



Department of Environmental Science and Policy

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Congratulations to the ESP Class of 2020!

Dear ESP Class of 2020, my most heartfelt congratulations on your accomplishments during the most challenging times of our lives. COVID19 just confirmed that health connects all species in the planet by an intricate and delicate web of interactions across species and ecosystems. More than ever environmental science, sustainability, and policy need new tools and new teams of scientists with new visionary hands-on applications.

We have an urgent need to provide current and future generations with critical knowledge and specialized skills to study, protect, conserve, and restore the Earth's biodiversity and ecosystems in sustainable ways. You are our path to the development of meaningful programs that will have a long-term, positive footprint on our natural resources and our planet. Our students, past and present are the reason we strive to continue building programs to train the best environmental science and policy practitioners on Earth. You are an incredibly unique, and diverse group that represents the best of what we see in our future. Brilliant, young professionals with new and fresh perspectives in the complexity of environmental science, policy, and sustainability.

I especially congratulate three of our PhD graduates: Dr. Rachel Golden Kroner, received the Best Doctoral Dissertation award and part of her research on the implications for conservation of protected areas in Amazonia, was published last year in the prestigious journal *Science* <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/364/6443/881>. Dr. Natalie Hall assessed bacterial communities in different types of urban stormwater best management practices; and Dr. Susan Howard applied the One Health framework to analyze the decisions made by visitors of a national park using a digital simulation an interactive video.

Also, kudos to our outstanding undergraduate degree concentration award winners Emma Gregory (Conservation), Rachel Pack (Ecological Science), Natalie Cross (Environmental Health), Essam Temuri (Human and Ecosystem Response to Climate Change), Keith Keel (Marine, Estuarine, and Freshwater Ecology), and Benjamin Nolen (Wildlife).

I would like to also extend my deep appreciation to our entire faculty team; and our administrative staff; all of whom have worked incredibly hard during this trying time and under very new and difficult circumstances to make sure that our department continue to bring the best possible education to our students.

To our new graduates, I urge you to become part of our alumni association, let's keep in touch, and please, let us know of your successes, big or small. You always have a home with us!

With warm wishes,

A. Alonso Aguirre
Department Chair and Professor,