

Cover Letter Working Session

with Rachel Gakenheimer, Career Services Office

Thursday, February 20, 4-5pm

Larsen G01

Cover Letters: Purpose

Opportunity to introduce yourself:

- Tell them *why* you are interested and *how* your experience meets their needs
- Elaborate on any special qualifications
- Highlight your successes
- Guide the reader (what to focus on & what to consider)

It's also a screen:

- Do you seem to understand the mission and values of the employer?
- Did you tailor the cover letter to the needs of the specific job?
- Can you articulate yourself well?

Cover Letter Format: Content

1st paragraph: Orient the reader

- Indicate position you're applying for & how you heard about it
- Tell why you are interested
- Introduce any key contacts
- Summarize in one sentence your qualifications

2nd - 4th paragraph: Show how your experience relates to what they need

- Use examples to show fit between skills, knowledge, and qualifications and position offered
- Focus on what you can do for them (instead of why you *want* the position)
- Expand on and connect bullets from resume (focus on success and scope of work)
- Highlight important experiences, key assets that will enhance your contribution

Last paragraph: Clarify what happens next

- Tell them when you will contact them
- Thank them!

Cover Letter Format: Review

Dear Mr. / Ms. Xx or FName LName,

INTRO:

I'm excited to apply for the Boston Program Coordinator position. The position jumped out at me from Harvard's database. My conversation with [your colleague] further inspired me to apply. Empowering and engaging citizens through local action as well as my teaching and leadership experience are well aligned to the requirements for this position.

HOW ALIGNED: *experience with urban youth; leadership, teaching, advocacy skills;*

Having been born and brought up in [urban community], I am well aware of the many challenges that face urban communities. I was fortunate to work with [a club that] led me to register many people to vote, educate citizens on bond referendum that provided my school district with \$150 million dollars, and advocate to stop the reintroduction of corporal punishment into my school district, amongst many other successes.

My early experiences heavily influenced my future endeavors and have continued to inspire my passion for youth and community. They drew me to HGSE to study literacy, bilingualism, and how children in stressful situations can better learn and where I built a model curriculum that has been adopted by the local school district. I look forward to using these skills to further your projects [x, y, and z]. I believe that my unique experiences ... all make me an excellent candidate for the position.

NEXT STEPS:

Thank you so much for your time, and please feel free to contact me with any questions by phone at (617) 555-1212 or email at email@email.com. I will also follow up on [this date] to see if you have any questions.

Tips Review Checklist

Understand the mission of the organization and how it contributes to the industry

Deconstruct and analyze the job description

Indicate why you are inspired by the position and how it fits in with your mission / goals.

Clearly state the position you are applying for

Articulate how you can help the organization achieve its goals

Use examples to show fit between your education, experience, and skills and the position offered

Give examples of qualities required for the job

Proof-read your letter for typos and misspellings

Do you feel good about your letter? Do you feel that it represents you well?

Any questions?