

Essay - CEMS 2021

I would like to apply my unique education to the environmental field as an agent of change. I am majoring in Geological Engineering and minoring in Engineering for Community Development, a minor offered through the Humanitarian Engineering (HE) department at Mines. This combination has shown me that technical solutions are effective, but that problems cannot simply be solved through technical solutions. For example, the information exchanges and protocols within the environmental field lie far beyond the aspects that technical solutions solve. The environmental field is a diverse world of complex issues and information that must be applied to society in an understandable and sustainable way.

In addition to minoring in HE, my experience studying policy has influenced my view on how I want to shape the environmental field. I recently researched for the Payne Institute for Public Policy this past semester, and while the topic of my paper was on the social implications of energy subsidies, I learned universal facts about all fields of policy. One being that policy, whatever the field, only works if that policy tends to the social, environmental, and economic conditions of that country or society. This applies to environmental management - these practices must be both sustainable to the environment, but also sustainable to the people that are to abide by them. It is this understanding of local contexts that is too often overlooked in the environmental management field. I hope to change this.

Ultimately, I would like to apply my interdisciplinary background to the environmental field in order to change the way people think about and solve environmental problems. Technical professionals (engineers) often have tunnel vision - seeing only the extent of their calculations on paper, not in society. This must change. The environmental field is an inherently socio-technical area that needs not only technical expertise, but social and political attention. I hope to adopt these concerns in my future career as an engineer in order to create more sustainable and socially just environmental practices, procedures, and exchange of information.