

Essay 2: Three paths forward

A specific career, or the path that leads you to it as time unfolds is unpredictable and any expectation you have of it is likely to be wrong. Skeptical introspection of the past can shed some insight into what the first steps should be, and an honest assessment of what you value and prioritize can place beacons into your future that provide a general direction in which to head.

What I value and prioritize is to use scientific evidence to guide environmental policy, and to connect communities to the decision making processes that is consequent to their own lives.

I've always been an interdisciplinary type; my interests demand it. The first path forward to where my beacon shines is to continue to gain scientific insights into the areas already familiar to me, including programming, statistical modeling, and plant biology. This is contained within the my applied program of interest but shifts the focus to how these sciences are utilized to help understand the impacts of climate change. The materials and methods will be rigorous and complex and if the past is an indicator frustration can overwhelm the will of desire. Utilizing the Knight-Hennessy mentorship infrastructure I will build a robust network of experts and peers with similar scientific backgrounds for technical advice as well as emotional support.

Ironically, the policy aspect of my future career is of prime importance, yet as of now I have no official experience except a current class I'm enrolled in yet to start. This doesn't deter me, although I don't take lightly the affects bad policy can have. I plan to take full advantage of the public policy courses offered with the realization that the scale of our problems can't be solved solely by one individual. What I see as leadership is the ability to identify what others need to know to heighten their potential, while knowing enough of their knowledge set to also maximize my own. This can create solutions with emergent properties and can have impacts that are much more than the sum of their parts. This level of communication is better obtained when deep personal bonds have been developed. I would be honored to develop such bonds with people who share the

same devotion, passion, and sense of urgency as one must to be a Knight-Hennessy Scholar.

When dealing with the immense complexity of impacts from environment or globalized economies, multi-national and national agencies are a necessity. But not all issues need to be solved by such large agents, nor are such large agents affective at solving all local problems. Where community level organization can achieve its goals, I feel it should be reduced to this level, as it can be controlled and modified better and more efficiently by the people who know their own needs. I would plan to attend workshops designed to solve problems as scales of villages, towns, cities, countries, and international organizations, or perhaps instigate one myself if this was not in place if others also would find it of value.

Lastly, although not another path but only a footstep, the first footstep into the program would be one with an open and opportunistic mind!