

Alexis Serido

Statement of Purpose

This past year has brought on many new tasks and challenges for everyone. As a result of such unprecedented times, I was able to experience the undergraduate Landscape Architecture program at Rutgers in a very new and unique way. Ultimately, the challenges I have faced in my now fifth semester as a part of this program, second semester entirely virtual, have surfaced a deeper appreciation for this field as a whole. I have gained a new perspective on Landscape Architecture and its importance in our everyday lives, as well as the positive impact it can have on individuals, groups, and larger communities. As a part of this program at Rutgers, I have learned so much about how multifaceted this field is, all while being immersed in an atmosphere that allows me to discover my personal strengths and abilities, gain further knowledge, and explore other areas of interest. This field has allowed me to venture into more of my own personal interests: plant science, horticulture, urban and environmental policy, research, and ultimately art. Design stretches far beyond the physicality of its aesthetics; it is how space is used, enjoyed, and what benefits it serves to individuals, the environment, and the community as a whole.

Inspired by a student-run course I took my first year at Rutgers titled, “Exploring Landscape Architecture and Environmental Design,” I was motivated to apply for this position. After being selected for this role and designing my own curriculum to teach this course virtually, I will forever be grateful for the experience. When curating my lesson plans and trying to find connections between Landscape Architecture and elements such as academic success, diversity and inclusion, and personal wellness, my eyes were opened up to the true vastness of this field. I was so thankful to be able to share my passion for this field with students of different backgrounds and academic interests. This opportunity ultimately led me to discover how deeply rooted my passion is for the field itself and my desire to pursue higher education within it. These mentioned experiences, as well as other opportunities I've had solely as a result of the undergraduate program of Landscape Architecture, are what motivate me most to pursue higher education and research niches in this field. Being a candidate for this scholarship will allow me to further explore not only my personal interests but all the other aspects that Landscape Architecture has to offer in the form of personal research.

Recently, I have been nominated as a candidate for the George H. Cook Scholars Program and I am a recent recipient of the Roy H. Deboer Travel Prize, both of which are through the Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences. In this program and with

this travel prize, I will be able to research the New Jersey Pinelands National Reserve and work individually to gain new skills and knowledge as a future practicing Landscape Architect. Specifically, I will be focusing on and exploring its legends, ecological, social, and cultural significance to the state. These scholarships will allow me to further develop my research plans and explore meaningful aspects of the Pinelands in a deeper, more concentrated, and comprehensive way.

Looking into my future, I am interested in learning more about the management of public, state, and national parks and gardens. Early on in my academic career, I was exposed to how beneficial these outdoor places and spaces can be to those who visit them. I have additional interests in the conservation and preservation of these state and national parks. Seeing firsthand how gardens, in specific, can influence their visitors, sparked an additional interest of mine. I hope to further explore sensory gardens and horticultural therapy alike. As a landscape architect, it is important to consider how your designs will influence its visitors, horticultural therapy adds an additional layer to be considered.

Covid-19 has created a larger appreciation among the general public for public, green, and outdoor spaces. This, in turn, has brought more attention to the importance and practicality of the work coming from this field. As a practicing landscape architect in the future, I hope to create spaces that focus on this appreciation of our natural environment. In doing so, I seek to implement design strategies that focus on resilience, sustainability, green design, and address issues like climate change and rising sea levels where applicable and appropriate. If awarded this scholarship, I will learn more about Landscape Architecture and my personal research, all while simultaneously unveiling more about myself and my personal interests.