ICE Program Tip Sheet: Cover Letters

PURPOSE:
The purpose of the cover letter is to:

- Introduce you and your resume to a prospective employer
- Demonstrate your interest in a position
- Highlight your experiences that are relevant to the employer’s requirements for the position
- Demonstrate your writing skills

GENERAL TIPS:

- Always write a cover letter to accompany your resume (unless instructed otherwise), whether you contact the employer by mail, fax, email or other means as directed by the employer. When sending by email, you can include the cover letter in the body of the email and/or attach it along with your resume.
- If possible, send your cover letter to a specific person and always check for correct spelling of the name, correct title, and correct address.
  - Use the phrase “Dear Hiring Manager” to begin your letter only if a contact name is not available; avoid using “To Whom It May Concern”.
- The cover letter should be one page and should always have your full name and contact information included in case it becomes separated from your resume.

WRITING A COVER LETTER:

- **Paragraph #1:** Mention the position you are applying for, where you heard about the opening, and/or the name of the person who referred you to the employer.

- **Paragraphs #2 and #3:** Identify the three to four skills needed for the job and highlight your background as it relates to the job position requirements and qualifications that the employer has described in the job description. To add more focus to your cover letter, include research about the company and how this information pertains to your application and qualifications for the position.

- **Paragraph #4:** State your interest in the position again and that you look forward to speaking to the employer soon to discuss your qualifications and how you match the requirements for the position. Tell the employer how and when you will follow-up. If you mention that you are going to call to inquire about an interview, then be sure to do so on the appointed day. If you cannot call and must wait for a response from the employer, then be sure to thank the employer for consideration of your credentials.
  - If the employer requests a salary requirement, quote a salary range within paragraph #4. You may speak to a faculty adviser, professionals working in your field, or refer to websites like www.salary.com to research current salary ranges.
  - If a salary history is requested, include the information on a separate sheet of paper listing the organization, your title, and your salary for each position. If you have primarily held non-paid or stipend-only positions, let the employer know that this is not indicative of your current market value. References also should be listed on a separate sheet of paper (when requested by the employer).
• **Proofread, Proofread, Proofread!!!**: Check for spelling, grammar, typographical errors, and consistent formatting. Use spell check, but also have your resume and cover letter reviewed by Teachers College Career Services and family, friends and colleagues who can offer critical feedback. Be sure to use the same font and font size that is used on your resume.

• Ask yourself these questions to be sure the employer will know the following things after reading your cover letter:
  
  o What position are you applying for?
  o Where did you hear about the position?
  o Who you are?
  o Why are you interested?
  o Why should the employer consider you for the position?
  o When and how you are going to follow-up?