

# Cover Letter Resource Guide

## *What is a cover letter?*

A cover letter is an accompanying document that should always be included when submitting your résumé for career opportunities. A cover letter can be used to expound on experiences that were only briefly touched upon in your resume, and it serves as an excellent tool for customizing your application materials and demonstrating that you have thoroughly researched the company/organization that you are applying to.

## *Getting Started*

The cover letter is a crucial part of the application process. While a perfect cover letter won't necessarily get you a job, a poorly written cover letter will certainly keep you from getting an interview. Before writing your cover letter it is important that you get some information in order. We recommend having a copy of the job description for the job that you are applying for and a copy of your résumé on hand for use as resources. First, put together an outline of the most important qualifications included in the job description. Then, look over your résumé and highlight experiences that meet these criteria. In addition, make sure you have thoroughly researched the company/organization and have a good understanding of their mission and what they do. Once you have all of this information it is time to get started writing! On the following pages you will find a detailed outline of the structure of a cover letter as well as examples. As you work on your cover letter keep the tips below in mind.

## **IMPORTANT COVER LETTER WRITING TIPS:**

- There is no such thing as a “form” cover letter. Each letter you write should be unique and targeted to a specific employer and position.
- The employer does not expect you to repeat your résumé in your cover letter. They already have your résumé! The cover letter is a place for you to expound on and highlight the great experiences you have had that are relevant to the job.
- Your cover letter also allows the employer to gauge your writing skills. Take time with your cover letter! Have at least two people proofread the document before you send it in.
- Make use of resources at the Graves Center. To make an appointment for a counselor to critique your cover letter just call 502-863-8383.

# ANATOMY OF A COVER LETTER

## Paragraph one = Introduction

Your introduction paragraph should be brief and to the point. Make sure you cover the following areas:

- Why are you writing?
  - ❖ In this first sentence you should tell them that you are writing to apply for a position. Make sure you explicitly state the name of the particular position as the organization may have a multitude of positions available.
- Where did you find out about the organization, the position etc.
  - ❖ Again, be specific. It is helpful to the employer if they know exactly which listing you are referring to.
- An introduction line to the rest of the letter
  - ❖ It may help to think of this as your thesis statement.

## Paragraph two = About you

In this paragraph the goal is to clearly outline the ways in which you meet the employer's qualifications or criteria. Don't feel pressured to stuff your entire résumé in to one paragraph. Instead, highlight and expound on a few key aspects of your résumé that specifically align with the qualifications stated in the job listing. Provide the employer with specific examples from any of the following:

- Professional Experience- internships or part-time jobs
- Education - did you work on a relevant class project or take classes in the employer's field?
- Volunteer Experience - volunteer work is just as valuable as professional experience if it is relevant to the job qualifications
- Special skills - don't forget to point out required language or computer skills

## Paragraph three = About them

Before writing this paragraph take some time to think about why you are applying for this position.

- Is it their mission statement, their goal?
- An article you read?
- A specific project?
- The way they work?
- Word from someone that works or use to work there?

There must be a reason that you chose this organization. In this paragraph you tell them why. This allows you to show that you have done your research on the organization and that this is not a form cover letter that you are sending out to hundreds of employers.

## Paragraph four = conclusion

To conclude your cover letter touch on the following points:

- Mention that you are including your résumé
- Give them your phone number and e-mail address in case they want to contact you
- Unless the announcement states "no phone calls please", tell them that you will be contacting them at a specified time span (i.e. within a week) and then calculate when they will receive the letter and call them at that time. **ONLY MENTION THIS IF YOU ACTUALLY INTEND ON CALLING.**
- **Thank them for their time and consideration**

# SAMPLE APPLICATION COVER LETTER

*An application cover letter means that you have identified a specific job listing and are applying for the job.*

Charles Schulz  
413 Appleton Court  
Georgetown, KY 40324

April 23, 2011

Susan Boyd  
Sustainability Task Force of DC  
1794 Columbia Rd., NW  
Washington, DC 20009

Dear Ms. Boyd:

I am writing to express my interest in the Sustainability Task Force Summer Internship Program, which I read about on the Georgetown College Graves Center for Calling & Career website. I am a junior at Georgetown College and I am very interested in educating the community about environmental protection.

I would be a strong asset to the Sustainability Taskforce because of my academic training and experience writing about environmental issues. For example, I have written for my school paper, and several community newspapers. Through these writing experiences, I not only had to write clear messages, but I also developed strong relationships with both my audiences and community members who I interviewed. Through my undergraduate studies, I have begun to develop a solid foundation of environmental issues including economics, ecology, and policy. In addition, I developed strong research skills during my sophomore year working in the school library. Finally, through my previous work experience as an office manager, I developed strong computer, organizational and interpersonal skills.

I am very interested in the Sustainability Task Force because you have a reputation for ensuring local involvement, and I think it is vital to include community members in the decisions that affect their lives. The practice of including all affected voices provides more support and proactive solutions, which is evidenced by the press releases linked to your web site. I also enjoy writing about environmental issues and want to be part of a team that has been responsible for so many important projects.

Enclosed is my resume for your review and consideration. I will contact you within two to three weeks to make sure you have received all of my information. In the meantime if you have any questions or would like to further discuss my qualifications, you can call me at 502-863-8122 or email me at charlie\_s@georgetowncollege.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to talking with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

*Charles Schulz*

Charles Schulz

# SAMPLE PROSPECTING COVER LETTER

*An application cover letter means that you have not found a specific job opportunity listed with the organization, but would like to inquire about possible opportunities.*

Carl Candidate  
456 College Avenue  
Bloomington, IN 47405

December 3, 2010

Mr. Brett Newkirk  
Director of College Recruiting  
Dubois County Community Foundation, Inc.  
323 East Sixth Street; P.O. Box 269  
Jasper, IN 47547-0269

Dear Mr. Newkirk:

I read your company's description on your website and would like to inquire about internship opportunities with your nonprofit management program. I want to work in the community and would like to work in Dubois County. I believe my career interests and education will prove beneficial to the foundation in an internship capacity.

I will receive my bachelor's degree in economics this coming May. My interest in nonprofits began as an undergraduate and developed further as I volunteered with various non-profit organizations in the community. I feel my classroom experiences and various positions have well prepared me for an internship position with the Dubois County Community Foundation.

My resume is enclosed for your consideration. I know from customer and supervisor feedback that I have the interpersonal skills and motivation needed to build a successful career in the nonprofit sector. Additionally, my education and training give me confidence in my career direction and in my abilities to perform competently. I will contact you in two to three weeks to follow up and see if you need any additional information. In the meantime, if you need to contact me, my phone number is 812-855-4848 or by email at [ccandidate@georgetowncollege.edu](mailto:ccandidate@georgetowncollege.edu). Thank you very much for considering my request. I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,

*Carl Candidate*

Carl Candidate