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Dear ACP,

Growing up I had always been fascinated by creating art and doing creative projects. Throughout my life, I feel like these creative endeavors have continued to narrow my path and help me figure out what I want to do in life. Graphic design is not just work to me, but it represents many of the experiences and the joys that I've been able to encounter in the last few years. I write to you in the hope that you'll see some of my passion and motivation within my design work for the Best Graphic Designer award.

I could go on for pages about why I love design, but a lot of it stems from it being a medium that I can truly express my feelings and emotions. But along with that, it is a form of expression that allows me to showcase my culture in different ways. Growing up in a Vietnamese household, I was constantly surrounded by extremely beautiful paintings, music, and different forms of art that led me to become a Graphic Designer. I owe my inspiration for becoming a designer to a famous musical variety show called Paris By Night, this show incorporates art forms like dance, music, and visuals into one experience for the diaspora of Overseas Vietnamese communities. I remember starting off making fan-made posters on PowerPoint before I started to gradually learn the Adobe suite which has led me to positions of work nowadays. I think with my upbringing's huge influence, I was pushed towards design as I didn't see much of my own culture's design and art elements in mainstream media.

As a freshman at Oregon State University, I joined our student media program, Orange Media Network, as a marketing associate. From day one, I remained persistent in my passion for design and developed it through this marketing role, which seemingly had nothing to do with creating graphics. I encouraged previous editors to implement more visual content into their print publications, increase social media engagement with targeted campaigns and more.

Later on, I became Creative Lead for OMN, leading a team of designers and creators to produce graphics and design publications for each medium in our department with almost no experience other than my persistence and enthusiasm for the job.

After a full year on the job, learning everything about being a lead and a better creative, I had the chance to attend the CMA/ACP conference in the fall of 2022, this is where a new design flame was sparked into my brain. I got the chance to meet and interact with so many different students that were crafting their work in the same way that I was. This was a big inspiration for me going forward with being a Creative Lead once more in my last year of college. For me it was seeing all these different students work that pushed me to want to make our organizations' work better.

Through developing a tighter collaboration with editors and writers, I helped elevate the clarity and impact of their journalistic storytelling through my personal design style and vision, while incorporating marketing tactics from start to finish. I also implemented my design knowledge to help publications produce journalism that were more visually accessible on all platforms, which drastically improved audience engagement online, in social media, and on the newsstands. By doing this I helped solidify what a designer means to our organization, someone that can compile everyone's ideas and produce it into something visually stunning.

From my experience as the Creative Lead at Orange Media Network (OMN), I've found that the designer's role in any media organization is one of the most important if not the most. Although it can vary based on the leader, I've found myself at the center of idea creation, implementation, and much more. The designer's role is not only to take the ideas of others and be able to create them but also to be able to let them dream bigger and accomplish newer feats.

This is one of the biggest things that has impacted my creative process. Thinking outside of the box and coming up with ideas that push the envelope further from someone's original idea are the greatest motivation for me. My

favorite way to work through a creative problem, was always to pull in different types of people to see how they would view a specific piece. For example getting a writer or editors point of view on a specific magazine layout is important because you want to have a fine balance of readability and flow along with the aestheticism of design.

Initially, I thought this job would just be a good outlet for me to scratch my creative itch and gain some experience along the way, but I didn't realize how much I would love producing visual content through a journalistic lens. I finally understood the power of visual media in storytelling, and realized there was true potential for me to pursue it as a career.

I've found that during my time here at Orange Media Network, I've truly found what I'm meant to do for the rest of my life. I want to work within a media organization to create magazines, newspapers, marketing campaigns and more to help uplift diverse voices, make news more accessible, and bring a fresh perspective to publication design.

Working in a college journalism organization has also opened so many doors to things I never thought I would be able to do. After working closely with multiple editors over the years and seeing the joy of their writers seeing their work in print and how people from all over the community consumed our content, I wanted to try my hand at writing. As a graduating senior, I began focusing all my attention on journalism, specifically concentrating on expanding my news skill set to include writing and editing, not just design.

In April, I approached the Editor-in-Chief of OSU's newspaper, The Daily Barometer, about starting a column called "The Culture Corner", and in May, I wrote my first story. After interviewing several students from all over OSU about their experiences with the term Asian American Pacific Islander, I discussed how the term does not effectively represent all the communities that it is supposed to, and argue that most media only highlights stories of East Asians, and the stories of other Asian communities, like Southeast Asians or South Asians, often go untold.

As a Vietnamese American who always wanted to see myself represented in the media, I realized how crucial it is to truly have a diverse newsroom. The people writing stories are just as important as the stories themselves.

Writing this column solidified what I already knew in my heart after my introduction to the world of journalism: I am a curious person who genuinely enjoys speaking with people, especially those in marginalized groups, and I aspire to elevate their perspectives on impactful topics through all forms of media — whether that be design, writing, or both.

I've found that during my time here at Orange Media Network, I've truly found what I'm meant to do for the rest of my life. I want to work within a media organization to be able to shape the conversation and what's being produced in journalism, whether it be from a marketing perspective in audience, to laying out pages for a magazine. My passion and curiosity for journalism has truly blossomed within the last year, and I can't wait to see where the work I got to produce this year will take me.

A handwritten signature in orange ink, consisting of stylized, cursive letters that appear to be 'AC' followed by a flourish.