

To whom it may concern,

I fondly remember the first time a program I had written for my introductory Java class successfully compiled. It was more satisfying than landing several front-page bylines in the Arizona Republic newspaper where I was an intern reporter for about a year. I likely wrote several hundred, mostly crime-related news stories while there, and before long, I had been sort of granted my own beat covering Phoenix cold cases. Doing so eventually led to my first data-oriented piece and left me with a soft spot for crime statistics.

I had always known computers could do more than facilitate Google searches and provide high-speed access to memes, but my awareness of their impact on journalism was heightened when I took a data-reporting class at Arizona State University's Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

Steve Doig teaches the class, but there was a brief time when that almost wasn't the case. He was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, which is statistically a death-sentence in most cases. He regularly attends the Investigative Reporters and Editors' NICAR conferences, but was unable to last year and sent me in his place. He has recovered, thankfully, and can keep teaching future data-journalists.

His class is incredibly thorough for a journalism course, but there aren't any other data-specific classes at Cronkite, so I sought them elsewhere at ASU to supplement my new interest. I've become proficient in Java, R, Python and Unix, the latter being incredibly useful and frankly, I think more journalists should use it for things like task automation, document scraping and data querying and wrangling.

I'm learning front-end web development this semester so I can move past the basic HTML and CSS I've used to build my website. I've studied statistics heavily in several courses, including one currently in which we're using Python for spatial analyses. My hope is to apply these skills to my work at the Arizona Center for Investigative Reporting, where I've taken an internship for the spring semester.

I'm no professional programmer, genius statistician or expert journalist, but I'm taking steps to becoming some combination of the three, and I aspire to opportunities in which I would have the pleasure and fortune to learn and work with people I admire and regard as some of the best in the industry.

Sincerely,  
Justin Price