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 well over a decade since my high school graduation and this was reentering the realm of STEM, perhaps with the slight added modification of STEAM - Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics, as research is certainly a creative process.  There was 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