

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 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. The eagerness many reporters exerted toward covering such things was mind-boggling. 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.

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. 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 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 and Unix, the latter being 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 and am learning how to automate HTML using the terminal. I've studied geographic information science, taken several statistics courses and have been working with the Arizona Center for Investigative Reporting for the past few months to keep honing my writing skills by penning some data-driven stories of my own.

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.

Sincerely,
Justin Price