I first heard about CEP as a freshman in college, when I was looking through a list of all the majors offered at the University of Washington. At that time, I didn't really know what I wanted to study or what my true passions were, all I knew was that I needed a small community to be welcomed in and a part of. I found that transitioning to college was especially hard for me because I had not only come from another state, but I also had just graduated from a class of 56 girls from a small private school. So, coming to UW felt very intimidating because the school was so huge, I knew no one at all, and all my friends and family were two states away. However, as I was scrolling through that list of majors, what really drew me to CEP was the fact that it was described as small, interdisciplinary major that would not only allow you to study the importance of environment and space, but it would also give me the opportunity to be a part of a community where others also valued that community. So, that same night I reached out to Nico Martinucci (who was the outreach advisor at the time) and set up a meeting so that I could learn more about CEP from a person who had actually been in the major.

I remember going into that meeting feeling a little intimidated but also excited. My thought process was that this meeting would dictate what the rest of my college years would be like. It was a short meeting, maybe about twenty minutes, and Nico told me that I should apply next year as a sophomore so that I may start my junior year. After that, it seemed like CEP would be the right choice. I then completed all of the necessary prerequisites, applied, interviewed, and got in. I was so excited because I knew that CEP would pair perfectly with my Latin American and Caribbean Studies major and Human Rights minor. I would be able to take what I would be learning from all my areas of study and apply it to the community that I had come from in Los Angeles to become a city planner and organizer.

Looking back, I really do feel like CEP has prepared me to become that planner that I had aspired and still hope to be. I really feel like I learned some real-world skills that I can take to the workplace. For instance, I now know how to facilitate a group and meetings in a productive manner. I've already used this skill several times outside of CEP, but I remember absolutely hating having to do this for class. The thought of getting in front of everyone and directing the conversation absolutely terrified me. It still does. But, having to do it for almost every CEP course makes it a little easier each time. Another thing that I learned in CEP was how to really

approach situations intentionally. Before CEP, I feel like I would look at my education in a passive way. I would go to class, but would not really thinking about what I was learning beyond the classroom. However, with CEP, I learned that I needed to be intentional with my studies and college education. I feel like I especially learned this by looking at all my classmates who do amazing things for school and in their free time. I am always speechless when I learn what some of my peers have created and how intentional they are with their time. I feel motivated to do more with what I already have and have learned how to intentionally map out days when I really want to be productive.

While I have learned a lot of real-world skills in CEP, I also look back at my time in the major with some regrets and wishes that I had done some things differently. I think the largest regret is not speaking up during class and amongst my peers. In high school, I wasn't really a quiet person and was considered a leader amongst my classmates, but I feel like all that changed with I came to UW. I thought it would be easier to be that person I was in high school if I was in a smaller major like CEP, but that didn't really work either. I stayed quiet in all of my classes, even when I had thought about certain topics and felt passionately about some things. For a long time, I would really beat myself up about it to. I felt like maybe I was ostracizing myself and this was the reason I hadn't really felt a part of the CEP community like the rest of my cohort. However, although I know that I could have done a lot of things differently on my end, the truth was that I never felt fully comfortable in CEP. I was always anxious or nervous about something, and didn't really feel comfortable in that CEP environment. A lot of the CEP core courses did not feel engaging to me. I wasn't that passionate about the material we were learning, especially if I compared it to other classes that I was taking at the time. Overall, I never felt relaxed in CEP and like I could be my true self. Still, looking back, I wish I would've let go of some of my anxieties and just taken the time to speak up.

Another thing that I wish I had done differently throughout my time in CEP is be more active in my committee, especially in the Community Engagement Committee. All three quarters of my Senior year I spent in CEC, yet I feel as though I did not personally get much done. I feel like I was always too preoccupied with something else, whether that be my Senior Project, my internship, or some personal issues that I was struggling with. However, I was passionate about

the things that CEC was advocating for. I know that that committee did and is going to bring a lot of change within the CEP community, and I regret not being as much a part of that change. However, I know that CEC is paving the way for a new generation of CEPsters that will make the major more inclusive and diverse.

Despite my regrets, I am glad that I can address and grow from them. I know how to navigate myself better than I did before and will take them as a learning lesson for the future. However, I know that moving forward I will not be looking at my regrets but rather how grateful I am to have met and gotten close to some of my peers in CEP. It is because of them that I have truly felt a part of the community and have learned so much. I know that these friendships will extend far beyond my time at UW, and we will keep in touch for the years to come. It is also because of them that I have felt so inspired and excited about the future and the potential that I have personally and professionally. I am so grateful to have gotten to meet the people in my cohort and grow close to friends that I otherwise probably would have never had come across in this huge university.

Overall, I am glad that I looked at that list my freshman year and found out about CEP. I am sad that I will never be able to see my cohort all in one place again because we spent so much time together these past two years. However, I am excited that we are all moving onto bigger and better things. I would be lying if I didn't say that I am so scared to see what the future holds for me. As of right now, I have no definite plan for what I plan to do after this summer. There are so many possibilities for me, and so many routes I can take. It makes me nervous because what if I don't choose the right one? But I know that as long as I follow my passions and instincts, I'll end up at the right places.