

## **Cover Letter**

The purpose of a cover letter is to show how your background fits the particular job and organization to which you are applying. You are also demonstrating to a prospective employer that you are the right person for the position and that you have a specific interest in working for that organization.

There are two basic types of cover letters: letters of application and letters of inquiry. A letter of application is used to apply for a position currently available. A letter of inquiry is sent to express interest in working for a particular employer. Most major employers do not keep resumes on file unless they have positions available. Therefore, letters of inquiry should be limited. Contact the employer for their policies on unsolicited letters and resumes prior to sending them.

### **General Suggestions for Cover Letters:**

- Include a cover letter when sending, emailing or faxing a resume.
- Your letters should be work centered and employer centered, not self-centered.
- Tailor your letters for each employer and position. Generic, mass produced letters are unprofessional.
- Research the employer! Demonstrate some knowledge of the organization. Information is available on the Internet, in the Career Resource Center, Murphy Library, and most public libraries.
- Highlight how you can contribute to the organization to which you are applying.
- Incorporate your job objective into the letter, especially if you have not included an objective in your resume.
- Call attention to items on your resume rather than duplicating all the information included on the resume.
- Be brief. In most cases a one page letter is sufficient.
- When the employer requests salary history or requirements, it is best to state a range. Indicate that through your research, you are aware that the salary range for a person with your experience, education and training for this type of position is between \$\_\_\_\_\_ and \$\_\_\_\_\_. See the Career Services Home Page for salary information.

### **Paragraph Content Suggestions:**

#### *Opening Paragraph*

Avoid typical openings; be creative. Give reasons for your interest in the employer and the position and demonstrate your knowledge of the employer. Consider using one of the following as an opening:

- Explain what you have to offer the organization in regard to your job objective.
- You are impressed with the organization's products, management style, curriculum, facilities, etc.
- You are aware that the organization will be interviewing on campus later in the semester, but you would like to speak to them sooner because of opportunities with other organizations available to you now.
- You are seeking a position with a smaller organization to gain a broad perspective of the functions of a particular organization, or for other reasons.
- You are seeking a large organization that will allow you the opportunity to specialize, or other reasons.

- You are seeking a small, rural school because you attended a small school or taught at a small school. The same reasons apply for other positions and other schools.
- You are interested in technical sales or consumer goods sales, or retail sales, and why.
- You are interested in working for a franchise because....
- You have been referred by (person's name) and are impressed with the information he or she gave you on (organization's name).
- You are impressed by a current development within the organization. Possible current events might include an article in a recent publication, a recent expansion project (either a building or acquisition of another company), a new product line, a recent change in administration, or knowledge of the school district's recent athletic records.
- If you have met the person you are writing to, remind the person of where and when, and thank him/her for stimulating your interest.
- Perhaps you were impressed with the information given at a recent seminar, workshop, or during a tour of their organization.
- If applicable, state you are aware they have hired University of Wisconsin-La Crosse graduates in the past.

### *Middle Paragraphs*

Any of the above suggestions not used in the first paragraph are possibilities for the middle paragraphs. Also the following:

- Stress what you can contribute to the organization by calling attention to your particular experiences and abilities that relate to the position you are seeking. However, do not duplicate information from your resume word for word. Employers do not want to read the same information twice.
- For letters of application, indicate knowledge of the job description and that you are aware you meet the qualifications.
- For inquiries, mention your interest in specific types of positions if you know that this employer has these positions, or discuss skills that you have that you would like to put to use in this organization.

### *Closing Paragraph*

In letters of application, request an interview at the convenience of the employer. In letters of inquiry, tell the employer that you will call them to discuss opportunities with their organization.

- If appropriate, request necessary application materials.
- If you will be in the city on a certain date, volunteer this information.
- Indicate if you can be contacted at a telephone number or address other than the one(s) on your resume.
- If applicable to you, tell them that you have an answering machine or that you can easily be reached by email.
- If you will be away for an extended period of time, tell them who will take a message. Always make sure potential employers can reach you easily.
- Thank the person for their time and consideration and politely request an interview.
- Closing

- Acceptable closings: Sincerely, Sincerely yours, Yours sincerely.
- Type and sign your name.
- Type the word "Enclosure" to indicate that additional materials such as your resume have been enclosed.