COVER LETTERS

HP + UP
GSAPP
Columbia University
11.28.2012
Agenda

1. Applicability: What are they for?

2. Preparation: Make your content count

3. Creation: Formatting, Organization and More

4. Additional Resources
What are cover letters for?

- Create a personal impression
What are cover letters for?

• Create a personal impression

• Connecting the dots between job description and your resume
What are cover letters for?

- Create a personal impression
- Connecting the dots between job description and your resume
- Highlight your strengths
What are cover letters NOT for?

- Telling a narrative of your life story
What are cover letters NOT for?

• Telling a narrative of your life story

• Repeating your resume
What are cover letters NOT for?

- Telling a narrative of your life story
- Repeating your resume
- Drawing attention to gaps, weaknesses, etc.
Cover Letter Prep

- Research company/organization: What are the problems and opportunities it faces? Who are their competitors? Recent stories in the news?
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• Brainstorm: map skills from job description to your own accomplishments and skills to develop your “talking points.”
# Map Skills to Job Description, Step 1: Analyze Job Description

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<th>Basic Function</th>
<th>This position reports to the Director of Planning &amp; Development and will be responsible for zoning, subdivision development, comprehensive planning and historic preservation.</th>
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| Primary Duties | • The Planner serves as a team member with other city departments reviewing building permits, construction and site plans for conformance with city regulations.  
• This position is responsible for historic preservation including preservation plans, grants and makes recommendations on proposed changes for historic sites and districts to ensure compliance with local, state and federal preservation regulations.  
• This position requires a working knowledge of zoning and planning laws; principles of land use planning and development; comprehensive plans including their formation, process of adoption and implementation. |
| Experience      | A Bachelor's Degree in urban planning, public administration with an emphasis in planning or other related field is required. Master's Degree is preferred. Experience in Geographic Information Systems and sustainable development practices preferred. |
| Skills          | The ideal candidate must possess strong negotiation, consensus building, public relations, organizational and communications skills. |
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| **Skills** | The ideal candidate must possess strong negotiation, consensus building, public relations, organizational and communications skills. |
Map Skills to Job Description, Step 2: Identify Themes

Theme 1: serve as a team member with other city departments reviewing building permits, construction and site plans

Theme 2: make recommendations in compliance with preservation regulations

Theme 3: put in to practice working knowledge of zoning and planning laws; principles of land use planning and development; comprehensive plans
Map Skills to Job Description, Step 3: Generate personal examples

Theme 1: teamwork reviewing permits, construction & site plans
“As a team member of the Creative Village studio project for clients, the City of Orlando and the Creative Village Development, I reviewed potential site construction plans to determine…”

Theme 2: make recommendations in compliance with preservation regulations
“While attending Columbia University, I took additional courses in the historic preservation program, which provided me with practical experience in researching significant historic resources and drafting long term preservation strategies…”

Theme 3: put in to practice working knowledge of zoning and planning laws; principles of land use planning and development; comprehensive plans
“During my internship with XYZ, I reviewed New York City zoning codes and made recommendations to make land use changes.”
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**Theme 2**: producing visual representations of development projects and creating advocacy materials

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Content

• Use examples, be specific, note outcomes
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• Reflect back THEIR words from the job announcement
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- Use examples, be specific, note outcomes
- Reflect back THEIR words from the job announcement
- Make it about them, not you. Even when you talk about you, talk about what you can do for them: “Because of my experience working with top management and presenting to advisory boards, I would be confident and effective in responding to donor inquiries.”
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• Reference what specifically interests you about them
Congratulations. You just prepared for your interview.
Important Formatting Points

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• Subject lines
  Re: Logan, Trisha – Resume submitted for Conservator position
  Re: Junior Analyst Position
  Re: Postion #123XYZ, Applicant: Trisha Logan
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• File type and name
Please upload a resume and thoughtful cover letter, outlining how your skills and experience meet the qualifications of the position and stating how you heard about this opportunity, both in Word format, to Melanie Mullan at http://jobs.cgcareers.org/application.aspx?id=1973. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis.

If you would like more information about this position, please contact Noelle MacKay (802) 828-5216. Resumes will not be accepted via e-mail. You must apply online to be considered. The State of Vermont’s webpage for new job seekers is at:
http://humanresources.vermont.gov/career_center/job_listings?list=new They will ask you to Create/Update Application. Please follow the directions carefully. Please use Internet Explorer as your browser. To apply online: 1) You will need to go to the Department of Human Resources Website (humanresources.vermont.gov) 2) Scroll down to “Go to ESS login” and enter your employee ID number and password. 3) Click on Recruiting Activities Home. 4) Click on View Job Postings. 5) Scroll down and Click on Search. 6) Click on Agency to put in alphabetical order (to search by Agency). 7) Scroll down to the job you want to apply for (posting number 30466) 8) Click on the box to the right of the posting to put it in the Job Basket. 9) Scroll down to the bottom of the page and click "Apply for Job In Basket". 10) Go through your application and answer the questions pertaining to the specific Job. 11) Click “submit”.

Noelle MacKay

http://humanresources.vermont.gov

noelle.mackay@state.vt.us

Phone: 802-828-5216
SUBMISSION | Please send cover letter and resume as a single PDF document (maximum of 2 pages), with a portfolio of material if available, to jobs@hraadvisors.com. We ask that your file be named in the following format “LAST NAME.FIRST NAME.DATE.”
Cover letter organization

- Header/Greeting
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• Paragraph 1, Intro: what job are you applying for, where did you hear about it, plus summary sentence of why you are applying/a good fit
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• Paragraph 3: restate your interest, ask for an interview, close with a statement that will encourage a response, say thank you
Dear Mr./Ms.:  

First paragraph  
In your initial paragraph, state the reason for the letter, the specific position or type of work for which you are applying and indicate from which resource (GSD Career Services, professor, alumnus/a) you learned of the opening. Refer the reader to the enclosed resume or application that summarizes your qualifications, training, experiences or whatever media you may be utilizing to present yourself.

Second paragraph  
Indicate why you are interested in the position, the firm, the services they provide and, above all, what you can do for the employer. If you are a recent graduate, explain how your academic background makes you a qualified candidate for the position. If you had some practical work experience, point out the specific achievements or unique qualifications. Try not to repeat the same information the reader will find in the resume. Instead, highlight specific points related to that employer’s needs.

Final paragraph  
In the closing paragraph, indicate your desire for a personal interview and your flexibility as to the time and place. Repeat your phone number in the cover letter and offer in case your resume is separated. Finally, close your letter with a statement or question that will encourage a response. For example, state that you will be in the city where the firm is located on a certain date to set up an interview. You can also ask if they desire additional information or references. Repeat your phone number in the cover letter in case your resume is separated.

Sincerely yours,
Anna P. Student

[Don’t forget to sign the letter and enclose your resume.]
Tone

- Positive: Drop in words that convey enthusiasm, friendliness, energy, interest, etc.
  - “I especially enjoy the challenge of…”
  - “Because of my deep interest in…”
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• Clear: Keep syntax and vocabulary simple and straightforward
Syntax: The Repetitive “I”

Vary your sentence structure to avoid too many “I” statements. Quick exercise:

“I also gained significant experience consulting with property owners on rehabilitation applications while at the Landmarks Preservation Commission.”
Syntax: The Repetitive “I”

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Syntax: The Repetitive “I”

“I also gained significant experience consulting with property owners on rehabilitation applications while at the Landmarks Preservation Commission.”

While working for the Landmarks Preservation Commission, I also gained significant experience consulting with property owners on rehabilitation applications.

OR

Another one of my key skills is consulting with property owners on rehabilitation applications, which I demonstrated while at the Landmarks Preservation Commission.
Additional Resources

• Center for Career Education: cover letter samples, plus thorough resume/cover letter guide
  http://www.careereducation.columbia.edu/resources/basics

• EJ Chase Consulting: great examples of letters for jobs and networking
  http://www.careereducation.columbia.edu/resources/basics

• Harvard Career Services
  http://www.gsd.harvard.edu/images/content/5/2/528705/res_2009_cover_letters.pdf

• Trisha Logan, Charlotte Egerton, Lucy Robson: cover letter review via email or in person
The Next C3!

Beginning Your Job Search
Wednesday, January 30th
1-2pm