



Marcus Russi &lt;marcusrussi@gmail.com&gt;

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**CPA Fall award**

14 messages

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**Marcus Russi** <marcus.russi@yale.edu>  
To: enrique.delacruz@yale.edu

Wed, Aug 30, 2017 at 11:07 PM

Hi Head De La Cruz,

My name is Marcus Russi, and I'm a senior in the college majoring in Computer Science. I only have one semester left at Yale (which I will complete in the spring), but I'm excited to meet you and your family around Branford! Several of my friends who just graduated from Branford College and majored in the biological sciences were ecstatic to witness your appointment on that spring day in the dining hall, too.

This fall I'm doing research and software engineering at the School of Public Health on an HIV/TB epidemiological model while on a Leave of Absence, but I'm living at my house on Dwight St as usual and, of course, staying involved in the Branford and off-campus (we are starting to call it Dwight Street College) community.

I'd like to apply for CPA funding for the fall term, and the project I wish to carry out with the funding stems from my experience commuting, via bicycle, to and from the School of Public Health this summer. This was my first experience as a cyclist-commuter in an urban area, and more specifically my first experience regularly cycling on major roads during the morning and afternoon rush hours.

It was often terrifying and I had a few close calls. Usually they involved motorists passing with way too little room (this happens to be illegal, CT law requires 3' minimum), motorists failing to signal and making right turns in front of me while we both traveled down the roadway at 10-20mph (also illegal, and the cause of my first and only collision with a car in Fall 2016), and motorist intolerance and anger towards my legal occupancy of the centers of left- and right-turn lanes as we approached intersections (often resulting in some combination of reckless driving, horn honking, verbal harassment, etc.).

Through personal reflection, and conversation with other New Haven cyclists, I've centered my thinking on these experiences around two almost inalterable conditions of the urban cyclist: a state of constant helplessness, and a state of baseline fear stemming from the radically different levels of risk taken on by the motorist and the cyclist; all whilst occupying the same roadway. As a cyclist, I have no reliable way of summoning a motorist's attention because bikes don't come with horns that can match the decibel level of a car horn. Not only am I a tiny, lightweight object compared to the 1000kg+ bulk of a steel- and aluminum-clad automobile, I can't easily make a driver even notice me if they're about to do something that could cause injury or fatality to one or both of us (whereas, the first car horn became available in 1910 and shortly thereafter became part of all Ford Motor Vehicle Co. automobiles). Worse, if a car does hit me as I travel down the road, the chance that I will sustain a life-altering or life-ending injury is substantially higher than that of the people in the car: the occupants are shielded by millions of dollars worth' of car safety research supporting features such as crumple zones, airbags, and automatic EMS dialers. It chills me to recall a similar discrepancy in risk whereby drunk drivers die less frequently than the occupants of the vehicles they haphazardly slam into.

As a result of my experiences this summer, I felt determined to take action. However, for a while I wasn't sure what I could reasonably do about a problem I feel is at the core of efforts to change urban transit culture towards one which makes cycling as attractive an option as it ought to be. For instance, a few days after almost being taken out by a car while riding down George Street, I bought a marine horn from the West Marine store on Branford. After testing it in a field, I realized that its' 120dB is way too loud to be a reasonable thing to employ on an urban roadway. And, while I intend to shadow at Devil's Gear or College Street Cycles so that I can volunteer at the Bradley Street Bike Co-op later this fall, this work will not directly improve the condition of New Haven cyclists as they engage with the innumerable hazards motorists pose to them on a daily basis. I now believe that the best way for me to respond to my experiences is to create a work of performance art that also happens to function as a mobile public information campaign, and a peaceful, respectful protest.

More specifically I intend to create an piece of mixed media that serves two primary purposes:

1. Educate motorists about Connecticut laws applicable to cyclists, and laws applicable to motorists sharing a roadway with cyclists.

2. Illuminate to motorists (a majority of whom do not regularly cycle in New Haven) what the experience of the urban cyclist can look like, day-in and day-out – both the positives, and the negatives.

My primary design goals are as follows:

1. Create a structure that can be safely towed behind a bicycle or mounted on a rigid-frame backpack which has the ability to serve as a sort of mobile “billboard.” Key to the design of this structure is to withstand a light brush with an automobile without threatening the stability of the bicycle.
2. Design the structure to allow the mounting of a small collection of rectangular, but dimension-varying signs on the “billboard.”
3. Create signs for the billboard, including but not limited to: a 3-ft-wide plank extending leftwards from the bicycle’s center axis to demonstrate the proper amount of space to be allotted while passing a cyclist, a URL to a website summarizing relevant laws and guidelines (with a slogan, for instance “Know our rights, know yours, too:”), statistics about cycling fatalities and injuries, and photographic or pictorial artwork on the experience of the urban cyclist and the cyclist-commuter life.

In support of the creation of this artwork, I intend to:

1. Consult with the owners of Devil’s Gear Bike Shop and Bradley Street Bike Co-Op about the design of such a structure, including the potential sourcing of a mount for attaching the structure to the bicycle, if indeed such a structure is best mounted on a bicycle rather than a backpack.
2. Converse with Melanie Zimyeski, Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator for the Connecticut Department of Transportation, and the Connecticut Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Board to receive advice on maintaining full compliance with all relevant state law while cycling with the structure.
3. Collaborate with Bike Walk Connecticut and Elm City Cycling, two cycling advocacy groups, to explore any formal support, media coverage, or expansion of the project that could potentially be achieved.

Having created the structure and associated artwork, the performative, public-informative, and peaceful protest aspect of the project will then be on display throughout the downtown New Haven area through my cycling around the city on a daily basis with the structure for a period of thirty days during the Fall semester. For some period of time thereafter, I hope to exhibit the bicycle and structure within the College for public viewing, allowing a space for conversation about the relationship between cyclists and motorists in the New Haven area.

I understand that the deadline for applying for the CPA grant is this Monday, and that undoubtably you are very busy with beginning-of-term proceedings. Since the guidelines of the grant suggest that the applicant meet with their Head of College, I thought that the above text should provide a sufficient introduction to my proposal, should you be short on time. Is there any period on Thursday, Friday, or Monday where you might be able to meet to discuss my project and my proposal for the CPA award?

All the best,

Marcus Russi

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**Marcus Russi** <marcus.russi@yale.edu>  
To: Tessa Adler <tessa.adler@yale.edu>

Thu, Aug 31, 2017 at 1:28 PM

What I actually sent (ignore the .rtf I sent to you on Messenger)

[Quoted text hidden]

**De La Cruz, Enrique** <enrique.delacruz@yale.edu>  
To: "marcus.russi@yale.edu" <marcus.russi@bulldogs.yale.edu>

Thu, Aug 31, 2017 at 10:46 PM

Marcus,

Thanks for reaching out and the thorough description. I ride a Vespa (150 Cc with valid plates) and share your experience (and sentiments) with some automobile drivers, and think this could be particularly helpful.

Unfortunately, I am booked tight with advisees (1st years and MB&B majors - lots of them) tomorrow, and Monday is a bit of a mess with schools closed. I suggest you go for it nonetheless, and ask that we try to meet after the submission date. With that in mind, can you drop a note on Monday? I can try to meet if I am around.

E-

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**From:** [marcusruissi@gmail.com](mailto:marcusruissi@gmail.com) <[marcusruissi@gmail.com](mailto:marcusruissi@gmail.com)> on behalf of Marcus Russi  
<[marcus.russi@yale.edu](mailto:marcus.russi@yale.edu)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 30, 2017 11:07:58 PM  
**To:** De La Cruz, Enrique  
**Subject:** CPA Fall award

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**Marcus Russi** <[marcus.russi@yale.edu](mailto:marcus.russi@yale.edu)>  
To: [gregpelican@comcast.net](mailto:gregpelican@comcast.net)

Sun, Sep 3, 2017 at 3:50 PM

Hey Greg!

Happy labor day weekend!

This is not the actual grant proposal (I'll be writing that this evening). But, it's an email to someone on the committee who reviews the proposals (you're required to talk to them before you submit) which I think does a good job of explaining basically what my project is about. I'd be particularly interested to hear what you think about important considerations for the design of such a structure, how to do this without getting killed, and any messaging you think would be particularly apt for a piece of artwork of this nature. I'm also planning on reaching out to Scott to bounce some ideas off him about how to mount the thing safely and securely.

Thank you again for offering to review my ideas for the project.

Cheers, and call me if you want to talk over the phone,

Marcus  
[203 984 1636](tel:2039841636)

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Marcus Russi** <marcus.russi@yale.edu>  
Date: Wed, Aug 30, 2017 at 11:07 PM  
Subject: CPA Fall award  
To: **enrique.delacruz@yale.edu**

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**Marcus Russi** <marcusrussi@gmail.com>  
To: "De La Cruz, Enrique" <enrique.delacruz@yale.edu>

Mon, Sep 4, 2017 at 2:31 AM

Hi Professor De La Cruz,

Thanks for the email. I hadn't thought that two-wheel motorists might be subject to the same kind of scary-stuff but I guess it shouldn't be surprising.

I totally understand that you'd be busy with academic advisees and that's why I chose to type out a longish email in lieu of hoping that you'd be able to squeeze me in. In any case, I included a screenshot of my schedule for today (Monday) if you happen to have 15-30min free and would like to discuss the project. I decided a few days ago to apply for a second grant regarding a new documentary technique for sharing my experiences doing winter alpine climbing in the North Cascades with the Yale community, and I would be happy to discuss that with you, as well.

Today I was in my backyard on Dwight Street and heard an explosion or car crash on Dwight St (I couldn't differentiate at first). I ended up being the first responder to a 30-40mph T-bone car collision at Dwight and Edgewood (I hold licensure in Washington State as an EMT-B) which was caused by a woman running the light to try to make it to the N/S Frontage Road / CT-34W / I-91 corridor in one shot (it's hard to drive the length of Dwight St without hitting a light, unless you are lucky or reckless/insane). I am grateful to be able to tell you that neither driver (single occupant vehicles) will die from their injuries and they didn't kill/injure any bicyclists or pedestrians in the process of crashing their cars either. However, as I opened one of the cars (both were totaled) to ascertain that there weren't adults or children in the backseat and coughed as gray smoke poured out of the car (which fortunately did not catch on fire), I couldn't help but wonder what would have happened if the woman who ran the red light had hit me instead as I traveled eastwards on Edgewood (my regular cycling route for returning from West Rock State Park). It seemed like the answer was pretty obvious.

-Marcus

[Quoted text hidden]

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**Marcus Russi** <marcusrussi@gmail.com>  
To: "De La Cruz, Enrique" <enrique.delacruz@yale.edu>

Mon, Sep 4, 2017 at 2:31 AM

Mon 4

9:45 AM

monica wooster sq

11 AM

brunch 360 state st b...

4:15 PM

ULA  
potluck

6:30 PM

yct  
dinner

7 PM

call mom

CPA ap...

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Marcus Russi <marcusrussi@gmail.com>

Mon, Sep 4, 2017 at 2:32 AM

To: Isaac Seamus Kirk-Davidoff <isaac.kirk-davidoff@yale.edu>

early reflections on this evening

[Quoted text hidden]

Marcus Russi <marcusrussi@gmail.com>

Mon, Sep 4, 2017 at 2:36 AM

To: Colin Francois Hemez <colin.hemez@yale.edu>

early reflections on this evening

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Marcus Russi <marcusrussi@gmail.com>

Date: Mon, Sep 4, 2017 at 2:31 AM

Subject: Re: CPA Fall award

[Quoted text hidden]

Marcus Russi <marcusrussi@gmail.com>

Mon, Sep 4, 2017 at 2:43 AM

To: slimae8@sbcglobal.net

Cc: Isaac Seamus Kirk-Davidoff <isaac.kirk-davidoff@yale.edu>

Hey Jean,

It was great to chat about the accident and Dwight St traffic this evening. I think it was really therapeutic for me to talk to a neighbor about what happened and what can be done. I will, for sure, go to a meeting at Amistad to discuss what I saw and what I think should be done about it.

I am forwarding an email I just wrote to my "Head of College" who is sort of an academic/personal advisor to me, and is also someone responsible for administering arts-related grants available to undergrads. I had emailed him earlier in the week to talk about my ideas about a cycling-related piece of performance artwork I want to create to raise awareness about the motorist-cyclist relationship in the City of New Haven. After my experience tonight with the car crash tonight I couldn't help but compose a follow-up email to him describing the accident and why I think the accident is important to think about when we think about other issues in our community such as bike safety and pedestrian safety.

I wanted to just thank you again for talking through this with me and encouraging me to go to the Amistad meeting. Again, let us know if you'd like to have dinner with us in the backyard sometime, no matter how late the hour! We'd love to show you what we built and have you over for the evening.

Cheers,

Marcus

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Marcus Russi** <[marcusrussi@gmail.com](mailto:marcusrussi@gmail.com)>

Date: Mon, Sep 4, 2017 at 2:31 AM

Subject: Re: CPA Fall award

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**De La Cruz, Enrique** <[enrique.delacruz@yale.edu](mailto:enrique.delacruz@yale.edu)>

Mon, Sep 4, 2017 at 8:28 AM

To: Marcus Russi <[marcusrussi@gmail.com](mailto:marcusrussi@gmail.com)>

Marcus,

Do you have a few minutes to touch base this morning at 11 am?

I will be in my BR office.

E-

iPhone! Apologies for typos and brevity.

[Quoted text hidden]

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**De La Cruz, Enrique** <[enrique.delacruz@yale.edu](mailto:enrique.delacruz@yale.edu)>

Mon, Sep 4, 2017 at 8:30 AM

To: Marcus Russi <[marcusrussi@gmail.com](mailto:marcusrussi@gmail.com)>

Just saw this. Noon would be too tight as well?

E-

iPhone! Apologies for typos and brevity.

On Sep 4, 2017, at 2:31 AM, Marcus Russi <[marcusrussi@gmail.com](mailto:marcusrussi@gmail.com)> wrote:

<image.png>

[Quoted text hidden]

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**image.png**

46K



**Marcus Russi** <marcusrussi@gmail.com>  
To: "De La Cruz, Enrique" <enrique.delacruz@yale.edu>

Mon, Sep 4, 2017 at 8:43 AM

I can definitely do noon in your BR office. See you then?

-Marcus  
[Quoted text hidden]

**Marcus Russi** <marcusrussi@gmail.com>  
To: "De La Cruz, Enrique" <enrique.delacruz@yale.edu>

Mon, Sep 4, 2017 at 3:57 PM

Hey Enrique,

It was great to meet you today. I just finished the grant. The site is extremely laggy and I am worried that a bug will manifest or something else will otherwise go wrong and prevent me from submitting through the official portal by 4:00pm (It is 3:56pm right now). I am including the .pdf of the entire application and the .pdf of one of the supporting documents as an attachment to this email, to act as a stopgap should the portal fail to submit my application.

-Marcus  
[Quoted text hidden]

## 2 attachments

 **Branford College Creative and Performing Arts Grant Application - Fall 2017.pdf**  
151K

 **Description of Project.pdf**  
486K

**Marcus Russi** <marcusrussi@gmail.com>  
To: "De La Cruz, Enrique" <enrique.delacruz@yale.edu>

Mon, Sep 4, 2017 at 4:03 PM

Edit: I got the grant to successfully submit via the portal a few minutes ago, well before the 4:00pm deadline.

Three quick things:

- I decided not to apply for the grant related to my audio-pictorial storytelling project on North Cascadian winter alpinism. I don't really need any money for it until the spring, anyway, so I'll apply for that CPA grant at the beginning of the Spring 2018 semester.
- I placed the Caravan project in the "Dramatic Production"/"Plays and Musicals" category. My project does not fit cleanly into any of the existing categories. However, my project will be "Dramatic," it will require "Production," – both multimedia and in the sense of the production of the actual Caravan, it is a "Play" on the idea of the billboard as it manifests on interstate highways throughout the country, and I might record some audio from my cycles around the city, so it could be considered "Musical," too. However, if the Committee feels that it better fits another one of the other six categories, please let me know because I am open to discussing changing the category.
- I plan to begin recruiting undergraduates, art students, professors, and members of the New Haven cycling community onto the project starting today. I respectfully ask that you allow this chain of email conversation to be shared with potentially interested members of the aforementioned groups to aid in the communication of what my project is about.

Enjoy the rest of Labor Day!

-Marcus

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