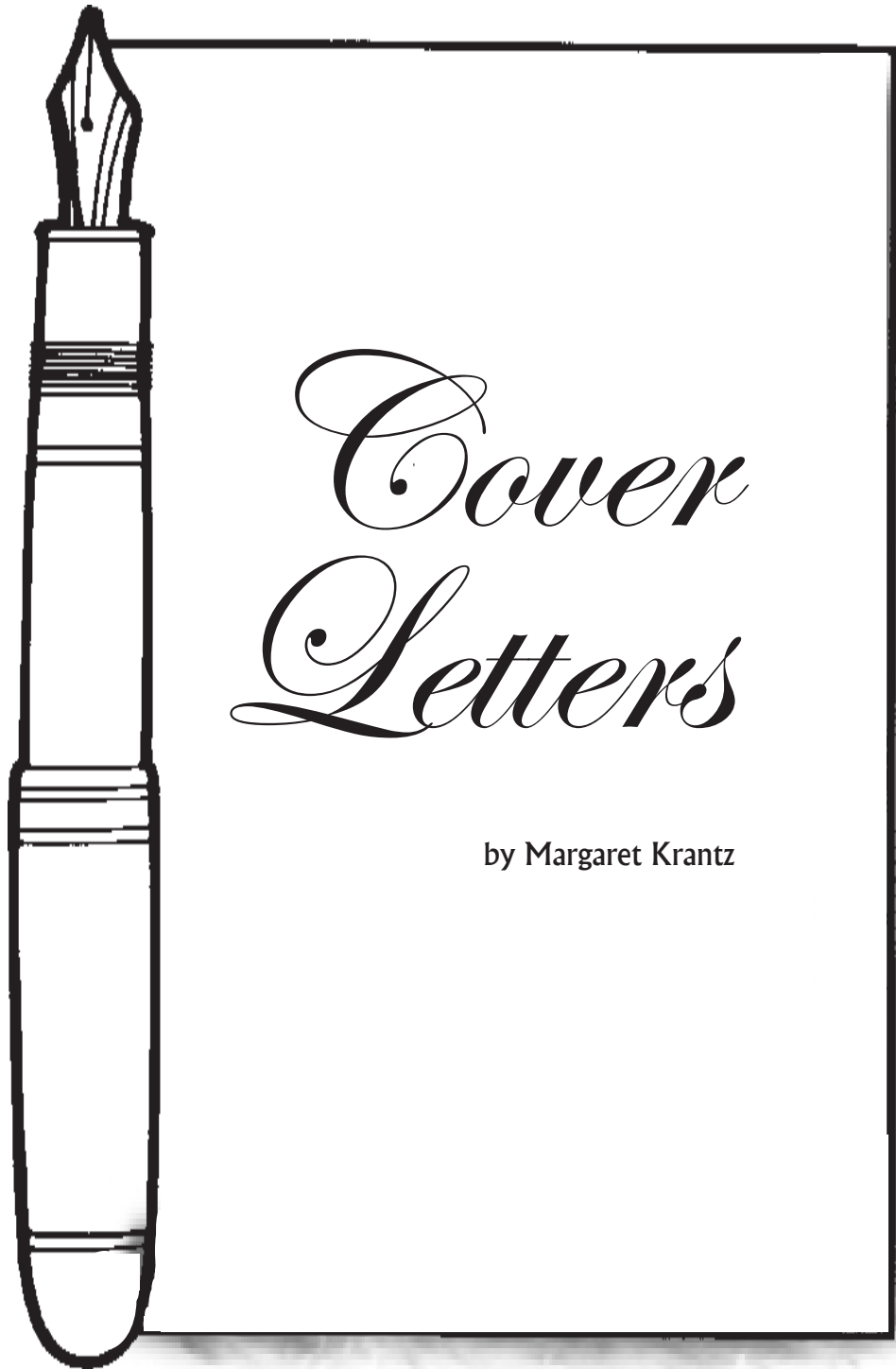


# 2017 Cover Letter Guide

Hanover College Career and Professional Development Center



## In short

For a quick summary of the main points of cover letter writing, read this page. If you have a question about a particular aspect of the process, refer to the explanations and illustrations on the following pages.

**A** cover letter accompanies a résumé any time you are not able to hand deliver it. Generally fairly formulaic in format, it serves three purposes: to tell a potential employer of your interest in applying for a job, to describe the ways your skills and experience meet the employer's needs, and to explain what you will do to follow up with this contact.

As you compose your cover letter, bear the following rules in mind:

**Follow standard business letter format** and punctuation,

**Address your letter to an actual person**, rather than to a job title, whenever possible,

**Explain why you are writing** in the first sentence, so that the letter can be read with that understanding or rerouted to the proper person. If you have connections with the addressee or have had prior contact, state that in the first sentence as well,

**Describe your professional skills** as they relate to the actual position you are hoping to attain. If at all possible, incorporate the specific skills or terms targeted by the employer in the job advertisement into your letter,

**Outline what you are willing to do** as a next step in establishing contact with the employer to further your application, and

**Sign your letter!**

**About e-mail:** Employer policies about e-mailed documents vary. If e-mailed résumés and cover letters are accepted, save your documents as PDFs so that your formatting is preserved, and send them as attachments to a very brief, typo-free, introductory e-mail message that says, "Please accept the attached documents in application for [position title]. Sincerely, [your name]"

# Cover Letters

**C**over letters, or “letters of interest,” are used whenever you don’t hand deliver your résumé. Always written in response to an actual specific job opening, cover letters highlight the skills and experience in your background which are directly related to the targeted job. A careful reading of the opening announcement is very important when writing your cover letter.

In many cases, your letter will be the first contact you will have with an employer, so remember that some employers value cover letters equally with résumés. Not only will a good letter outline your qualifications, it will serve as a writing sample and example of the

care you place in your work; if it isn’t written well, chances are good that the attached résumé will never be read at all. You should write to catch the reader’s attention and keep it. Be concise, direct and well-organized, and use short, clear sentences throughout. Show enthusiasm for the job while also avoiding an insincere, mass-produced sound. Above all, remember what your audience cares about. Potential employers want to know how you can help them accomplish their mission; they generally have little or no interest in how their job will benefit you. Focus on what you have to offer them based, if possible, on the language in their advertisement, not on what you hope to gain from them.

## Heading and Inside Address

Type your address and the current date in the upper right-hand corner for “modified block” style or flush left for “full block” (remember to have your closing align with the heading). Skip one line after the date, then type the “inside address,” that is, the name, job title and address of the recipient of the letter on the left margin.

517 Ball Drive #555  
Hanover College  
Hanover, IN 47243

February 21, 2017

Mr. Patrick O’Malley  
Director of Human Resources  
521 Patterson Street, Suite 4B  
Lexington, MA 01281

Dear Mr. O’Malley:

## Salutation

Address your letter to an actual individual, preferably to one who is in the position to hire you. Call the organization to request the name (and correct spelling) of the manager in

charge of the branch you wish to work for. Be sure to request specific information about the job vacancy and the company at the same time. If the vacancy announcement specifies “no calls,” address your letter to the head of the office, “Dear Human Resources Manager:” Use a colon at the end.

## Before You Begin

Before you begin drafting your letter, be sure that the job is the right one for you. Read the opening announcement carefully:

- Do you understand the specific job well?  
If the ad is too general to tell, do you understand the field itself well?
- Does the position fit your interests?
- Do you have all or most of the skills and qualifications it requires?

If you can answer yes to these questions, read the ad again, highlighting all requirements it lists so that you can address each one specifically in your cover letter. To assist yourself in the process, create a chart like the following:

They are seeking:	I have/am:
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

In a recent survey, employers named cover letters as equally important to résumés in selecting candidates to interview.

## Paragraph 1

1. Always identify the job you are applying for and how you heard about it in the first sentence. "I am responding to your advertisement for Assistant Zookeeper which appeared in the Louisville Courier-Journal on February 21, 2017."
2. Establish rapport with your reader by referring to a past interaction, mutual acquaintance or shared interest. "I met you at CCE in Indianapolis." "I was given your name by your colleague, Ted Smith," "Thank you for speaking with me about your opening yesterday," or "Through my studies, I have discovered that I am fascinated by the field of forensic psychology. I would like to discuss with you the possibility of my obtaining a summer internship with Psych R Us."
3. Demonstrate your knowledge of the organization. "I am interested in pursuing a career in chemistry. I have been impressed by the advances made by your company in polymers this year."
4. In a sentence, explain why you are looking for a job now. "I will graduate from college in May," or "I am relocating to your area," for example.

I am writing to apply for the position in your research department listed in the Louisville Courier-Journal on February 20, 2017. I will graduate with a Bachelor of Arts degree from Hanover College in May, 2017. After speaking with Pat Newcomer in your Human Resources office, I believe that I am well qualified for your position.

## Check your Quality

- Use high quality paper and same font as on your résumé.
- Center your letter vertically on the page. Don't leave a lot of white space at the bottom.
- Check your content:  
Have you described how you can meet each of the requirements mentioned in the ad?  
Have you remembered the reader's perspective?
- Proofread for flow, clear sentence structure, accuracy of facts, grammar and typographical errors.

## Paragraph 2

Now that you understand the position well and have identified your greatest strengths, you are ready to outline in detail your qualifications for the position. Look back over your chart from the previous page, and identify 3 or 4 main themes in your qualifications, in the form of specific achievements, traits or skills, which qualify you for the position. Be sure to customize your skills and experience to the requirements specified in the advertisement or mentioned by the company when you called. Refer to your résumé, but don't quote it. While a résumé lists individual tasks you have performed, this paragraph summarizes in overarching themes the ways you match the requirements of the job. As this is the key paragraph in your cover letter, it should be longest and provide the most detailed information. If necessary, feel free to break it into two sections.

As a chemistry major, I am quite interested in chemical applications in consumer production. I am experienced in running titration, litmus, refractometer, and gas chromatography tests, and have entered and analyzed data from these experiments on the computer. Through an internship at Madison Chemical, I was responsible for reading and recording levels of various gauges. I possess strong attention to detail and a commitment to accuracy.

In your ad, you mention that your position requires report writing. While at Hanover, through nearly forty-five lab reports and over 30 other paper assignments, I have developed strong writing skills. As one third of these projects involved extensive research, I have developed skills in analysis as well. My experience and qualifications are explained in further detail on my enclosed résumé.

I would welcome the opportunity to answer any questions you may have. I am on break the week of March 2 and plan to be in the Indianapolis area, if you would like to meet to discuss my qualifications further. Until March 1, I can be reached through my cell phone at (812) 599-5555.

### Paragraph 3

1. State what you will do next, or ways in which you are willing to assist them as they consider you. "I am available for interviews at your convenience," or "I would welcome the chance to discuss my qualifications with you." In fields in which assertiveness is a virtue, it is good to give a date when you'll follow up, "I will call you before February

10 to discuss my qualifications." However, never give the employer a deadline, e.g. "Please call me within the next two weeks." If you state that you will call, be sure to do so, and be ready for informal questions or even a telephone interview right on the spot. Review your qualifications before you call!

2. Tell how you can be reached, "If you leave a message on my cell phone, I will return your call right away." Be sure your voice mail message sounds professional.

### Closing

Thank them for considering you. Aligning your margin with that of your address at the top, end with "Sincerely," or "Sincerely yours," then skipping several lines for your signature, type your name as it appears on your résumé. Be sure to sign your letter before you mail it!

Thank you for considering my qualifications for this position.

Sincerely,

*Wanda G. Job*

Wanda G. Job

### Where to Find out More

The CPDC has many useful guides to assist you in writing cover letters, with examples appropriate to your situation. We also offer an Informational Interviewing Guide which gives examples of questions to ask a potential employer prior to writing your cover letter.

# Letters of Inquiry

**Write** a letter of inquiry in place of a cover letter when you are contacting a potential employer to learn about possible job openings. Part of the purpose of a letter of inquiry is to learn more about job requirements before you write your résumé; to send one now offers the employer the chance to screen you out before you have the ability to target your résumé to their opening.

A letter of inquiry is similar in style to a cover letter in that with both you are to state clearly why you are writing, to outline your relevant skills to the best of your knowledge and then to state what you will do next. Likewise the format is identical. However, a letter of inquiry is intended to locate job leads, not to respond to actual job openings announcements. Therefore, while you will always include a résumé with a cover letter, it is generally not a good idea to include one with a letter of inquiry.

## What to Include

- Begin with a brief explanation of your purpose in writing. Ask about openings, or request an application. Request additional information if it would help you to target your résumé.
- Give a brief overview of your qualifications, so that they see that your request merits a response.
- If your return address is out of their region, explain how you plan to handle the distance.
- Thank them for their assistance.
- Omit any mention of your résumé.

**(Follow standard business letter format for headings and closings.)**

Dear Dr. Sawyer:

I am writing to request a job application and information about your school system and students. In May 2017, I will complete my Bachelor of Arts degree in elementary education from Hanover College. I am interested in obtaining an elementary teaching position at Kidsargrate Elementary.

My professional experience includes two years of substitute teaching, and three summers as a camp counselor for 8 - 12 year olds, in addition to a semester's student teaching. This experience has prepared me well for the classroom and for extracurricular responsibilities. I am well-versed in integrating computers into the classroom and have received strong evaluations for my classroom management style.

I plan to relocate to your area and will be certified to teach at the elementary level in the state of Indiana upon graduation. Thank you for sending these materials.

Sincerely,

The Ad

**Field/Grassroots Organizing Department Internship:**

- \* Assist in maintaining contact with local Interfaith Alliances across the country, maintaining records that relate to events and activities;
- \* Event planning for local and national events;
- \* Research and develop resources; and,
- \* Attend coalition meetings to keep TIA abreast of coalition strategies and relevant legislation.

3812 Wyndsong Trail  
Lexington, KY 40514

February 10, 2017

Cecilia Smith-Budd  
Director of Intern Programs  
The Interfaith Alliance  
1331 H Street, 11th Floor  
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Ms. Smith-Budd:

Please consider me as a candidate for the Fall 2017 Internship Program with the Field Department at The Interfaith Alliance. I am currently a Senior Political Science major and Theological Studies minor at Hanover College in Hanover, IN. My passion lies in faith-based social justice and the practical application of political association in order to empower change in the areas of religious liberty and diversity. Because of my shared interest with the mission of the Alliance and my personal and professional skills, I believe that I am qualified for a place in the internship program.

I have strong experience in event planning, on a small scale through small advocacy campaigns with a student social justice group. I also have organized a community-wide event, Wake Up and Live, a unity festival devoted to education on social justice issues and embodying the spirit of change within oneself. I am currently the leader of the student social justice group, People for Peace, and hold regular weekly strategy meetings and discussion forums. I am adventurous and have strong social skills, and would be devoted to participating in similar strategy meetings in any community. Although I do not have direct experience with an interfaith coalition, I have lived in a Muslim community in Africa for an extended period of time, where I was a religious minority and was immersed in a multiple faith environment. I have worked to unify multiple Christian denominational groups, who at the time were experiencing strained relationships. My passion for religious understanding would be very beneficial to the program.

I have professional skills that include experience at a professional doctor's office, where I performed clerical work, which included interacting with doctors, staff persons, and patients on a daily basis, and assisted in the medical research department. My research capabilities are advanced; as a student at Hanover College I have written a senior thesis, as well as over 10 research papers of at least 10 pages in length, and given numerous presentations on academic research.

I would welcome the chance to answer any questions you may have for me regarding my application. I can be reached on my cell phone (812) 555-7913 or by email at brownje@hanover.edu. I am available for a phone interview at any time or can make arrangements to be in Washington, D.C. I am quite willing to provide any additional information you may require. Thank you very much for taking the time to consider my application for this position.

Sincerely,

*Jessica Brown*

Jessica Brown



8171 W CR 200 N  
North Salem, IN 46165

April 15, 2017

Dr. Rocky D. Killion  
Superintendent, West Lafayette Community Schools  
1130 N Salisbury Street  
West Lafayette, IN 47906

**Fifth Grade Teacher  
Happy Hollow Elementary  
West Lafayette Community  
School Corporation**

Dear Dr. Killion:

I am writing to express my interest in the instructional position that is currently available at Happy Hollow Elementary in the West Lafayette Community School Corporation. I learned of the opening through a notice posted on the corporation's website. I am confident that my academic background and experience working with others will enable me to be a great asset to your highly honored corporation.

I have completed my Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education from Hanover College and have successfully completed the Indiana Core Assessments. With teaching experience in both urban and suburban school districts, I bring a sensitivity and understanding to both working with and teaching young people from various socioeconomic and religious backgrounds. My commitment to ensuring every student will learn remains my number one objective as an educator. During my placement as a student teacher at M.S.D. of Wayne Township's Bridgeport Elementary, I applied a broad range of teaching strategies to help meet the needs of every student. I constructed my lesson plans by first consulting the Common Core and Indiana State Standards for clear, tangible learning objectives. I then differentiated my instruction to account for the various learning styles, IEPs, gifted and talented abilities, and cultural and socioeconomic needs found within my classroom. I am prepared to do the same at Happy Hollow. It should also be noted that I look to encourage students to assume a very active role with their learning. By the end of the semester at Bridgeport, my students enthusiastically made strategic choices, reflected on their learning processes, collaborated with their peers often, and submitted constant feedback. In this way, my students took ownership of their learning and helped provide a direction for how and when to move forward with a topic or given conversation.

Also a part of my student teaching, I had the opportunity to work closely with both building and corporation-wide grade teams. As a student teacher, I collaborated with colleagues to develop action plans for teaching various units in Language Arts. I also actively participated in extra-curricular activities and volunteered for extra duties, demonstrating an enthusiasm and true desire to be part of the school community. As a member of the Hanover College community, I served as president for three years of the College's only student education organization – ISEA. As a member of residence life, I worked for three years with a staff of seven resident assistants to create a positive, welcoming living-learning environment in each of the buildings we were responsible for. I hope my track record will serve as an indicator of my continued commitment to both learning and professional development.

I truly believe that we are all lifelong learners and would love the opportunity to share this belief with the students of the West Lafayette School Corporation. I hope to combine my range of experiences with my ability to be a compassionate, enthusiastic, intelligent teacher who will make a positive contribution to your school district. I welcome the opportunity to discuss with you in person my ideas and qualifications. I may be reached at (317) 555-3565 or [doubb@hanover.edu](mailto:doubb@hanover.edu). Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Brandon Doub

The Ad

**Special Events/Volunteer Coordinator:**

Seeking dynamic, organized and motivated individual to guide and expand fundraising events, while also managing and stewarding MCHA volunteers. Position would be responsible for working with the Special Event Committee to execute both MCHA events including planning, logistics, event marketing and fundraising. Position would also help manage volunteers. Candidate must have Bachelors degree and/or 3 years direct experience in fundraising events. Individual must be highly organized, self-motivated and have an outgoing personality to motivate and engage donors and volunteers. Must also be a multi-tasker who is detail-oriented with a commitment to excellence. Computer literacy a must including Excel, Word and base level understanding of databases.

2674 South Adams Street #5  
Bloomington, IN 47403

February 18, 2017

Sarah J. Hayes  
Chief Executive Officer  
P.O. Box 1334  
Bloomington, IN 47402

Dear Ms. Hayes:

I am responding to your advertisement for Special Events and Volunteer Coordinator, which appeared on your website. I have always had a passion for helping others and I have been impressed by the events Monroe County Humane Association holds to benefit the lives of animals. After reviewing the qualifications listed in the advertisement and viewing the Tails on the Town and Run For the Animals websites, I believe that I am well qualified for your position.

I have gained valuable experience in event planning, through the student service organization, Earthwide Outreach by Students (EOS), through which I organized an international service trip for twenty-five fellow students and myself. While a leader of EOS, I held regular weekly strategy meetings and discussion forums to lay out fundraising events and make trip preparations. I have also attained invaluable event planning skills as a member of Chi Omega's Community Service and Social Committees. While on the Community Service committees I contributed to the development of a new fundraiser, The Chi Omega Fashion Show. This event, which raises money for The Make-A-Wish Foundation, has since become an annual event. Our first year's goal of \$3000 was exceeded by nearly 6% in the first year. As a member of the Social Committee at Chi Omega, I organized our annual formal and semi-formal events as well as smaller functions. I researched various locations, catering menus and transportation options in order to choose those best suited for our needs and budget. I have strong social skills, and would be devoted to participating in strategy meetings in any community. Although I do not have direct experience working with a humane society, my experience in designing and carrying out plans with a committee would be an asset to any event coordinating position.

My professional skills include experience working at the Indiana State Fair, where I designed and implemented educational programs to be used during the fair. This position necessitated collaboration with another Education Department intern to fulfill assignments in an organized and timely manner. I attended meetings of the State Fair Board in which I was able to observe the inner workings of the State Fair and all the planning necessary to host such a large event. Most of my work while interning for the Indiana State Fair was devoted to making preparations for the Wondertrail to be used during the fair. I spent the entirety of June and July researching content for the Wondertrail and generating a strategy for fair time use and maintenance of the various elements around the fair grounds.

I would welcome the chance to answer any questions you may have for me regarding my application. I can be reached at my cell phone number (765) 555-8553 or by email at [wheelera@hanover.edu](mailto:wheelera@hanover.edu). I am quite willing to provide any additional information you may require. Thank you very much for taking the time to consider my qualifications for this position.

Sincerely,

*Alison P. Wheeler*

Alison P. Wheeler

The Ad

Responsible for developing and investigating cases involving potential violations of NCAA legislation, the compilation and evaluation of evidence of infractions, the drafting of necessary documents, and the oral presentation of information and evidence before the NCAA Committee on Infractions. Essential qualifications include:

1. Baccalaureate degree.
2. Well-developed analytical, oral and writing skills.
3. Ability to work independently and manage various job assignments.
4. A level of self-confidence that allows you to remain poised and able to think clearly in stressful circumstances.
5. Willingness to keep information confidential.
6. The ability to communicate effectively with potential witnesses of varied backgrounds.

1391 Prairie Creek Court  
Carmel, IN 46032

February 25, 2017

The National Collegiate Athletic Association  
700 W. Washington Street  
P.O. Box 6222  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46206-6222

Dear Human Resource Manager:

While visiting my campus Career and Professional Development Center, I learned about your need for an Assistant Director of Enforcement at the national offices in Indianapolis. I am very interested in the position, and feel that my education and experiences are appropriate for the job.

I will graduate in May from Hanover College with a degree in psychology and physical education. During my time at Hanover I have been involved in many organizations and activities which have similar duties and responsibilities as those of the Assistant Director of Enforcement. Having been a committee chair on Student Senate and Vice President of Programming on the executive Panhellenic Council, I have become adept at organization, time management and dealing with various constituencies and by-laws. As captain of my college soccer team, I know how to be a leader and interact as a representative of an organization within athletics. I am currently in my final season as an NCAA athlete, and would like to continue to be involved with your organization. Having had such a positive experience as an NCAA student athlete, I would like to have the opportunity to make sure that others are able to come away with the same sentiments that I have.

I believe that both my background in psychology and physical education, along with my previous experiences at the college level, make me an excellent candidate for this position. I have also attached my résumé with additional information about my qualifications. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

*Lauren E. Drew*

Lauren E. Drew  
(317) 690-9200  
drewl@hanover.edu



## *Cover Letters*

### **Final quality check:**

- Is your cover letter clear and easy to skim for main points?**
- Did you relate your background to the job opening?**
- Did you proofread carefully?**
- Does your letter match your résumé in font style, font size and paper (if printed)?**
- Did you sign your letter?**