

## **Will H. Provost**

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### **Re: 2016 Wes McClure Scholarship**

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Will Provost, I am currently pursuing my Master's of Public Administration at the University of Southern California, and I have a strong interest in pursuing a career in local government. At USC, I am a Dean's Merit Scholar and City/County Management Fellow, and with 20 units, I am exactly halfway through the program. I have been heavily involved with student activities since arriving on campus, helping to organize the annual City/County Summit and I was recently elected to serve as Co-Chair of the student chapter of ICMA. During this time I have also excelled academically, maintaining a 4.0 GPA.

In addition to my achievements on campus, I began pursuing my MPA with a specific interest in entering the field of City Management, and in February I successfully made the jump into local government. As an Hourly Data Analyst in the City of Glendale's City Manager's Office, I have been working on a wide-variety of projects, ranging from managing the City's open data platform to working with department heads to refine our Key Performance Indicators. Most significantly, this experience has reaffirmed my interest in the field, and I am eager and excited to pursue it as a career.

Prior to entering the MPA program, I worked for multiple economic consulting firms, conducting complex analyses, preparing reports, and working with many local government clients to help answer pressing questions. As an undergraduate, I studied economics at Lewis & Clark College, where I graduated Magna Cum Laude, with honors. I continue to have a passion for economics, but I increasingly value it as a framework through which to solve problems in the real world.

To conclude, I believe my academic success, leadership capabilities, and strong interest in City Management make me an ideal candidate for this scholarship. Thank you kindly for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Will H. Provost

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### **Wes McClure Scholarship Essay**

Riding BART from my childhood home in Richmond, California, whether it be to see an A's game in Oakland or to attend a cultural event in San Francisco, I'd find myself looking out from the train over the cities passing by. I was always struck by how each city has its own unique neighborhoods and characteristics, and how each held the chance for new discoveries and experiences. Disembarking from the train, I took pleasure in finding secret paths, hidden staircases, and idiosyncratic structures and landmarks. Looking back, I now see my pleasure in the myriad threads of connection that each place held: Oakland, where my father was a public school teacher; Berkeley, where my brother served as a police officer; Kensington, where my mother owned a business; and the tiny pocket of Albany ("one square mile") where I attended public school. I am drawn to cities for their diversity, their unique histories, and for their constantly evolving web of connections.

As I pursued my education, I found myself increasingly interested in, as well as troubled by, the obstacles and struggles that contemporary cities face. I had entered college passionate about environmental problems, and came to focus on the links between environmental degradation and disparities in health, income, and social class. After taking a number of environmental studies and sociology classes in college, I began to recognize economics as an essential framework through which to think about addressing the social and environmental problems of our time. I also began to see the practical benefits of utilizing an economic



perspective. For example, many states struggled with the pollution caused by littered bottles and cans, but after establishing a small incentive (via a deposit-refund system) that problem has been largely alleviated.

My honors thesis explored the relative welfare effects of municipal plastic bag regulatory policies, whether in the form of a ban, tax, or alternative mechanism. I also conducted an independent research project analyzing the impact on recycling rates of “pay-as-you-throw” municipal solid waste policies. Both projects allowed me to use an economic framework in an applied way. For my academic merit and efforts as President of the Society of Economists, I received the Lewis & Clark Worldly Philosopher Award, given annually to one student in the economics department.

I continue to value economic theory, strategy, and modeling, with an abiding interest in applying these disciplines to public policy. I feel passionate about translating theory into action, and deeply committed to work that has the potential for a transformative impact on peoples lives. Therefore, I want to be involved with designing and implementing policies “on the ground”. I want to think about a broad range of issues ranging from minimum wage and labor laws to landfills and municipal solid waste policies. I believe that as a City Manager I can use my economics background every day to solve problems more efficiently and improve services for the community.

In the years after graduating from college I have continued to expand my analytical skills and abilities in my work with two consulting firms, often working with clients in local government. However, eager to begin my career in professional local government management, last fall I began pursuing my Master’s of Public Administration at the University of Southern

California. At USC, I am a City/County Management Fellow, I helped plan the annual City/County Summit, and I was just elected to serve as Co-Chair of ICMA@USC for the upcoming academic year. Off campus, I left my job as a Senior Analyst at ECONorthwest in February for an hourly position in the City of Glendale's City Manager's Office. Having finished a year of intensive local government coursework and work experience, I am more excited than ever to be entering the field.

Looking to the future, I can picture myself taking BART throughout the Bay Area and looking out over a neighborhood or city that was impacted by my work. As California continues to grow in population, so too the demand for services is expanding. Moreover, the proper management of finite resources, ranging from capital to natural resources like water, will be critical to the long-term health of California's communities. I intend to use my background in economics to excel as I work to help cities overcome these and other challenges; I believe this scholarship will support me immensely as I strive to improve and celebrate California's cities.