a great deal of experience, in a wide variety of environments, examining land use and land cover change using remote sensing. He has examined fire as a contributor to deforestation in Mexico, the carbon holding capacity of mangroves in Ecuador, and most recently a project on the expansion of coca cultivation in the Peruvian Amazon. I hope that I can contribute in some meaningful way to his research in Peru and acquire the research experience that will enable me to find a good job using my advanced skill set.

While I do not know exactly what research I want to pursue, I have no doubt that the foundation that I have from my GIS certificate as well as new techniques that I will gain in the MSGA program can only benefit me. While I don't have a lot of work experience now, I know that I can learn much more about geospatial analysis and the ways that geographers can contribute to understanding the different variables that contribute to deforestation in different locations. Some courses particular that I think will help me achieve my goals are Advanced Remote Sensing, Modeling and Spatial Statistics, as well as GeoDesign and GeoVisualization. I look forward to working more closely with the Geography faculty.

(343 words)