To: y1xu@odu.edu
Subject: Interest in Participating in Undergraduate Research

Dear Dr. Yuesheng Xu,

My name is Lily Daniels, and I am a second-year Applied Mathematics and English major at Old Dominion University. I learned about your research through the Chief Departmental Advisor for the Department of Mathematics, Professor Robert Strozak. I was told that you recently won an NSF grant and might need some more students to assist with research. I am very interested in participating in undergraduate research, and I was wondering if I could join your research group.

I have read several of your articles including "A fixed-point proximity approach to solving the support vector regression with group lasso regularization" and "A fast discrete spectral method for stochastic partial differential questions." Since my primary research interest is computational mathematics, I was particularly fascinated by your application of the Karhunen-Loève expansion.

After I graduate from Old Dominion University, I plan to pursue a Ph.D. in Computational and Applied Mathematics or a related scientific field. Currently, I am interested in increasing and applying my computational mathematics skills. Assisting you with research would be an irreplaceable experience. Additionally, as an English major, I would be able to utilize my critical reading and writing skills during all stages of research.

I hope that you will allow me to join your research group. If you are not too busy, I would enjoy meeting with you and discussing my potential role in your lab. I am free after 4 pm most weekdays. I have attached my resume and unofficial transcript to this email. Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Lily Daniels
ODU UIN: 00000000
ODU email: ldani002@odu.edu

Lily Daniels

Dr. Daniel Richards

Technical Writing

14 September 2019

<div align="center">Ideological Analysis</div>

Ideology is defined as "the cultural belief in what is good, right, and best" (Moses and Katz 74). Email is a communication technology designed to increase "speed, productivity, and efficiency" (84). However, in the process of meeting that end goal, email dissolves boundaries between business and personal communication and between workplace and home. Moses and Katz also argue that email breaks down traditional frameworks, such as social hierarchies and formal conventions. They propose that "[e]mail users pay less attention to traditional, formal business convention, such as structure, spelling, and grammar" (74). Email is not simply a technological innovation or application; it is an ideological product and a cultural phenomenon that reaches into political, economic, and relational spheres (86).

The argument in "The Phantom Machine: The Invisible Ideology of Email (A Cultural Critique)" is twofold: email promotes productivity (84) and destroys traditional conventions (73). The capitalistic goals of productivity are apparent throughout the email I composed for this assignment. However, the second aspect of their argument did not manifest itself in my email. Thus, the ideology of email quietly permeates into all aspects of life but fails to saturate.

Dr. Yuesheng Xu is a researcher and mathematics professor at Old Dominion University (ODU). I wrote him an email expressing my desire to join his research group. As I composed the email, I followed the guidelines of the *Purdue Owl* and *Writing Commons* resources and the study by Boland and Queen. I chose to heed their advice because I wanted my email to be clear

and respectful. The advice by *Purdue Owl* and *Writing Commons* was especially relevant since it was targeted at students. According to the piece by Moses and Katz, formatting conventions demonstrate the ideology of email and technology (91). For example, subject lines increase efficiency because receivers can scan their inbox instead of opening each individual email (92). My email's composition reflects this capitalistic ideology, but the fact that I chose to adhere to a structure in the first place goes against their claim that email is a technology that "subsume traditional institutional frameworks" (74).

When I composed the email, I followed the basic outline described by the *Writing Commons*: subject-line, salutation, and message. Instead of using an open-ended subject line, such as "Research" or "Question," I wrote a short yet descriptive subject line that identified my purpose. I chose to include a formal greeting given the subject matter. In the introduction, I identified myself and my specific request. In the following two paragraphs, I briefly explained my interest in Dr. Xu's research and listed several personal goals. Then, I concluded by reiterating my request and expressing my gratitude. Additionally, I made Dr. Xu aware of the attached files, and I included my contact information at the end.

The goal of speed is especially apparent in the details. As suggested by the *Writing Commons*, I added an extra space between each paragraph to increase readability. In terms of syntax, the message was mostly comprised of simple and compound sentences. While this might make for dull reading, one can easily scan and comprehend the content.

My attention to hierarchy and grammar challenges the argument made by Moses and Katz that "users may be moving away from traditional institutional frameworks" (93). They reference the shift from traditional salutations as an example of email "flattening…traditional hierarchies" (94). However, I specifically chose to follow the traditional guidelines because I

wanted to write with sensitivity to the hierarchies that exist in academia. Similarly, I made every attempt to keep the email free of spelling and grammar errors. According to Boland and Queen's (2016) research, typing and grammar errors often negatively influences a reader's impression of a writer. Since my audience was a research professor, I wanted to make a good impression and demonstrate my attention to detail.

While the ideology of email affected the time, place, and device I used to write this email, I was more concerned with the overall quality of my work. ODU is a lively, urban campus with many distractions, and I enjoy study groups with friends as much as the next young college student, but I chose to work alone and at home to increase my productivity and improve my quality of writing. I could have dashed off this email on my phone as I walked from one class to another, but I wanted to take some time and focus on crafting a thoughtful email. Over the course of several days, I composed this email in a Microsoft Word document on my laptop. I wrote and edited the majority of it while I was at home and periodically worked on it between classes at ODU's campus. If I had written it on my phone, I would have had a higher chance of making mistakes while proofreading. Microsoft Word is equipped with more sophisticated grammar and spellchecker technology than most phones. In fact, I have not been able to enable any spellchecker on my smartphone, and its predictive type and autocorrect settings are unreliable. My desire to work productively yet thoughtfully demonstrates a marriage of ideologies.

When you sprinkle salt into a glass water, it permeates the water and affects the entire glass. Add too much salt, and you will end up with a saturated salt water solution. Eventually, if you add enough salt, it will absorb the water completely. The invisible ideology of email has affected all aspects of our lives, but it has not yet replaced traditional conventions. Instead, we see a mixture of ideologies existing all at once.

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