

WAS*IS Statement of Interest for Mariana Felix

Dear Ms. Demuth,

It was a pleasure to meet you at the AMS student meeting as well as to speak with the many Weather and Society * Integrated Studies (WAS*IS) alumni during the WAS*IS/SPC reception. At the reception I was privileged to speak with a WAS*IS alumnus, Mr. Daniel Nietfeld, who thought my visions and research interests made me an ideal candidate for this workshop. When speaking with other alumni, I was especially drawn to learning about how to combine social science tools and physical science research with a cohort of passionate scientists that I could collaborate with.

In an even more personal note, after doing some more research about what will be covered in the workshop, I see WAS*IS as a gateway to an exciting career that would allow me to have a positive impact in the lives of many people. If chosen to participate, I hope to apply my newly acquired tools in the social sciences, background in severe weather research, as well as my interest in political science and my passion for public service to help third world country residents be aware and prepared for natural disasters.

Since I was born in Brazil and am a dual citizen of Brazil and the United States, I cannot help but ask myself what I could do to help my home country and other third world countries. I find it difficult to read news articles about hundreds of people dying in flash floods during the raining season and about tornadoes ripping through communities without warning. I am interested in conducting research that would reveal the best way of informing Brazilians and eventually other third world countries about these and other threats and about starting some type of warning service for many countries who do not have one. I am also interested in helping combat the famine and diseases I personally witnessed during El Niño years in northeastern Brazil and that I read about every few years in other Central and South American countries.

I believe there are many steps that could be taken to solve some of the problems I read about and have personally experienced in South America. For example, hundreds of lives could be saved from flash flooding through increasing public awareness of flooding and flood zones, more strict building regulations, and educating the public on healthy clean-up procedures. Furthermore, most Brazilians are unaware that the southern-most states are prone to tornadoes every spring. Those state officials need to work together to implement a warning plan that works for their constituents. Finally, regarding climate issues, the effects of El Niño in the distribution of rainfall and the effects of global climate change needs to be better explained to policy makers, farmers, and the public. With this knowledge, the country could take steps in formulating new climate policy, there could be change in the behavior of citizens, and the country could make plans for adaptation.

I believe my knowledge in the field of public relations acquired through my BA in journalism, the knowledge in atmospheric sciences from my BS and the MS I am currently in the process of earning, the insight I now have from a combination of a graduate level political science class and my personal interests in the subject, and my passion for public service show that I am not going to follow the traditional atmospheric science research path. I believe the only thing that is lacking in my education is enough exposure to the social sciences to allow me to conduct surveys, interviews, and field work and pull meaningful statistics about the socioeconomic status and behavioral trends of those I wish to help. The WAS*IS would provide the opportunity to learn to apply the social sciences to my atmospheric research in order to show results that could drive policy creation in federal and local governments.

Best regards,

Mariana Felix