COVER LETTERS

A cover letter is a well written document that accompanies a resume designed to highlight your previous experiences, academic background, and skills as they relate to the position you are applying for. Your cover letter should not reiterate your resume, but should tell a story expanding upon your qualified skills. A cover letter should explain why you are interested in working for the organization and what value you will add. The focus of a cover letter should address the employer's needs rather than your own needs. Employers also often use a cover letter to assess your writing skills.

When writing a Cover Letter:
- Review the position description and tailor your letter to the position/industry. The reader should feel like you wrote this cover letter just for this specific position. Limit your use of the pronoun "I"
- Address your cover letter to "Dear Hiring Manager" if you do not know the individual's name or include a specific name if you identify the individual hiring for the role
- Focus on how your background and skills match the position requirements rather than on why you want the position/what you believe you will gain from working at the organization in that role
- Utilize positive language and keep the focus on what you <u>can</u> do. Illustrate in your letter how you believe the organization's goals and values align with your own
- Use a business letter format; follow the same format guidelines as your resume (i.e. single spaced, font size between 10-12, margins between .5"-1")
- If you are emailing your cover letter, attach your letter as a PDF or Microsoft Word document instead of pasting it into the body of the email
- Use spell check. Make sure to read the letter out loud after you have finished writing to check for grammatical errors and consider asking someone else to read your letter to ensure you have not missed any other errors

Structure of a Cover Letter:
Your Name
Your Street Address
Your City, State Zip Code

Date

Name of Hiring Manager (or leave this blank if you do not know who it is)
Employer Title
Organization/Company (start here with this line if you do not know who to specifically address the cover letter to)
Employer Street Address
Employer City, State Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name:

First Paragraph
Explain why you are writing the cover letter and identify the exact position you are applying to. Be sure to:
- Briefly describe your qualifications (i.e. academic background, years working in a specific industry) and state why you are an ideal candidate for the position
- Mention how you learned about the position (be specific if you were referred by someone)
- State an important detail about the company's work that you find interesting to demonstrate your interest and knowledge of the company's industry

Middle Paragraph(s)
Use the 1-2 middle paragraph(s) to highlight the 2-3 key aspects of your experiences and academic background that correlate with the position description. Use action verbs and focus on elaborating why you would be successful in that role. For each experience you highlight, include the following:
- Clearly state the experience (i.e. a part time job/student organization/internship/volunteer)
- Detail your role, responsibilities, and expertise/knowledge (only highlight aspects related to the position)
- Highlight accomplishments in your previous role and explain how these accomplishments have prepared you for the responsibilities of the new position

Final Paragraph
When finishing your cover letter:
- Be direct and restate your motivation, interest, and qualifications as they relate directly to the role
- Thank the employer for their consideration of you; mention that you look forward to discussing your qualifications further with them
- Mention next steps and how you will follow up (i.e. will you wait to hear from them or will you contact them in one week?)
- Finish with a formal closing (i.e. Sincerely, Best, Regards), press enter 3 spaces down and then type your name. If you're physically handing a cover letter to someone you can also physically sign your name