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 news stories while there, mostly crime-related, and before long, I was sort of granted my own beat covering Phoenix cold cases. Doing so eventually led to my first feature piece and left me with a soft spot for crime statistics.

I took an internship at the National Journalism Center in Washington, D.C. for the summer of 2014, which lent my reporting services to the Washington Free Beacon where I covered politics. So much exposure to the political scene left me overwhelmingly frustrated with the convoluted jargon and redundant talking points of public officials and think tanks. What was even more mind-boggling was the eagerness many reporters exerted toward covering such things. So I started sifting through campaign contributions and lobbying expense reports to help the Free Beacon reporters with their stories and to keep myself occupied (for the sake of transparency, the Free Beacon is outwardly right-leaning, and there's a pretty good story of how I wound up there).

I had always known computers had more to offer than Google and 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.

The professor was Steve Doig. He still 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 NICAR, but was unable to last year and sent me in his stead. I am beyond grateful to him for that trip and to whomever or whatever brought him into remission so he can keep teaching future data-journalists.

His class was incredibly thorough for a journalism course, but there aren't any other data-specific classes at Cronkite, so I sought courses elsewhere at ASU to supplement my new interest. Since then, I've become proficient in Java and R. I'll soon be able to say the same about Unix, which is incredibly useful and frankly, I'm surprised more journalists don't take advantage of it. I'll be taking my first web-development class next semester, though I've taught myself enough HTML and CSS to build my website (I'll be able to automate that process in Unix within the next month). I've studied geographic information science, taken several statistics courses and have been working with the Arizona Center for Investigative Reporting for the last few months to keep honing my writing skills by penning my own data-driven stories.

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 the best in the industry.

Also, FiveThirtyEight has used my data.

Thank you for your consideration,
Justin Price