



Cover Letter Guide

1200 Academy Street
Kalamazoo, MI 49006
269.337.7183
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Monday, September 19, 2012

Kalamazoo College Student
Hicks Center Box 123
Kalamazoo, MI 49006

Dear Kalamazoo College Student:

A cover letter is the first impression you give to a prospective employer. The purpose of a cover letter is to introduce yourself, elicit interest in you as a candidate, highlight one or two exceptional and relevant experiences, and show an interest in a particular organization or position. Each job you apply for needs its own cover letter. **No two cover letters should ever be identical.**

Even though each cover letter you write will be different, there is a basic template to which you can refer. Traditionally there are three paragraphs in a cover letter that will span **one page** or less. The first is an introductory paragraph, in which you acquaint the reader with why you are writing. The second is related to the qualifications that will make you a competitive candidate for the position. The third is a concluding paragraph that allows you to restate your interest in the organization and initiate a next step. In this format, the cover letter allows you to give a prospective employer a glimpse at your qualifications.

Cover letters should be flawless, so it is imperative that many people proofread your work. The Center for Career and Professional Development staff and Career Associates are more than happy to provide you with feedback. Schedule a meeting, or stop by the office during drop-in times for more assistance. Creating a powerful cover letter will undoubtedly make you stand out in the crowd and possibly help you secure an interview for a position you desire.

Sincerely,

Staff and Career Associates
Center for Career and Professional Development

Step 1 Cover Letter Basics

Your Address

Date

Company Address

Note: *If submitting via email, these first three items are unnecessary. Simply cut and paste the rest of your letter into the body of the email, and attach a .pdf version of your résumé.*

Dear (Mr./Ms./Dr.) Last Name:

Introductory Paragraph

Introduce yourself and clearly state why you are writing. If you have already met, remind them where/when. State how you learned of the organization and job opening. Why do you want to work here? Why do you want this position? Identify any connections you have with the organization. Make it obvious that you know something specifically about the organization to which you are applying.

Middle Paragraph(s)

Sell yourself for the position. What can you offer to the organization? Put yourself in their shoes – what do they want to know about you? What benefit will they realize in hiring you? Highlight areas of your background that would be of greatest interest to the company – but do not simply reiterate your résumé. Give actual experiences; don't just state what you can do. Include something special or unique about yourself that would benefit the employer.

Closing Paragraph

Reconfirm your interest, thank them, and outline next possible steps. Do not make it sound like you already have the position, but state your contact information and that you are interested in talking further.

Ultimately there are five questions that employers look to have answered as they read a cover letter. Therefore, it is important that you provide answers for each question. You will notice that the answers fit well into the paragraphs described above. The questions include:

1. What is the purpose of this letter? *Introductory Paragraph*
2. Why are you interested in this field? *Introductory Paragraph*
3. Why are you interested in us, in particular? *Introductory Paragraph*
4. Why should we be interested in you? *Middle Paragraph*
5. Where do you propose we go from here? *Closing Paragraph*

Step 2 Cover Letter Checklist

My letter...

- ☐ is unique for this position.
- ☐ is neat and organized.
- ☐ is to the point, written the way I would speak.
- ☐ is signed (unless it is being submitted via e-mail).
- ☐ is addressed to a specific person (name and title).
- ☐ is of appropriate length (3-4 paragraphs is sufficient).
- ☐ has appropriate margins (no smaller than .7 inch).
- ☐ uses the same matching paper and fonts as my résumé.
- ☐ notifies the reader of any additional enclosures (example: résumé).

My introductory paragraph...

- ☐ tells exactly for what position I am applying.
- ☐ tells how I heard about the position.
- ☐ tells why I am specifically interested in this position.
- ☐ identifies any connection(s) I have with the organization.

My middle paragraph(s)...

- ☐ tell specific examples that sell my skills.
- ☐ tell the employer what I can do for the organization – not what it can do for me.
- ☐ use limited sentences beginning with “I” and “My.”
- ☐ use professional and active language that includes terminology of my field.

My closing...

- ☐ reiterates my enthusiasm for this opportunity.
- ☐ expresses appreciation for the employer considering my application.
- ☐ contains my professional email address and phone number.
- ☐ has been proofread, proofread, proofread! Errors are not professional.

Step 3 Review with the CCPD

Once you have created your first draft, bring your cover letter to the CCPD and have a staff member take a look. Feedback will be provided to make sure you are articulating your skills and abilities in such a way that the reader cannot help but look at your résumé.

123 Stuart Avenue
Kalamazoo, MI 49006

April 26, 2012

Ms. Janet Doe, Director
Office of International Programs
University of Texas
P.O. Box 112
Austin, TX 99999

Dear Ms. Doe:

I was interested to read the article in *The Austin Times* which addressed the growing international student population at your university. I am moving to Austin next month and am eager to continue my work with international students. I am writing to introduce myself as I would like to be considered for any positions that may be available in the Office of International Programs at the University of Texas.

I will graduate this June from Kalamazoo College with a B.A. in Human Development and Social Relations with a concentration in Intercultural Communications. For the past year I have worked as a Peer Advisor in the Center for International Programs. I have been responsible for 15 international students who have recently moved to the United States to attend school at Kalamazoo College. In this position, I provide individual counseling on personal, cultural and immigration issues, as well as organize professional, social and cultural programs. Combining interpersonal and organizational skills, I have been successful at assisting these students in making the transition to the United States. Additionally, during my junior year at Kalamazoo College I spent six months abroad in Thailand studying the effects of modernity on the environment and indigenous cultures of the country. These experiences have formed an excellent foundation on which to build my international student advising careers and I would be most interested in continuing my career at the University of Texas.

Thank you for taking the time to review my résumé. I can be reached via email at beth.bradley@kzoo.edu and/or by phone at (248) 555-1010. I will call you the first week of June to see if we can arrange a mutually convenient time for a personal interview. I will be moving to Austin at the end of June and would be delighted to meet with you shortly thereafter. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Beth Bradley".

Elizabeth Bradley

Below, the job posting sample and corresponding cover letter connect the graduate's qualifications to the position requirements, demonstrating a good fit for the position.

Whirlpool – Coordinator, University Relations

Description

Are you a born multi-tasker with a passion for talent? Do you thrive in a fast-paced, project management oriented organization? If so, Whirlpool's University Relations department is looking for a talented individual who can assist the organization in the execution of a cutting edge campus recruiting strategy as well as drive the new hire and intern on-boarding process. This role requires a quick thinker who is excited about bringing in great campus talent to help Whirlpool fulfill their entry-level talent needs. The University Relations Coordinator will be responsible for supporting and helping to grow the campus recruitment and selection process for full-time and intern hiring needs as well as support the Whirlpool new hire on-boarding process, and summer internship program. Other job responsibilities will also include:

- Work with University Career Centers to schedule campus interviews and information sessions
- Partner with Campus Organizations and Whirlpool Diversity Networks to schedule development workshops and social activities
- Deliver all communication to campus candidates
- Coordinate background checks, candidate travel and community tours
- Maintain Whirlpool's Applicant Tracking System and Metrics associated with University Relations Recruitment and On-boarding
- Drive the coordination of the Corporate Orientation program in the Twin Cities

Qualifications

- Bachelor's Degree in Human Resources, Management, Communications or related degree
- Experience in human resources, staffing or administrative support strongly preferred but not required
- Ability to prioritize workload, multi-task and organize projects
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills; project management skills a plus
- Strong PC skills with all Microsoft Office, Internet and database applications
- Demonstrated ability to handle confidential and sensitive information
- Ability to travel occasionally

Below, the cover letter sample corresponds to the previous job posting example, connecting the graduate's qualifications to the position requirements and demonstrating a good fit for the position. Are you using key words from the job description? Many companies are using databases to scan for key words, so make sure you are using the organization's language.

7054 Minor Road
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008

December 15, 2012

Ms. Gilda Johnson
Manager, Human Resources
Whirlpool Corporation
2000 North M-63
Benton Harbor, MI 49022

Dear Ms. Johnson:

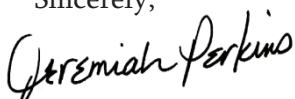
I am thrilled to apply for the position of University Relations Coordinator at Whirlpool recently advertised on your website. The position is a very close match for my educational background in Human Development and Social Relations and my human resources experience.

As a Staffing Intern at Aerotek in Benton Harbor, I effectively screened, interviewed and placed qualified candidates into entry-level positions throughout southwest Michigan. I was responsible for conducting background checks, tracking placements, and managing the metrics and weekly reports used to evaluate the team's recruiting strategies. Among Aerotek's many corporate clients, I particularly enjoyed working with Nouredine Aquas, Technical Department Manager at Whirlpool corporate, to assist him with the successful placement of a temporary Technician. Through this connection I developed a great respect for Whirlpool's corporate culture, the dedication to teamwork, high-quality products and effective communication.

As a member of K-Crew, our student admissions team at Kalamazoo College, I give tours of campus to prospective students and their parents. Through this work, I have developed my public speaking, relationship building and communication skills. I enjoy helping people feel welcomed and informed and would love the opportunity to organize workshops, social activities and tours. Collectively, these experiences have confirmed my dedication to pursue Human Resources as a career path.

I am confident that my professional and educational background, complemented by a personable disposition, would be a great asset to Whirlpool. Although the attached résumé outlines my accomplishments, a personal interview will further illustrate why I am an excellent fit for the position. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,



Jeremiah Perkins

In support of the Kalamazoo College mission to “prepare its graduates to better understand, live successfully within, and provide enlightened leadership to a richly diverse and increasingly complex world,” the Center for Career and Professional Development creates meaningful connections to the world of work, empowering Kalamazoo College students to explore, identify and pursue their diverse interests, values and passions, and to develop a framework of skills, networks and knowledge for successful lifelong career planning and professional development.

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**CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT**

More in Four. More in a Lifetime.®

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