To whom it may concern,

Senior design offers every graduating senior a distinct insight into what a future workplace or research environment might look like. Unlike the prior coursework, this class is distinctly focused on scoping in on a single project to be undertaken over the course of a single semester. As a result, it is in order to describe the pros and cons, the ups and downs, and offer some insight into the future of the course.

I would rank my overall experience in Capstone as a positive run-through. Particularly when discussing with some of the other groups and my friends, our whole process appeared to run much smoother than some others. Technically speaking, I learned a great deal about creating and modifying good data visualizations. I learned how and where to search for good research papers, what to extract from them, and where to find good sources of publicly accessible data. Additionally, I learned the expectations of research, an understanding of what a research meeting looks like, and how the distribution of work occurs in a research project. I also learned how the expectations of a research assignment differ from that of a standard client-product relation.

My frustrations in this project largely came from miscommunication and the initial burden of work. As far as miscommunication goes, it was not initially clear to me the expectations for meeting minutes, daily outlines, and meeting requirements. Several meetings with our client could at times become heated due to a miscommunication or expectations not being clearly outlined. Additionally, although our group was absolved from many assignments due to the nature of our project being a research project, several of my colleagues were under a disproportionate burden of effort in the course. I believe that the course, in an effort to streamline the real world application, suffered in large due to the burden of paper assignments in addition to the client’s expectations. Working with our client was at times a great deal of fun, as we dug deeper into discovering new aspects of our research. The interaction as a team was a cherished time, and I will remember some of the meetings we had very fondly.

In terms of CSE courses, I got dealt a very good deck of cards for the professors that really taught me exactly what I was willing to learn. I am sad to see many of them go, and I imagine that many of the staff feel the same way. In terms of professors that I really enjoyed, in no particular order:

* Dr. Castro-Hernandez - Intro and Object Oriented
* Dr. Gani - TA’d and took his Data Structures
* Dr. Rao - Systems II
* Prof. Mike Stahr - Databases
* Dr. Kiper - Algorithms
* Dr. Inclezan - Ethics
* Dr. Stephan - Intro to Software
* Dr. Bachmann - Graphics
* Dr. Zmuda - Mobile Apps and Comparative
* Dr. Campbell - Web Apps and Web Services
* Prof. Norm Krumpe - Math + CS
* Dr. Ferrenberg - High Performance Computing
* Dr. Davis - Advanced DB
* Dr. Rapos - Research Methods
* Dr. Raychoudhury - Senior Design
* Prof. Lynn Stahr - Senior Design

If I forgot any of my professors, it is likely because my memory is terrible. I ask that you take my sincerest apologies for any misstep.

The only experience that affected my GPA and sanity to a point worth noting in this reflection is the contribution of Dr. Fabio Guerinoni, who is no longer at the university. He is gone, and I don’t believe in speaking ill of others unless it can be used to benefit the future or for the sake of existing improvements. Dr. Fabio was careless in preparing labs, homework, lectures, and all other class material, often providing source code that did not compile. He refused to use C++ techniques in his Systems I class that were not updated for the current day, and resulted in the use of C coding for many of his assignments, which again, did not compile. He could not provide help on the labs that he modified from their original formats, did not provide answer keys for his TAs, and practiced a grading scale so inconsistent, that he often misgraded my assignments by upwards of 30 points based on his own proto-rubric.

I only offer this anecdote to offer the department some red flags to look out for in future hires, because his willful ignorance outbid my resilient work ethic, resulting in a grade for the course that did not reflect the effort I was putting into the course. In particular, I believe the CSE department could benefit from some sort of ‘auditing’ process, where if sufficient evidence was shown, a student’s grade could be manually adjusted by the chair. Particularly in situations like this.

As for the other departments, I really wish there was a way to get students out of having to take Pre-Med chemistry and biology and take something that may be more applicable to their day to day life. Even substituting chemistry for something like a field botany would prove more applicable to the average CSE student than an understanding of fundamental stoichiometry. I think much of this has to do with ABET accreditation, but I am still puzzled why after getting a 3 on the AP chemistry test, I was not able to get out of the intro course that covered less material than the AP class. This issue seems largely out of the department's hands, but I can dream.

In terms of non-CSE professors that I hold great respect and thankfulness for, Dr. Tammy Kernodle in the Musicology department is one of the best professors at Miami University. I had the privilege of taking her classes in Jazz History and Hip-Hop History and found them to be two of my favorite courses. She has a fervent passion for students of all backgrounds and is a voice for justice and humanity for all people. In addition, Dr. Louis DiBiasio of the Mathematics departmentment provided my knowledge of discrete mathematics, and taught me that it was okay to suck when you don’t understand things. He also taught me the importance of office hours and was a generally great man who began every class by reading a quote from a small book called ‘Deep Thoughts’. He will be missed.

In terms of overall campus experience, I have had a very positive time at Miami University. I have made a number of very good friends that I intend to have for life, and my association with my Christian organization (The Bridge) has enabled the growth of my faith as well as my ability to give to the community in need. The mission work I have been able to conduct and help peoples’ lives is what I continue to live for. I chose to pursue my work in Computer Science because of my love of programming, and my desire to make enough money to pay my parents’ house off and do more mission work in the future. The harvest is plenty, the workers are few, and people all over the world need a lot of help. This has been my objective since coming to Miami University, and it is my objective to this day. Education empowers, but it is only what we choose to do with it that gives its power any resolve. It is my hope that my time at Miami University has been reflective of my faith, of the Gospel, of my Christian testament as I have grown and others have grown with me. The global approach of Miami University and many universities is that ‘college’ is an experience ‘all about you and what you want to do and become’. It is a lie, plain as day. The experience should be about who you can serve, and what you are doing to help all of those around you.

I would not be at this point without all those who have come before me. The students, who have passed their insight into me over time: Mike Gentile, Alex Oladale. The professors who I have discussed at length. My entire family, parents and brother included, who have been supportive up to this point. My friends, who remind me that iron sharpens iron in how we choose to build each other up every single day. The full list of my thank-yous is too long to even remember, but as a final note, I have to thank every person who has come in contact with me at one point or another in this life. I have much I have learned, much I desire to teach, and much I have yet to learn.

I have no knowledge of who will read this document, where it will go, and where it will end up. If it ends up on your computer or desk, Dear Reader, I want to thank you for reading. It is my hope that I have at one point learned something from you, and in return, I hope you have learned something from me. It has been an honor and a privilege.

See you further on up the road,

Noah Dunn