Tips for Cover Letter and Resume writing

Cover Letter Suggestions

- Always be specific to the organization
- Make sure you use keywords throughout your cover letter and resume that were in your job description. If an employer is scanning resumes/cover letters, yours will come up in the search
- Address your cover letter to the recruiter/hiring manager – use a specific name
- Tell an employer why they will benefit from hiring you, not what you are going to gain from their company
- Use action verbs (see page 15-17)
- Use your own words; you do not want your cover letter to sound like it was copied from a book or the internet
- It should be concise and no more than one page
- How to send it:
    - Email, the cover letter should be the body of the email message (attach your resume as an MS Word attachment), attach resume and cover letter as two separate documents
    - Standard Mail, the cover letter should be printed on resume paper (match paper used for resume)
- Utilize the standard business letter format; write three to four paragraphs in 12 point Times New Roman font
- Opening Paragraph/First Paragraph (create interest and introduce yourself) - Let the employer know how you learned about the organization and/or position. Do research on the organization and tell them why you like their organization, etc.
- Second Paragraph (give overview of qualifications) - Give several short sentences that highlight your skills and relevant qualifications. Include why you are interested in the position and provide specific examples demonstrating how your academic, work, and/or volunteer experiences relate to the position you are seeking. Sell yourself and demonstrate that you have the specific skills that they need
- Third/Final Paragraph (conclusion & contact) - Include that you want to make a contribution to their organization. Let the employers know that you are available for questions about your background and experience. Thank the employer for his/her consideration

Resume Suggestions

Have two different types of resumes
- Chronological – one heading, list your most recent position first
- Functional – used for multiple headings (i. e Related Experience and Professional Experience). Multiple heading will help you highlight your related experience.

Font
- Use Times New Roman or another professional font throughout resume
- Font size should be 10-12, with your name in 16-18 size font

Layout
- Margins 0.5" to 0.9"
- Do not use templates- they can restrict your flexibility, formatting and individual style

Suggestions

- One, maybe two pages
- On the second page include your name and page number in the header; if pages become separated your second page should be able to stand alone
- Proofread for spelling and grammar mistakes
- Print on resume paper, email as a MS Word or PDF attachment
- Be honest – never lie, stretch the truth, or misrepresent yourself
- Do not overuse bold, capitalization, italics, or underlining

Content

- Keep your name on top, in bold and larger font than the rest of the resume
- Use only one phone number with an accurate professional email
- Objective should be short, concise, and to the point, modified for each new position
- Avoid spelling errors, typos, poor grammar
- Use only college education and write out the entire degree; highlight the degree not the school
- Only put the month and year you are graduating. Date ranges or "expected by" are unnecessary
- Adding your GPA is usually not recommended, but can be added in exceptional circumstances. Discuss this with your career counselor before adding it on your resume
- Use appropriate tense; past for previous experiences and present for current experiences
- If you are weak in experience, then use courses or relevant projects to highlight and illustrate your knowledge
- Focus on your accomplishments, rather than using your job duties
- Do not use abbreviations, complete sentences, personal information, salary expectation, salary history, personal pronouns, photographs, or reasons for leaving
- Do not include references on your resume – (see below)

References Tips

- Make a separate document for references
- Use the same heading as that of your resume and cover letter
- Put the main reference in the upper left corner then list in preference from the left to right, top to bottom
- Include the person's full name, title, name of company or university, department if applicable, full address, email address, and phone number
- Generally try to list 3-4 references
- References are those who can speak about your work experience, education/knowledge, or the pertinent characteristics related to the position sought
- Prepare your reference sheet, but only provide them when specifically requested by the company; keep separate from the resume
- Make sure you have talked with your references before providing their information. Give them a copy of your resume