Dear Ms. Colleen Stoxen,

I've come a long way since first breaking into the world of data journalism in the spring of 2020 – yes, the same spring that a pandemic broke out in. The short story is that it's been a series of trial and error learning tools like Python and HTML/CSS/Javascript to expand my skills, with each coding error resulting in keyboard face-smashing. But I have to say: it's been really fun learning despite all the hurdles. This past year dabbling in data journalism, working at The Minnesota Daily student newspaper then moving on to tracking the coronavirus for The New York Times, all while learning programming tools on the side, is a testament to my commitment to this type of work. Due to the ever-evolving nature of data journalism, I'm constantly pushed to improve my skill set and experience – and that's the type of environment where I thrive the most. As your Graphics Producer, I hope to put novelty, persistence, and visual creativity into my work to make sure that my data visualizations, however elaborate, are rooted in simplicity – the kind where the reader can easily understand at first glance the meaning behind a chart.

At my student newspaper, my best work was a data story on the percentage of classes that were switched to a more lenient grade scale. The project involved the entire scope, from requesting the data to reporting and visualizing it. At The Times, I've used my knowledge of spreadsheets to scrape, collect and analyze public covid information for compiling databases on covid at nursing homes, colleges, workplaces – as well as to track the U.S. vaccine rollout. I also wrote a briefing about covid at nursing homes, and the vaccination progress, learning how to scour the web for readily-available information like federal data and press releases when putting something out in the next hour. Every experience was fairly the same, but the methodology in which I retrieved and vetted the data for each project was different. There was even a time where we had to wipe an NYT project because we found out the data was faulty. I understood then how a clear methodology can mean the difference between clean data and faulty data. Whether collecting, vetting, or visualizing data, versatility is the most important tool that I have with me – I like being flexible to be able to float wherever my skills are needed the most and meet the daily, sometimes chaotic, demands of a news cycle.

As both a journalist and a frequent reader, I've always looked up to the Star Tribune as a beacon of inspiration for local journalism, especially the graphics/data team. They are a small yet highly-talented group, whose visual work I admire greatly and am very familiar with. So familiar that I'm currently a contractor with them, helping run a weekly scraper that updates the Tribune's online covid landing page. But I would like to do more and add a fresh perspective. As an official member of the graphics team, I would love to immerse my skill set in stories, for example, around sports or climate change – collaborating on an analysis story on MN United's player stats, or mapping the impact of climate change on the Boundary Waters ecosystem. Having familiarity with the Twin Cities, as well as the rest of the state, will help me dive right into the workflow of covering Minnesota's exciting and fast-paced news cycle. Put me on the team, coach. I'm eager to help bring context to nuanced and diverse stories about Minnesota, through graphics, data viz, and my creativity.

Thank you for considering my candidacy for this position. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,
Yves De Jesus,