



UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND

Center for Advanced Transportation Technology

Dept. of Civil & Environmental Engineering

3105 J. Kim Engineering Bldg.

College Park, MD 20742



August 24, 2010

3361 A.V. Williams Bldg.

Attn: Prof. Larry S. Davis

University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742-3255

Dear Prof. Davis:

The purpose of this letter is to tell you about three outstanding undergraduate students:

- Tapan Patel, B.S. Computer Science, 2011
- Barry Smith, B.S. Computer Science, 2011
- Akash Trivedi, B.S. Computer Science, 2013

These undergrads have gone above and beyond the call of duty since a recent disaster in the J. Kim Engineering Building crippled my laboratory. On the morning of August 12th, 2010, my staff and I arrived at the Kim Building to find that our server room had been completely flooded due to backpressure from a clogged building drain during a major thunderstorm. A literal waterfall was pouring down on top of our server equipment which houses all of our internal lab applications, our code repository, and a mission critical system used by first responders, transportation management officials, NSA, Secret Service, US Capitol Police, FEMA, and countless other agencies from New York down to North Carolina. After killing power to the room, we found that some of the servers had over one liter of water inside of them! Every single piece of equipment was destroyed. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were lost as were thousands of hours of work. It was a disaster beyond our wildest nightmares.

Immediately, my IT staff consisting of undergraduate students Barry Smith, Tapan Patel, and Akash Trivedi went to work to try to salvage vital data from the machines. Within a matter of hours, they had pieced together bits of equipment from other lab spaces to get partial functionality back up in my lab. Within a few days, they had successfully recovered data from our critical code repository.

I was truly impressed at how quickly they were accomplishing so many difficult tasks. Then I realized they weren't simply coming to work at 8AM and leaving at 5PM. Instead, they had been putting in all-nighters—working 24 hour a day—taking short naps to relieve one another.

I couldn't believe how hard they were working, and with no pressure from myself or any of the other full-time staff in the lab. They have even cancelled precious vacation time to ensure the lab is successful in spite of this disaster.

Barry, Tapan, and Akash continue to work extremely hard every day and many nights to try to bring our lab back to full capacity again. We still have a very long way to go. Insurance reimbursement has not yet come through, nor have we been able to purchase all of the equipment that was lost. Much of our data and hard work is still unaccounted for and may likely never be recovered.

The extremely hard work that these three students have put in is a testament to their character and abilities. They have done more than anyone would have expected. They are drastically underpaid for their duties and responsibilities. They have put in more hours and hard work than the University will allow us to compensate them for. These are remarkable young men who will be exemplar ambassadors for the University of Maryland when they graduate. They deserve every ounce of thanks and credit that we can offer!

I have written this letter to simply make you aware that these students exist, and that they deserve our thanks. Because of their hard work, my laboratory will continue to be able to bring in sponsored research projects that advance our safety, security, and knowledge of the world around us along with elevating the name and stature of the University of Maryland.

Sincerely,



Michael L. Pack
Director, Center for Advanced Transportation Technology Laboratory
<http://www.cattlab.umd.edu>

CC: Dr. C. D. Mote, Jr, Professor and President, University of Maryland
Dr. Darryll Pines, Farvardin Professor and Dean, School of Engineering
Dr. Ali Haghani, Professor and Chair, Civil & Environmental Engineering Department