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**HOW TO WRITE AN EFFECTIVE COVER LETTER**

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A *customized* cover letter should be sent with your resume when applying for a job or internship even if it is not requested. Think of your cover letter as a 3-5 paragraph essay that is no longer than 1 page. The purpose of the cover letter is twofold: to make a strong argument for your candidacy, and to showcase your writing skills. This letter should complement your resume, not simply summarize it.

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**JANE M. CAREER**

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(410) 516-8056 | career@jhu.edu

Today's Date

Mr./Ms. Name of Individual, Job Title  
Company or Organization Name  
Street Address or P.O. Box Number  
City, State, Zip Code (Country, if not U.S.)

Mr./Ms./Dr./Prof. Last Name of Individual:

**Introductory Paragraph:** This paragraph is usually 2-3 sentences. The first two sentences indicate the position you are applying for by telling how you learned about it, how you are connected to the organization, and why it is of interest to you. This shows that you have researched the organization and why it is of interest to you. The last sentence is your thesis statement that explains why you are right for the job. It also serves as the organizing statement that tells the reader how you are about to prove your thesis.

**First Body Paragraph:** The middle paragraphs should provide examples of accomplishments and specific situations where you demonstrated job-related skills in the order shown in the thesis. Begin each of the 2-3 middle paragraphs with a topic sentence that directly relates to one of the points in your thesis statement. Then support each topic sentence with relevant experiences to persuade the employer that you have the skills and abilities needed for the position.

**Second Body Paragraph:** Be careful to write topic sentences that allow you to make connections to as many experiences as possible. The reader should understand your argument simply by reading the thesis and topic sentences. For example, a topic sentence like "My social policy minor at JHU helped me develop strong quantitative and qualitative research abilities" expresses to the reader that this paragraph is *ONLY* about your social policy minor at JHU. This confines you to writing about experiences in your JHU program.

**Third Body Paragraph:** A better sentence might be "Through my courses and co-curricular experiences, I have developed strong quantitative and qualitative research skills." This sentence allows you to talk about Social Policy, class projects, and any other experience related to your research skills.

**Final Paragraph:** Conclude the cover letter by restating the most pertinent information regarding your qualifications in a concise sentence (similar to thesis statement). Then make a request for action in the form of an interview. End the letter with a "thank you" for consideration.

Sincerely,

Jane M. Career

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August 25, 2016

Mr. James Smith, Recruiter  
Human Resources Department  
Local Housing Authority (LHA)  
125 Lincoln Street  
Baltimore, MD 21218

Mr. Smith:

Recently, I discovered the Program Director position advertised on LHA.org. The LHA's mission to support the dignity of those it serves matches well with my perspective on effective housing policy. Given my experiences collaborating with many organizations in the housing/homelessness field, my success working directly with clients, and my understanding of data collection, I am an excellent candidate for the position.

Over the past two years, my experiences in the housing/homelessness field has necessitated that I collaborate with numerous organizations in the private and public sectors. As a volunteer housing advocate, positive relationships with a variety of organizations were essential to my successful placements of clients. Based on my extensive knowledge of the area and regulations, I was given the opportunity to work directly with the Tri-City Mental Health and the Baltimore Department of Mental Health agencies.

I have been fortunate to work directly with clients as a supervised student. For example, while interning with the U.S. Interagency Council on Homeless (USICH) last summer, I analyzed the homelessness-prevention components of every state, city, county, and region for USICH's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness in America. This required that I work closely with community leaders and the homeless in several areas to understand how the new Project Homeless Connect program could positively and negatively affect them.

Through my course work and co-curricular experiences, I developed the ability to collect data effectively. For example, as part of a Community Health course last year, I helped the Health and Human Services Committee of Montgomery County, Maryland, survey the county's domestic worker population. This project necessitated outreach and coordination with over ten non-profit agencies in Maryland and Washington, DC, along with Montgomery County government. To date, the survey has yielded over 300 responses, and is among the largest surveys of this population on record.

My experience collaborating with organizations in the housing/homelessness field, success with direct client work, and my understanding of data collection will help me be a successful Program Director at LHA. I look forward to learning more about this position in a personal interview. Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Jane Career