QUICK TIPS: COVER LETTER

What is a cover letter?

A cover letter is a unique and personalized way to introduce yourself to explain why you are sending a resume to a potential employer for a job opening. Your cover letter should explain to the employer why you are interested in their company or available position and why you are the best candidate.

Many companies use Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS), which scan cover letters for keywords that match the job description. However, due to the use of this software, there are specific ways a cover letter should be formatted so that it will scan properly into the company's system.

Sometimes the cover letter may be listed as optional. If that is the case, it is highly recommended to include it with!

To pass through an ATS:

- Do not use a template, invisible text boxes, special graphics, color, or shading.

- Always use a <u>blank Microsoft Word document</u> to create a text-only version of your cover letter for online submissions your application as it could serve in your favor if hiring managers are deciding between two candidates

- Use standard, non-decorative fonts between 10.5-12 pt. in black ink

- Margins should be equally set between .5-1 inch on all sides

- Cover letters should not exceed 1 page and should not be folded

- Always proofread your cover letter before you send it!

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Before you begin writing a cover letter, it is important to <u>research</u> both the position and organization to which you are applying. Use the company's website and LinkedIn to supplement the information outlined in the job description. From here, spend some time determining how your prior experience has provided you with the necessary skills that the employer is seeking. Try to emphasize those qualities in your cover letter.

In the supporting or "selling" paragraphs, talking about experiences that provided you with career readiness competencies will help you explain how you fulfill the job's requirements.

These are some competencies that employers highly value to help you brainstorm:

- Career & Self-Development
- Communication
- Critical Thinking
- Equity & Inclusion

- Leadership
- Professionalism
- Teamwork
- Technology

- The cover letter should be easy to read, look crisp, and have a format and style that is consistent with your resume.

- If submitting cover letter documents online/through email, upload the document as a PDF and send it accordingly.

**Remember to always customize your cover letter
for each position that you apply to, based on the particular job posting.**

FORMATTING THE COVER LETTER

The letter should contain the following information, in this order.

- Heading with your contact information (should match the heading on your resume)

- The date that you send the letter

- Employer's contact information

- Greeting

- Introduction paragraph – This paragraph should begin with a strong opening that states the position that you are applying to, include your referral if applicable, and highlight a few of your key qualifications that match the job description.

- Supporting, or "selling" paragraph(s) – The central paragraph of the cover letter is unique for each person, but the premise is the same for everyone: sell yourself! In this paragraph, you want to describe how you fulfill the job's requirements by expanding on the skills and experiences you have talked about in your resume or providing additional information.

- Closing paragraph – This paragraph essentially acts as the Thank You and Goodbye of your cover letter and informs the employer of the best way to contact you for an interview.

- Closing (sincerely, etc.)

- Your signature

- Enclosure (optional) – If you are sending anything other than a cover letter (a resume, for example) use "Enclosure" or "Attachment after your name/signature so the employer knows to expect.