

Dear Dr. Barker,

Greetings. My name is Corey Cao Nguyen. I'm an incoming third year UCI Digital Filmmaking student. This envelope and the contents that follow are a petition from myself and other DigiFilm students, asking you to transform UCI DigiFilm from a minor into a major program at the Claire Trevor School of the Arts.

For aspiring filmmakers at UC Irvine, DigiFilm acts as the catalyst for our professional careers. The minor perfectly blends a mixture of technical training and artistic enlightenment to produce wildly creative students with the pragmatic skills to bring their unique cinematic visions to life. In addition, incredible faculty members and other passionate students create a tight-knit, homely community for filmmakers. It was this melting pot of art, film, and friends that convinced me to leave my first major to pursue filmmaking. Simply, without DigiFilm, I would not be who I am.

Unfortunately, while most of my fellow students share in the positive experiences I have had, changing circumstances threaten the continued effectiveness of our program to facilitate the upward mobility of passionate, hard-working student filmmakers. A combination of a lack of funding and faculty to offer courses consistently creates scenarios in which senior students must graduate one or two courses short of completing the minor they've put three or four years worth of work into. This same problem also hinders our admissions, as we've repeatedly reset the record number for admissions every quarter since student interest and demand only rise exponentially with time. But we cannot accommodate this growing interest with our current infrastructure as a minor. And so, qualified UCI students who desperately wish to join us, can't.

As a student of Digital Filmmaking, I organized this petition, with the generous help of my fellow students, to bring these issues to light. But, I also wish to advocate for DigiFilm's potential as a major. In an ever-changing world, the lines of traditional media and online content continue to blur. For Digital Filmmaking, the expansion of our program into a major means the full realization of our goal to embrace the new digital age of the future. In your *Message from the Dean*, you spoke about how Claire Trevor students graduate with the necessary skills to succeed in today's art world. Enabling us to achieve this vision means handing UCI student filmmakers the tools and skills, not just for today, but for *tomorrow* as well.

The students and I fully recognize that fruits of our effort don't belong to us. We push forward this petition for those yet to arrive. As past students cut lumber for sets they never saw, we are trying to build a major for those who come next. Lin Manuel Miranda wrote, in *Hamilton*, "What is a legacy? It's planting seeds to a garden you don't get to see." The Digital Filmmaking major would be our garden. This petition is our seed.

What follows my letter are testimonies from my fellow students in which they describe the impacts UCI DigiFilm has had on their lives as well as a list of signatories who support this petition. Thank you so much for your time, and if you wish to reach out to me, you may do so at either coreycn@uci.edu or at my phone number : 714-603-9300

Best Regards,

Corey Cao Nguyen

Class of 2020
UCI Digital Filmmaking Student

Dear Dr. Barker,

My name is Jocelyn Contreras and I'm an incoming fourth year Literary Journalism student. I am minoring in Digital Filmmaking. I hope to become a renown screenwriter that captures the underserved populations of humanity. I strive to be humane and effective in the writing I produce.

The importance of innovation and the passion of exploration through hands-on experience were learned skills. These skills were acquired in the beginning of my second year, when I decided to join the Digital Filmmaking minor. From all the courses I have taken regarding the arts, social issues, and research driven lectures, the ones offered in this minor were and are irreplaceable. They have taught me the importance of film—the power to evoke a call to action through group effort consisting of undergraduate students. I've never met a professor so passionate about creating a space inclusive and respecting of every individual who wishes to enter the film industry. This minor has gathered talented students willing to put in more than one-hundred percent of their being into the work they create.

This minor has motivated me in so many ways: the possibility to succeed through hard work and group effort. I've always loved film and through this minor I learned the entire process of making a short film. It was a memorable and amazing opportunity to learn my strengths and weaknesses. We have built sets, set up lighting, we have gripped, I have directed, and we have edited to make imperfect and yet perfect creations. I am grateful to this minor and know that we are all going to accomplish amazing feats thanks to the values and skills we have learned. Because of this minor, I have become the innovative and curious student determined to create an inclusive space for Latina womxn in the film industry. I know this minor will continue to touch lives like mine, womxn who want to create a visual and creative film that truly defines us.

Sincerely, Jocelyn Azucena Contreras

Dear Dr. Barker,

My name is Nancy Nguyen. Like many Digifilm students, I am not a film major. I'm a biology major. I planned for a career in cancer research, and before I even entered college, I spent my high school summers at UCI developing new therapies for lymphoma. I continued that work as an undergraduate, submitting two UROP proposals, and soon, co-authoring a paper. As dedicated as I was to research, it was unfulfilling. I sought a different outlet in Digifilm. The work I did through this program was meaningful in a way that research was not. I worked on a documentary last quarter about the last gay bar in Garden Grove, my hometown. This project took me everywhere: bars, strangers' houses, UCI's LGBT archives. In the process, I met incredible, generous people who offered their stories. They cried, they laughed, they berated me. But what stuck in my memory the most was their words of gratitude upon seeing their lives and truths transmitted into the world.

I recently left my lab of three years and the prospect of a promising research career to pursue filmmaking. This is the right decision because DigiFilm has given me the skills, opportunities, and companions for whom I am forever grateful. But the most incredible thing a school can do, beyond transmitting skills and knowledge, is offering an environment where purpose can be discovered and cultivated. That is what DigiFilm is to me and what it can be for others.

Best Regards, Nancy Nguyen

Dear Dr. Barker,

My name is Joanne Ducot. The creation of DigiFilm minor during my 1st year is one of the reasons why I decided to stay at UC Irvine. Shortly after arriving at UCI, I wanted more hands-on experience and luckily I was accepted into the program. The information and skills I've learned from DigiFilm are valuable and will actually help me in my future career. I had the opportunity to show a film at the 2017 Newport Beach Film Festival and two films at the 2018 Newport Beach Film Festival. I was able to network with other award-winning filmmakers and represent UCI. The professors work hard and endlessly to create opportunities and experiences for their students. They know what is expected in the industry and they push students to reach their potential.

Out of every department I have worked with at UCI, DigiFilm seems to care the most about their student's success in the film industry. I'm grateful to have met so many talented people in the program who have made my undergrad experience a memorable one. DigiFilm truly creates an environment that allows the students to interact and work with one another and it feels like one big family.

I have been with the minor ever since day one and I was able to finish it this year. Over the three years, I could already see how fast the program is growing. However, there are only three professors/instructors and a whole lot of students. I can already see the improvement in the type of work students are producing ever since the start. I know how hard working these students are and their dedication to filmmaking. I would love to see UCI as a notable film school. I think the students that are in the program will represent UC Irvine with pride.

I wouldn't be the filmmaker I am today if it weren't for the DigiFilm professors and students. The classes not only teach you the technical aspects of filmmaking and industry standard knowledge but push you to think creatively. It feels like an open environment where students can freely share their new and innovative ideas. The courses here are challenges but extremely rewarding. I am proud to be a UCI Digital Filmmaking alumni and it would be my dream to see this amazing program grow even more.

Best Regards, Joanne Ducot

Dear Dr. Barker,

As a double-majored Art and Film and Media Studies graduate, DigiFilm has played a large part in my undergraduate experience. It was the 81A class that really gives me some hopes that I might have some shots in the film industry, because of the valuable skills that I learned there. However, that experience is limited due to the fact that we only have 8 classes in the minor, and I wasn't able to take all the classes because not all classes were offered at the right time due to the lack of space and the lack of staff. I think having a DigiFilm being a major would be a great benefit for students.

Sincerely, Theone Ly

Dear Dr. Barker,

The UCI Digital Filmmaking Minor Program is a uniquely invaluable incubator for rising filmmakers providing students with skills and experience in working in an industry-like microcosm with the tools and spaces commonly utilized by professionals in the pre-production, production, and post-production processes of making films. With guidance from renowned filmmakers and astute academics, students are trained in techniques and concepts both common and foreign to the American film industry. Students are exposed early on to the collaborative relationships crucial to succeed in the commercial and independent film industries. Essential to the program's task are its faculty, working spaces, and tools: students are trained to safely and creatively use the Sound Stage and the Post-Production Office at the Claire Trevor School of the Arts as well as the Annexes (bungalows) behind the Science Library including the equipment for production and hardware and software for post-production. More importantly, the faculty collectively employ a diverse and inclusive framework in the enrollment process and the pedagogical approach. DigiFilm consistently strives to make its technical, conceptual, and advisory resources available to students of disenfranchised communities allowing themselves and their networks to claim positions of power allowing them to shape narratives from their perspectives.

By providing them with necessary tools and training, DigiFilm can serve to validate their stories, their identities, alternative world views that combat predominant narratives about the world and peoples. Moreover, while nurturing marginalized narratives, DigiFilm offers students channels into film industries so they can take part in changing the course of these industries, the products they produce, the narratives people watch and internalize and project onto the world around them. In short, DigiFilm is a beacon that deserves to be amplified amidst the darkness surrounding us today and in the foreseeable future. Personally, DigiFilm taught me commercial and avant-garde techniques by exposing me to the grammars underneath popular films and obscure experimental and works of limited popularity. In turn, for our Art 81B class (Intro to Production pt. 2), we learned how to build a set with windows, doorways, hallways, and rooms from wood panels. Then for the final group projects, we were able to pitch our ideas to the class and we collectively selected 2 directors, 1 for each group. The idea I pitched, which my fellow filmmakers approved of and chose to work on, was about how people in power protect sexual offenders and how the survivor

may choose to respond. This is significant, not for myself, but for rising filmmakers intent on collectively making similar (and better) narratives about the victims/survivors of overt and covert forms of violence and what they do to address power, to address their world. It reflects the changing times and reflects how UCI can be committed to affirming such change.

As a recent graduate, I am even more empowered to enter and succeed in either commercial or independent film industries because DigiFilm trained me to effectively handle industry workload and workflow while being a better learner on the job than one with no training nor prior exposure. I have been able to work in student film sets from New York Film Academy and American Film Institute (AFI), TV pilots, music videos, and even promotional videos for UCI DigiFilm. In these sets, I have networked with professionals and would-be professionals who have invited me to upcoming shoots furthering my training and career.

Gathering the opinions of my peers while in the program, we agree that the minor program should become a permanent, full-fledged major program at UCI. The program needs more support from the School of the Arts and from the university in order to maintain and expand its scale and scope as an asset of a diversifying university in a diversifying global market. It is not simply a matter of funding a hobby. It is a matter of training students to re-define narratives produced by the industry that the American and global public internalize as reflections or proper interpretations of the world--it is an indispensable tool in the battle over truth and justice.

Signed, Vito Perez

Dear Dr. Barker,

Before attending UCI, I thought that the prospect of becoming a filmmaker was only a dream that would come only after attending film school or working my way up from the bottom in a studio. Digifilm has changed my perspective on that idea. It has given me the necessary skills to create work but also the confidence to pursue a career in filmmaking without having to do things the Hollywood way.

Once I arrived to UCI I signed up for the minor, I had never made a film before that. I was an art major that painted and took photos, but my time in Digifilm allowed me to flex my creativity into a field that I always loved and admired as a kid. I went from watching other filmmaker's movies in a theatre to having my own film screen in a theater at the Newport Beach Film Festival. I met so many talented classmates who I will continue to work with on future projects because I know Digifilm has equipped them with the same knowledge and skills that it has given me. As I write this letter I am currently underway on working on my first film project outside of school. Without Digifilm I don't think that would have been possible.

In this new digital age everyone with access to a camera and some lights can create work, but the process of creating a film has never been easy. There is so much depth to filmmaking that cannot be taught in just 8 courses. The minor prepared us with the basic understanding of some of the equipment, as well as the production process but it never went in depth with things like directing, writing or the nuances of cinematography.

I believe if Digifilm existed as a major it would produce successful filmmakers that are better equipped to make meaningful work, and that our program would compete with some of the best film schools in Southern California. There are hardworking and dedicated people working within Digifilm, giving us so much with limited courses and resources. That Idea that a minor can prepare students to make films is very unique to UCI. I believe Digifilm as a major would produce filmmakers whose work will stand out and bring pride to UCI.

I am extremely thankful for my time within Digifilm, it has prepared me and given me the necessary drive to pursue a career I know I will love and I know it has done the same for so many others.

Regards, Jose Villanueva
UCI Alumni, Class of 2017

Dear Dr. Barker,

As a transfer student and first generation student I was concerned with how well I would be able to integrate in such a huge institution like UCI. My family had little to no experience when it came to what college was like, how to prepare for graduate school, or even how financial aid worked. Throughout my journey toward higher education, I've always been faced with many challenges that I frankly had to face alone due to my parents/elder siblings inexperience with higher education. With aspirations to become an esteemed neuropsychologist and share my findings beyond the realm of higher education, I didn't know who to turn to when I first came to UCI until I stumbled upon the UCI Digital Filmmaking minor.

Being a student enrolled in this minor has completely transformed my life and has given me an abundance of resources, opportunities, and relationships that I would have never been able to develop with just my major of study alone. Attending just one event hosted by the Digital Filmmaking minor connected me to various individuals who now play key roles in the development to my new thesis statement involving racial disparity and reducing mass incarceration through foreign policies and practices. I've had the pleasure of meeting directors/producers who share the same passions that I do and admire my ideas and research so much that they are now willing help me even while overseas. During that same night, I met with Daniel Wehrenfennig the executive director of two programs here on campus called the Olive Tree Initiative and Deconstructing Diversity Initiative; both focus on developing methods for conflict resolution in middle eastern countries and here in the states. Dr. Wehrenfennig admired my approach in

combining the Arts with Neuropsychological research, and offered a research opportunity for that same year to travel across the states to further develop my thesis statement. This experience was invaluable and provided me the education and tools in tackling my research more effectively.

Lastly, because of this same event I not only applied and got accepted to the study abroad program for the University of Copenhagen in Denmark to start my research, but now have the scholarships, resources, and even faculty members who teach at my host school and who are also willing to help me in both my major of study and minor. The Digital Filmmaking minor turned my dream into a reality within a matter of minutes. I want other students to experience what I have because of this program, I know if this program was transformed from a minor to a major the impossible can be accomplished.

Sincerely, Christian Black

Signatories

Sharon He	Corey Jung	Larz Broussard
Christian Black	Jessica Lin	Terohiro Taura
Matthew Crouchley	Tracey Tran	Samantha Bejarano
Julius Beronio	Weihaio Shi	Corey Nguyen
Murphy Chu	Earnest Olivar	Cassie Wang
Chloe Castro	Joann Hockersmith	Megan Sullivan
Simar Mikkar	Vito Perez	Alyssa DeCampo
Neal Khodaskar	Karina Acosta	Jennifer Nguyen
Marvish Chandra	Nia Jarquin	David Torres
Haomin Liu	Selina Jiang	Gabby Salinardo
Chuong Nguyen	Aditi Mayer	Arnulfo Contreras
Theone Ly	Nancy Nguyen	Natalie Handelsman
Karen Pham	Henry Liu	Elle Merser
Lynslee Mercado	Joyce Zhang	Jose Villanueva
Joanne Ducot	Jocelyn Contreras	Rikki Young
Phillip Long	Matthew Gorarichkoskvy	Chad Breece
John Figueroa	Hannah Koury	Ryan Wang

Juan Chavez

Gabriella Escobar

Mingna Li

Tiffanie Yang

Aminh Nehmeh

Selina Jiang

Sheldon Chau

George Bashara

Deyo Forteza

Kimmy Ny

Michaela Holland

Jaime Ballesteros

Loie Cruz

Edward Patrick Alba

Sherilyn Datu

George Montoya

Robert Padilla

Jenna Benty

Katie Faulkner