

April 15, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

It is with the sincerest gratitude and humility that I recommend Cascadia Poetics Lab for the 2025 Humanities Washington Award. I have worked as Cascadia Poetics Lab's Administrative Assistant since June of 2023 and have had the pleasure of working closely with the efforts of Founding Director Paul E. Nelson, the Board of Directors, and the organization's vast network of dedicated volunteers and supporters. I firmly believe that Cascadia Poetics Lab is a force in creating artistic community and upholding the core principles of the humanities in King County and the Cascadia Bioregion.

I was hired as Cascadia Poetics Lab's Administrative Assistant shortly after graduating with my undergraduate degree with minimal experience in administration and non profit organization. Paul Nelson and the CPL board recognized my ambition and offered me a position, providing consistent guidance, education, respect, and grace for the two years that I have worked with them. Last year, I felt comfortable voicing my concern that our community so far has been mostly composed of people over the age of 60. Paul Nelson swiftly responded by providing me with the resources to establish Cascadia 2050, a youth initiative with the intention of expanding our programming and mission to poets and artists under the age of 40. With the help of key volunteers, Cascadia 2050 has already hosted one poetry reading in Seattle featuring a diverse group of young poets in collaboration with Gearhouse, an outdoor gear rental group, to bridge the gap between poets and environmentalists. Paul Nelson has also provided the group with materials to create a curriculum for workshops geared toward a younger audience. We hope to build a community in which young artists and writers can have open discussions, create and improve their craft, and disconnect from online distractions to strengthen their connection to surrounding environments and the people within them.

Paul Nelson is known for his personability, approaching others with dignity, creating welcoming connections wherever he goes, and finding ways in which he can support the efforts of others. An example of this is his work with the Mapes Creek Action Coalition, a local effort from ecologists and public workers to daylight Mapes Creek in Seattle's Rainier Beach neighborhood. Paul's involvement with the coalition's efforts introduced new programming to CPL as we hosted poetry readings, a week-long art residency, and a blessing all at Mapes Creek, demonstrating the power of the humanities to bring awareness to causes that are important to local communities.

The mission of the Cascadia Poetics Lab is to "empower people to practice poetry and build community in ways that deepen connection to self, place and the present moment." At the core of CPL's programming is the intention to incite belonging and respect within communities and surrounding environments through poetic and artistic practice. The examples above are only a small fraction of the tireless dedication I have witnessed from Paul Nelson and the Cascadia Poetics Lab board to follow the organization's mission and uphold the essential values within the humanities, marking this organization as a viable candidate for this award.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V Martinez', with a stylized, flowing script.

Veronica Martinez
Administrative Assistant, Cascadia Poetics Lab