ALEX CLEMMER

Personal Statement

To whom it may concern—

If you are reading this then you already know that I am applying for [$SOME_POSITION]. You will be glossing over this letter to look for reasons to not put this application down—reasons, in short, that would not show up on a resume under normal circumstances. This is the issue I want to address specifically here, using several qualitative examples:

I am first and foremost **dedicated** and **persistent**, and have no problem working on a project for as long as it takes to finish it. I got my current research job by hanging out in my advisor's research group for over a year and pestering her (in a nice way) with questions until she gave up and just hired me. I (politely) bothered the Director of Undergraduate Studies about a project I was working on until, to appease me, he finally decided to give me a colloquium all to myself (we're currently working on this together).

I should say that I also understand that sometimes projects don't work out, and you have to either revisit them or just recycle their successful parts: one example of this is that I've been a founding member of two failed CS clubs, but rather than give up, I'll be using this colloquium as a platform to build community involvement.

I am **very ambitious**—that is, my hobby is to find interesting ideas and see them through to completion. Currently, for example, I'm just finishing up work on a website that teaches people Chinese, sort of like Rosetta Stone. It has sound, pictures, and works on most browsers. I alone am responsible for the coding, planning, testing, debugging, and design. I had help recording the sound and taking the pictures.

One thing that's interesting to me is how this project has changed over time. For example, when it became untenable to work on this in my free time, I turned it into a research project, and will thus work on it with another professor for credit this Spring. One thing that I noticed in preliminary tests is that users "expect" a certain experience from a browser that is not really that consistent with how they interact with native apps; I hope to examine the limitations associated with this, as well as how we can overcome them in creative ways.

The reason I have chosen to do this is, first, that I'll get class credit for working on something I want to work on, and second, that the perspective of conducting constant user studies will sharpen my understanding of how people work with the website. The impact of that last part is, at the end, I hope to have a relatively well-tuned product, and should I choose to pursue it further, I have the freedom to do essentially whatever I want.

I am also **inquisitive** on a very deep level. When I am interested in a class and don't have the prerequisites, I sit in on it anyway. I go to nearly every colloquium the department offers, including the occasional PhD defense. I compulsively seek information relevant to my research; for example, I have Google alerts set up so that I know when someone whose research interests me gets a talk posted to, say, YouTube.

At the beginning, indicated that my hope was to give readers reasons to not put my application down. At this point, I hope to have given readers a compelling enough set of reasons to at least merit a few questions about who I am and what else it is that I've done. I would of course be remiss if I didn't recommend talking to my references, who are all familiar with me in everyday life, and who can each talk about various parts of what I have said. I have tried hard to cultivate qualities that make me a valuable and interesting person in my field, and if the things I have outlined to you are indicative of qualities that you value in people working next to you, then I cannot recommend highly enough talking either to them or me.

In closing, I would like to thank any readers for the time they have spent considering this application—I'm sure you have a lot of work to do, and it is flattering. I look forward to future correpsondence, regardless of the ultimate outcome.

With best hopes,

Alex Clemmer