July 30, 2019

Dear Dr. and Mrs. Tazelaar,

Thank you very much for the research opportunity granted by your generous donation to Calvin College.  I am one of the recipients of this research fellowship currently entering my senior year. Unlike many of the other undergraduates, Calvin classifies me as an adult learner due to being 33 years of age since June 2nd of this summer.  I came to Calvin as a post-baccalaureate with two Bachelors of Fine Arts, one in Digital Media and another in traditional Drawing.

Coming from a fine arts background, Computer Science and Mathematics were a drastic shift in direction.  It has been over a decade since my high school graduation and this was reentering the realm of STEM, with the slight added modification of STEAM - Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics.  There was certainly an adjustment period but following that my time here has been quite enjoyable albeit intellectually challenging. It is my plan to continue onwards to graduate school in the near future for a Master’s/Ph.D. in Computer Science.  It is also my hope that my career can somehow combine the visual arts and science into some cohesive whole that utilizes the entire range of my education. To that end, I hope to enter the field of data visualization or something similar. If I choose to go the academic route, however, my interests would align with machine learning and GPU’s.

The skills I have begun to learn and the theoretical concepts I have begun to delve into this summer will contribute greatly to my career and educational aspirations.  Big data seems to be a hot topic at the moment. Hence, experience with the Python programming language, Jupyter notebooks, Latex, and other tools of data science can only contribute to my future success as a student and employee.  I suppose I am following in my younger sister’s footsteps, who recently graduated from UC-Berkeley and is working at Facebook as a data analyst.

So again, I must thank you for the opportunity granted by your generous donation.  Without it, my summer would have consisted of taking additional classes at Calvin while working at Little Bangkok, a Thai restaurant that has been the primary source of income for me for the past 10 years or so.  That is simply a job and not a career. With your donation, I have been able to work with my faculty mentor, Professor Keith VanderLinden, on analyzing Twitter data and attempting to perform topic modeling on the Tweets in our dataset.  You will find attached to this letter a short summary of our work as of current progress.

I plan to continue this line of research or similar through my senior year at Calvin College.  It is required that we design and implement a senior project. Time has flown by this summer and I feel we have barely just scratched the surface of our exploration into topic modeling.  It is my hope that between my mentor and me, we can have publishable findings by the time of my graduation. I truly find it enjoyable to simply research. It is a vastly different experience from class assignments and projects with hard deadlines and scripted guidelines.  Here, I can simply let my thoughts travel down a myriad of different pathways and perhaps allow God to guide me to my destination.

Sincerely,

Joseph Jinn

Thank you letter to Donors who support student research opportunities

Why? Private support from donors makes it possible for Calvin to provide financial assistance to students. Many of these donors continue to give because they know their support helps students like you reach their educational and career goals. A thoughtful, personal note from you lets donors know that their investment in Calvin is meaningful and appreciated.

Here are a few guidelines:

1. Greet your donors formally

Since it’s likely you don’t know them personally, address them using a proper salutation, such as Dear Mr. and Mrs., Dear Dr. and Mrs., or Dear Doctors.

2. Introduce yourself

Tell your donors about yourself. Where are you from? Why did you come to Calvin? What is your major? What are your educational and career aspirations?

3. Say “Thank You”

· And don’t be afraid to say it more than once!

· Thank your donors for making this fellowship possible. Tell them how and why this funding has helped you. What opportunities will this fellowship make possible for you? Give your impressions on how this opportunity has impacted you personally and academically.

4. Brief research project overview

Give the highlights of the work you were involved with over the summer. You may just include the one-page summary that you are sending to Beth Schoone Jongen in the Science Division Office.

Once you’ve written a draft:

1. Be sure you’ve included…

...today’s date, a salutation, proper closing, and space for your signature.

2. Is your writing clear and concise?

Read your letter at least twice before signing your name. Have you avoided unnecessary words or phrases and awkward constructions?

3. Have you checked for spelling and grammar?

Check and re-check your letter for spelling and grammatical errors. If you’re using a computer, don’t rely solely on spell-check.

4. Is your letter visually attractive?

Have you used clean sheets of quality paper or stationery? Is the text spaced nicely on the page?

It is important that every fellowship recipient mail a thank you letter to his or her donor. Please e-mail Lori Feenstra a copy of your letter and note the date you posted it. Lori Feenstra, Stewardship Coordinator, 526-8425, lrf6@calvin.edu