Career Development Services
at Florida Gulf Coast University

Cover Letter Writing Guide
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Career Development Services
Florida Gulf Coast University
10501 FGCU Blvd S.
Fort Myers, FL 33965-6565
(239) 590-7946
Email: careercenter@fgcu.edu
Website: http://studentservices.fgcu.edu/careers/

FGCU Career Development Services supports the mission of the University and the Division of Student Affairs by promoting student learning and development and helping students fulfill their career expectations. Within this context, we assist students in developing and implementing career, education, and employment plans and decisions.

Overview of Services

Job and internship search advising, including resume/cover letter assistance and preparation for employment interviews and salary negotiation.

Graduate school planning, including assistance with resume/CV/personal statements, graduate school research, and preparation for interviews.

Advising on career and major selection, including assessments, major and career information, and assistance in the decision-making process.

Campus student employment, through the use of a web-based job listing system, College Central Network.
Writing Cover Letters

Any time you email, fax, mail, or submit your resume online, you should also include a cover letter.

The purpose of the cover letter is to:

- Show the prospective employer how your qualifications fit the particular job you are applying to
- Communicate your interest in working for that particular organization

There are two basic types of cover letters:

A **letter of application** is used when applying for a position that has been posted and is currently available. The letter should state how your educations, skills, and experience match the qualifications listed in the job posting. Therefore, it is imperative that you closely examine the job posting and ensure your letter includes the main qualifications desired. Do not duplicate everything that is on your resume - just highlight your main qualifications. NEVER USE A GENERIC COVER LETTER TEMPLATE. Each one should be customized for a specific job and company.

A **letter of inquiry**, or **prospecting letter**, is sent to express interest in working for a particular employer when there is not an advertised open job posting. Summarize your qualifications and highlight how you can make a contribution to the company. You must communicate why this company interests you and why you want to work for them. Therefore, like a letter of application, this letter should be customized for a specific company. A letter of inquiry is most effective when you can reference how you heard about the company, whether it is through one of your contacts or through your own research. **However, not all employers accept unsolicited letters and resumes.**

**Keep in Mind:**

**Tailored** – The cover letter is your chance to share with the employer how you are the best fit for their position, company, mission, product, service, etc.

**Do Your Research** – Find out as much as you can about the company and the position. Look at the company’s website, employees’ LinkedIn profiles, and company Twitter feed. Find out current challenges and how your role would help address those.

**Tone** – Don’t be afraid to show your enthusiasm! Use a tone that is reflective of the company and industry. For example, advertising companies might be attracted to a creative cover letter. For more conservative industries like banking, you may be safer by sticking to more professional prose.

**6 Second Rule** – Research shows that you have less than six seconds to get an employer’s attention from the moment they start reading your cover letter. If they skim it and see it’s a repetition of your resume, they won’t read it.

**Format** –

- Do not exceed one page
- Left-adjust the content
- Set your margins to a consistent number around the parameter of the page
- Clean-lined, 11-12 point
- Stay clear of fancy, scripted fonts, tiny type, or anything that makes it hard to read
Key Sections:

i. **Heading & Salutation** – Your letter should be addressed to a specific person. Consider calling the company receptionist for the name of the department manager, checking LinkedIn, or researching the company website for the name of the hiring manager.

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August 25, 20XX

Dear Mr. Jones:

Ever since I was enrolled in the Junior Law Academy in grade school, I have been fascinated with the Criminal Justice field. To protect and serve the community became a passion of mine at an early age, and I have been pursuing this dream ever since. I am sincerely interested in beginning my career by interning for the Sarasota Sheriff’s Department. I had the opportunity to meet Sergeant Jones when I accompanied her on a ride-along last summer. She showed me the essentials of a traffic stop, as well as how the county jail functions and operates, and the how the aviation unit is utilized. I noticed your department seeks individuals who uphold the values of integrity, respect, service, and fairness, which are values I strive to uphold as well. Although I am seeking to gain experience as an intern, I believe you will find my academic preparation in criminal justice and my personal strengths are a good fit for the Sarasota County Police Department internship program.
```

Example 1: Show your **passion** for the work. Use a contact name if you have one.

```
Dear Mr. Jones:

Pat A. Smythe
100 North 20th Street ● Fort Myers FL
(239) 000-0000 ● psmythe@eagle.fgcu.edu

Date of application submission
Include name, title, department, company name and address

Use a colon when addressing an employer you’ve never met before

August 25, 20XX

Peter Jones
General Manager
Neapolitan Marine Inc.
1000 Commerce Lane
Naples, FL 33979

Dear Mr. Jones:

Ever since I was enrolled in the Junior Law Academy in grade school, I have been fascinated with the Criminal Justice field. To protect and serve the community became a passion of mine at an early age, and I have been pursuing this dream ever since. I am sincerely interested in beginning my career by interning for the Sarasota Sheriff’s Department. I had the opportunity to meet Sergeant Jones when I accompanied her on a ride-along last summer. She showed me the essentials of a traffic stop, as well as how the county jail functions and operates, and the how the aviation unit is utilized. I noticed your department seeks individuals who uphold the values of integrity, respect, service, and fairness, which are values I strive to uphold as well. Although I am seeking to gain experience as an intern, I believe you will find my academic preparation in criminal justice and my personal strengths are a good fit for the Sarasota County Police Department internship program.
```
Example 2: Show your **connection** to the organization. Use a contact name if you have one.

Dear Mr. Jones:

This past January, I began my journey with the Walt Disney Company as an Attractions Host at Star Tours, in Disney’s Hollywood Studios. As a participant in the College Program, I was able to enhance my guest relations experience and meet some extraordinary individuals. As a Resort and Hospitality Management major at Florida Gulf Coast University, I was eager for the opportunity to meet people who worked for the Hotel Lodging Operations team at Walt Disney World. I met with Jane Smith, Manager for Front Desk Operations at the Pop Century Resort, and she shared with me how your reservation system works, and the types of projects in which Management Interns can be involved. She also gave me information about the Professional Internship opportunities available at Disney, and fueled my desire to apply. After my experience with the Walt Disney Company, I feel not only more excited about this opportunity, but significantly better prepared for a Management Internship position.

Example 3: Show **what you know** and why they are an appealing employer.

Dear Mr. Jones:

In the Naples Daily News, I recently read about the expansion of your headquarters in Bonita Springs. Already an admirer of ACE Engineering, I was excited to learn about your plans for growth. As a new graduate of the Civil Engineering program and an active member of the Engineering Club at FGCU, I am most interested in the culture of collaboration you strive to create in your company, as well as your commitment to the environment. I believe you will find I am a strong candidate for the Engineer Trainee position with your company based on my academic preparation, my work on sustainability initiatives, and my demonstrated interpersonal skills.

**Tips for the intro paragraph:**

- In today’s economy, a lot of people have the right skills; *employers want people who genuinely want the job*
- Be authentic, don’t go overboard with flattery
- In some industries like fashion or technology, it is more appropriate to say that you love or use a company’s product
2. **Second Paragraph – Your strategic “sales pitch.”**

What makes you the best candidate for the position? Employers are looking for evidence that proves you possess the desired qualifications. This evidence comes in the form of your education, experience, skills and personality. Therefore, your cover letter should contain specific examples that you have what they are looking for.

**Follow these steps to help you form strategic cover letter examples:**

**Step 1:** Refer to the job posting and list the desired qualifications.

**Step 2:** Think back to your experiences – school work, internships, volunteer service, campus involvement – and record specific examples of times you demonstrated these desired qualifications.

**See examples below.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible job description qualifications or requirements</th>
<th>What I’ll bring to the table: evidence of experience, knowledge, skills, and traits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to relate and communicate with people at various levels of an organization</td>
<td>• As a student assistant with Campus Recreation, I presented a proposal to the Director and VP of Student Affairs for the 3v3 Tournament for Tots fundraising event that went on to raise $12,000 for the StandUp for Kids nonprofit organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrated ability to simultaneously handle a large and diverse number of projects with tact and persistence</td>
<td>• Maintained a full-time class schedule while working part-time as an accounting intern and fulfilling my duties as Treasurer for Kappa Alpha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong customer service and interpersonal skills</td>
<td>• In my position at Target, I greeted over 200 in-store guests per day and responded to inquiries about sales items</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Bachelor’s degree | • Earning a Bachelor of Arts in Communication from FGCU  
• Minor in Advertising; relevant coursework in Promotional Writing & Design |

**Step 3:** Take the examples you have developed and integrate them into the prose of your cover letter. DO NOT just list them in the cover letter.

3. **Optional Third Paragraph – Why do you want to work for this employer?**

45% of employers want to know why you want to work for them.

Emphasize your knowledge of the company, your familiarity with the industry, and how this position fits into your career plan. If this section is not longer than two sentences, do not create a third paragraph, just combine content into the final paragraph.

Based on your research, show the employer that you know what the company does and the challenges it faces. These challenges do not need to be specific, just general industry trends. Then emphasize your personal value by showing how you might solve the problem.

Example: You might write, “A lot of healthcare organizations are making large adjustments to their methods of providing high quality care to patients following the changing laws.” Then address how your experience or education in healthcare law and policy has equipped you to meet the challenges of a changing health care industry.

Discuss how you feel connected to the company’s product, service, mission, business model, etc. Share a personal or professional experience that taught you about the importance of the industry or the work the company is doing. This will validate your connection to the company.
4. **Final Paragraph**

In this paragraph, thank the reader for their time and consideration. Indicate the phone number and email where you can best be reached. Make sure there is a professional greeting, including your name, on your voicemail message! If you are applying to a position out of the area, indicate when you are planning to relocate to that area, or when you may be taking a trip to the area and would be available for an interview. You can also indicate if you plan to receive any certification that is required for the position.

I am excited to learn more about this position and your team’s goals. I would welcome the opportunity to speak with you in more detail about my background and how I feel I can contribute to your company mission. Feel free to contact me at your convenience by phone (239-000-0000) or email (eagleazul@eagle.fgcu.edu). I will follow up with you following my relocation to the Denver area next week, June 4, 20XX. Thank you for your consideration.

5. **The Closing**

Keep the closing simple—“Sincerely” suffices. Follow these rules for your signature:

- **Email:** simply type your name under your closing, you can include a script version of your name in place of your signature
- **Hard copy:** sign your name in blue or black ink above your typed name
- **Attached PDF or Word document:** copy and paste an image of your actual signature above your typed name using a scanner or insert as a picture

Sincerely,

*Pat A. Smythe*

Pat A Smythe
The Dos and Don’ts of Cover Letter Writing

Do

- Tailor the cover letter as you would your resume
- Include a strong opening statement that clarifies the fact that you want the job and are the best candidate for it
- Be succinct – a hiring manager should be able to read the letter quickly
- Share an accomplishment that shows you can address the challenges the employer faces
- Be authentic and genuine
- Show your enthusiasm for the position!

Don’t

- Don’t try to be funny – too often it falls flat or does not translate when read
- Don’t send a generic cover letter from a template – customize for each specific job
- Don’t go overboard with flattery – be professional and mature
- Don’t repeat your resume bullet points – use your cover letter to highlight new material
- Don’t use phrases like, “I’ll be a huge asset to your team” – you are making a big assumption about your value that recruiters may not appreciate. Instead, use phrases like, “I would appreciate the opportunity to contribute as part of your team.”

Useful Cover Letter Phrases

- Please accept this letter as my enthusiastic application for the position of....
- I learned of this opportunity from...
- I am very interested in pursuing this exceptional opportunity.
- My keen interest in this position stems from...
- My professional experience is solid and well-rounded, and includes...
- My primary focus involved...
- This position represents a tremendous opportunity to continue my clear and committed career path...
- I believe the combination of my education and experiences have prepared me...
- As a result of these experiences...
- Beyond enthusiasm for the position, I offer all of the essential elements in requires including...
- I firmly believe my experience, education and background would enable me to make a significant contribution...
- It is a challenging position for which I believe I am well qualified
- My interest and knowledge in this area was further enhanced by...
- My particular area of effectiveness is...
- Although I have found my current position to be professionally rewarding...
- My professional experiences are supplemented by...
- I look forward with enthusiasm to an opportunity for an interview
CONVENTIONAL EXAMPLE

PAT A. SMYTHE
100 North 20th Street – Fort Myers, FL, 33901
(239) 000-0000 – psmythe@eagle.fgcu.edu

August 25, 20XX

Peter Jones
General Manager
Neapolitan Marine Inc.
1000 Commerce Lane
Naples, FL 33979

Dear Mr. Jones:

Please accept this letter and resume in application for the Public Relations Director position at Neapolitan Marine (#1234) as posted on the FGCU College Central Network website. I believe my combination of experience, skills and personal interest in the boating industry matches well with the qualifications you are seeking.

On my resume you’ll note that I recently graduated from Florida Gulf Coast University with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Marketing. This past spring, I served as the Public Relations/Advertising Intern at Gulf Coast Cruise Liner, a luxury yacht broker in Naples where I had the opportunity to work with the media, write press releases, and develop community relations events. My responsibilities also included overseeing the creation of all corporate marketing materials and maintaining the company website. Managing these communication strategies required proficiency in various desktop publishing programs and website design software. Attention to detail, strong organizational skills, and the ability to work under deadlines were critical to ensuring successful public relations efforts for the company.

Neapolitan Marine has a great reputation in the boating industry and I am very interested in learning more about this position and your public relations goals. I would welcome the opportunity to speak with you in more detail about my background and how I may be able to contribute to your team. Feel free to contact me at your convenience at 239-000-0000. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Pat A. Smythe

Pat A. Smythe
August 25, 20XX

Ms. Julie Manager
Nursing Care Coordinator
Family Birthing Center
Lee County Hospital
Fort Myers FL 33901

Dear Ms. Manager:

While researching the Southwest Florida healthcare marketplace, I learned of the position of Graduate Nurse in Labor and Delivery at your Family Birthing Center facility in the Lee County Hospital healthcare system.

In May of 20XX, I will receive my Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing from Florida Gulf Coast University. The program at FGCU has given me intensive hands on experience through clinical rotations and state-of-the-art education facilities. In my rotations, I worked on several units including medical-surgery, pediatrics, and obstetrics. In addition, I completed an independent study based on my work at Boston Nursing System this past summer. As a volunteer at BNS, I spent 10 weeks observing and assisting a Certified Nurse Midwife during clinical visits and labor and delivery. This spring, my clinical rotations will include 6 weeks on a high-risk maternity unit at HCH Healthcare System in Naples.

I am confident my skills gained from these experiences would prove beneficial to your organization and I would welcome an opportunity to discuss my qualifications with you. I may be reached by telephone (239-000-0000) or email (psmyth@eagle.fgcu.edu). Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Pat A. Smythe
PAT A. SMYTHE
100 North 20th Street – Fort Myers, FL, 33901
(239) 000-0000 – psmythe@eagle.fgcu.edu

April 28, 20XX

Michael Fox
Senior Recruiter
Acme, Inc.
3435 Center Drive
Naples FL

Dear Mr. Fox:

January Jones, my former supervisor, recommended I contact you about the Management Trainee position with Acme, Inc. After reviewing information about your company, I am very enthusiastic about the opportunity with Acme, Inc. Your mission to provide quality products, great value and WOW service is an effort I would like to join. I noticed you are looking for candidates with leadership, teamwork and customer service skills. I think you will find my experience and academic preparation make me a good candidate for your management training program.

During my time as Vice President of the Psychology Club at Florida Gulf Coast University, I collaborated with club members to create and implement several popular events. For our Careers Extravaganza, I organized planning meetings and motivated members to complete tasks on time. I contracted professional speakers, arranged the venue and delegated the marketing to creative students with related experience. Club members told me they had fun putting together this event, and our efforts resulted in a 30% increase in student attendance from the prior year. We also received very positive feedback from students, speakers and professors.

In my current work as a customer service associate for Gopher Mania, my manager frequently comments on my ability to provide our customers with an exceptional shopping experience. I do this by greeting customers warmly, anticipating their needs and going the extra mile to ensure their satisfaction with our products and services.

I look forward to an opportunity to talk with you about the Management Training Program at Acme, Inc. This position aligns well with my career goals, and I would enjoy becoming part of your team. I can be reached at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Sincerely,

Pat A. Smythe
April 1, 20XX

Felicity Barnacle
Director of Public Relations
Hot Shot Events
135 Distillery Lane
Naples FL 34101

Dear Ms. Barnacle:

With 2 years of experience in public relations and event planning, and a Bachelor of Arts in Communication, I am an excellent candidate for the position of Event Planner with Hot Shot Events. I have a record of planning successful large-scale events that I managed under budget while ensuring the satisfaction of everyone attending. I have been impressed with the variety of the events that Hot Shot produces, as well as the value you place on creativity and client satisfaction. I am excited about the opportunity with your firm and feel it is a great fit for my career goals.

Among my most relevant experiences, I have worked as an Event Planning Intern and as the PR Chair for my sorority. The success I achieved in my internship led my supervisor to give me an increase in responsibilities not given to interns in prior years. For example, for a recent event I led a team of 3 volunteers and 1 staff member to create and implement a new gala fundraising event that attracted over 120 prospective donors, received rave reviews and raised over $14,000. It was very satisfying to be able to develop a brand new event that was so well received.

Some other achievements include:
● Planning and implementing as sorority charity event that came in 10% under budget as a result of creative problem solving, negotiation skills and my ability to solicit donations
● Maintaining strong professional relationships with over 30 vendors
● Consistently achieved 94% satisfaction rate or better among event attendees

I would value the opportunity to bring my skills, experience and education to Hot Shot Events. I look forward to an opportunity to discuss how I can contribute to your company. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Pat A. Smythe
Amanda Long
Senior Recruiter
Sherwin-Williams Company
Address Line 1
Fort Myers FL 33965

April 28, 20XX

Dear Ms. Long,

On a recent visit to Sherwin-Williams to buy paint for my apartment, I was impressed with the customer service I received from the Assistant Manager. He took the time to provide do-it-yourself tips for me and carefully explained the features of each product. I knew then that I would be very interested in an opportunity within your company. I am enthusiastic about applying for the Management Training program in an organization where quality customer service is valued. I also noticed that Sherwin-Williams seeks employees with leadership skills, a drive for excellence, and teamwork skills. I believe my customer service experience, education in Psychology, and personal strengths would be a great fit for a Management Trainee position.

I’m the kind of person who is inherently welcoming to clients and customers – it is the part of my work that I’ve enjoyed most. In my position with Costco, I noticed a woman buying multiple bags of dog food. I engaged her in conversation at the register and learned she volunteered regularly at an animal shelter. Each time I saw her, I asked about her volunteer work, which she happily discussed. Recently, this woman surprised me with a gift for the holidays – a gesture that showed me that I had been successful in making Costco a great place to shop. My manager frequently comments on my willingness to go above and beyond to help customers. I work with co-workers to make the customer’s experience a good one. Based on my performance, I have been asked to step in as interim supervisor on occasion, where I help resolve service issues and model a positive attitude towards customers and team members.

As a recent graduate of Florida Gulf Coast University, I am well prepared and excited to contribute to the success of a Sherwin-Williams store. I gained valuable leadership skills by working closely with the Psychology Club’s members to bring high-quality events to campus. Those events consistently received positive feedback from students and professors.

I look forward to speaking with you in greater detail about ways I could contribute to the Sherwin-Williams team. I can be reached anytime at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Sincerely,

Pat A. Smythe
PAT A. SMYTHE
100 North 20th Street – Fort Myers, FL 33901
(239) 000-0000 – psmythe@eagle.fgcu.edu

September 12, 20XX

Peter Jones
Director of Business Development
ACE Advertising
1000 Commerce Lane
Tampa, FL 33979

Dear Mr. Jones:

I am a recent graduate of Florida Gulf Coast University with a Marketing degree and am considering relocating to the Tampa area. While conducting research on advertising firms in Tampa, I came across your company website and was very impressed. I have been looking for opportunities to break into the advertising field and would like to inquire about possible positions in your account management department.

As indicated on my resume, I have gained advertising experience through an internship at the Gulf Coast Chamber of Commerce, which involved working on numerous outreach initiatives with the Membership Director. These projects included creating promotional materials, developing media spots, redesigning the website, and assisting with a direct mail campaign. I also noticed on your website that your company has accounts with many of the top luxury resorts in Florida. As an Assistant Front Desk Manager at an upscale hotel in Naples for two years, I have a strong understanding of the hospitality industry, which may enable me to make an immediate contribution with some of these accounts.

I am genuinely interested in working for ACE Advertising. If there aren’t any full-time positions available, I would also be willing to work part-time or assist on a temporary basis with any special projects you may have. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this in more detail with you. Feel free to contact me at your convenience at (239) 000-0000. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Pat A. Smythe

Pat A. Smythe
Sample Thank You Letter

PAT A. SMYTHE
100 North 20th Street – Fort Myers, FL 33901
(239) 000-0000 – psmythe@eagle.fgcu.edu

September 19, 20XX

Mr. Peter Jones
General Manager
Neapolitan Marine, Inc.
Naples, FL 33979

Dear Mr. Jones:

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to interview for the Marketing Director position at Neapolitan Marine. During the interview, you stressed that having a strong marketing program was critical to achieving your goal of becoming the largest marine products supplier in Southwest Florida. With my previous marketing experience and connections in the local boating industry, I believe I can help you achieve your goal.

I am very interested in joining your leadership your team and contributing to the continued success of Neapolitan Marine. I look forward to hearing from you and appreciate your consideration of my candidacy for this position.

Sincerely,

Pat Smythe

Pat Smythe
Professional References

Since over 80% of employers check references, be prepared to submit a list of your professional references to prospective employers. Do not put your references on your resume – they should be on a separate document, titled “Professional References.” In most cases, only submit your reference with your resume if it is requested. Also, it is not necessary to write “References Available upon Request” on your resume. That is understood.

Why do employers conduct reference checks?
- Ensure the consistency of everything stated on your resume and what you have said in the interview
- Obtain feedback that provides a more in-depth picture of you as a candidate, including their perception of your skills, personality, and work performance
- Identify any areas of weakness or concern

Consequently, these are the only individuals capable of providing this information objectively:
- Current and former supervisors and colleagues (supervisors preferred)
- Current and former faculty/staff members
- People that may know you from a substantial volunteer experience.

As you can see, friends and relatives are not included on the list since they probably can’t speak to your employment performance, and their feedback is not typically considered objective.

Follow the sample reference entry below:
Mr. John Smith
Teller Supervisor
Everglades Bank
100 Main St.
Fort Myers, FL 33988
Cell: (xxx)xxx-xxxx
Work: (xxx) xxx-xxxx
Email: jsmith@eb.com
Relationship: Immediate supervisor for two years at Everglades bank
Can speak on behalf of my [ability to__________, skills in ______________, etc]

Preparing your list of references:
- Your list should compromise a minim of three, maximum of five references
- Ask each person if they would be willing to serve as a positive reference. If a person doesn’t seem pleased about being a reference, you are probably better not using them. A lukewarm or “I don’t know her very well” reference can be damaging.
- Ask them for the phone number in which they prefer to be contacted
- If you know, let them know what kinds of jobs or which companies you are applying to. This can help them customize their feedback toward the job/company.
- Put them in order of strongest to weakest. Your strongest references are typically your current supervisor, individuals who know you well and have the most favorable things to say about you, and people that have know you the longest. Avoid having more than two references from the same place.
- Bring a hard copy on stationary that matches your resume when you go on an interview.

Once you have obtained the job, it is professional protocol to send a note or email to all your references letting them know, and thanking them for their help.