



THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

Columbus School of Law

THE COVER LETTER

What is the purpose of a cover letter?.....	1
When should I use a cover letter and what should it contain?	1
What format should I use?	2
Address Block and Salutation	2
Use of "Esquire"	2
Use of colon	2
Samples	2
Who is an appropriate person to contact within an organization?	3
What should I include in my letter?.....	3
First Paragraph - The Opening.....	3
Second to Third Paragraphs: The Sell.....	3
Last Paragraph: The Closing and Salary Information.....	4
What kind of paper should I use?	4
Are there any special tactics regarding out-of-town job searches?.....	4
COVER LETTER OUTLINE	4
Attention: Why are you contacting this organization or person?	5
Interest: Why are you interested in working for this organization?.....	5
Fit: Why are you the right person for the job?	5
Follow-up	6
ACTION VERBS FOR RÉSUMÉS AND COVER LETTERS.....	7
SAMPLE COVER LETTERS.....	8
TOP TEN COVER LETTER MISTAKES	17

THE COVER LETTER

What is the purpose of a cover letter?

Your cover letter serves to:

- display your writing ability and attention to detail - it's a writing sample!
- highlight significant achievements
- encourage the reader to look at particular information on your résumé
- answer questions the reader may have based on a quick review of your résumé, e.g., Why are you looking for a job in New York when you went to school and lived elsewhere? Why are you looking to leave your current employer? Why are you interested in this particular organization?
- interest the reader in talking with you to learn more

When should I use a cover letter and what should it contain?

You should always include a cover letter when applying for a position or responding to an advertisement, even when it is not expressly requested. The cover letter should be a concise, well-written business letter that introduces you and requests an interview. Three or four paragraphs are usually sufficient to state your purpose for writing and to create a favorable impression. Show genuine enthusiasm for the job and "market" yourself. Make your letter sound unique to that employer. Avoid clichés. The more your letter looks as if it could have been addressed to just anyone, the less effective it will be.

Do not send your cover letter and résumé via facsimile or email unless the employer specifically asks you to do so or you cannot make an application deadline otherwise; it is not the preferred way to submit your materials and some employers may refuse faxed or emailed credentials.

When applying to different types of employers, **develop several cover letters that are tailored** to the various types of organizations; do not write one cover letter to be used for every employer -- it will signal that you have not done your homework about a particular position/employer. At the very least, you should tailor your cover letters to the type of practice or employer; i.e., litigation or government, demonstrating that you are particularly interested in and qualified to work for a certain kind of employer. You should highlight those skills and experiences most relevant to the position sought or employer seeking. For example, if applying to a litigation boutique, you will want to highlight oral advocacy skills and client contact; if applying to government regulatory agency, these same skills are not as relevant and should not be given as much emphasis.

Typographical and/or grammatical errors are usually deadly; run spell-check, but do not rely on it solely as it will not detect all errors; proofread carefully and have someone else proof your letter as a back-up precaution. Career advisors in OCPD are happy to review cover letters; they should be dropped off at the reception desk, room 163 or email them to jobs@law.edu.

What format should I use?

Use standard business format in all correspondence with employers. That means indented paragraphs with address, date, and closing on the right half of the paper. Do not use the flush-left business format. If you send your cover letter via email, send it as an attachment to maintain control over format.

Address Block and Salutation

When addressing any business correspondence, be sure the employer's name is correct. When writing to a law firm, this includes **appropriate placement of commas and whether the title includes an ampersand (&) or an "and" before the final name.** Your letters should be addressed to a specific person. If you cannot find a name of a recruiter or hiring partner, call the general number to the organization's switchboard to find out the name (and correct spelling) of the person responsible for hiring.

Use of "Esquire": When including "Esquire" or the abbreviated "Esq." after an individual's name in the address block, never use Ms. or Mr. as a prefix. Esquire is used alone at the end of a person's name to indicate that he or she is an attorney.

Use of colon: Because this is a business and not personal letter, **always use a colon** in the salutation and **never a comma.** For example:

John P. Smith, Esq.
Smith, Smith and Jones
100 Surrey Road
Arlington, VA 20001

Dear Mr. Smith:

Samples

For an unknown person:

Dear Sir or Madam:

*For U.S. Representatives
or Congressman/woman:*

The Honorable Michael C. Korson
U.S. House of Representatives
104 Dirksen House Office Building
Washington, DC 20000

Dear Mr. Korson:

OR

Dear Representative Korson:

For U.S. Senators:

The Honorable Ruth O. Steinmetz
U.S. Senate
204 Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20000

Dear Senator Steinmetz:

Who is an appropriate person to contact within an organization. If the firm has a Recruiting Coordinator/Recruiting Manager, you should send your materials to that individual. All large law firms and government organizations should have such an administrative person to handle applicants. Smaller firms will not typically have a recruitment person and you will contact a lawyer who is the designated recruitment contact within the firm. It is always a good idea to find an attorney within the firm to contact in addition to a recruitment contact, such as:

1. **Alumni** from the Columbus School of Law or your undergraduate institution (LEXIS search can easily identify such individuals)
2. Within a law firm, the **Partner who is the head of the practice group** in which you are interested (see *Law Firm Yellow Book*, Law Firm shelf and on-line on www.leadershipdirectories.com (password available from any reference librarian).
3. Within a law firm, the **hiring partner** (see *Law Firm Yellow Book* on the Law Firm shelf or *NALP Directory of Legal Employers*, available in OCPD and at www.nalpdirectory.com); for some of the smaller and medium sized firms, you will probably have to call the firm to find out who is in charge of law student and attorney hiring

Any of these individuals may take an interest in your candidacy and be of assistance to you.

What should I include in my letter?

First Paragraph: Your Introduction

The opening should be up to three sentences. Begin confidently and state why you are writing and/or where you heard of the opening. Try to be original, but not flip. **You want to grab the reader's attention.** If someone referred you to the addressee, mention that person's name in the first line of the first paragraph; a referral or contact's name can set your application apart from others.

Second to Third Paragraphs: Your Sell

You may split this part of the letter into two paragraphs if (and only if) your relevant background is fairly extensive. Employers prefer short cover letters demonstrating that you can make your point clearly and concisely, much like a legal memorandum. Focus on why the reader should talk with you. Expound on what you have to offer and why you want to offer it **to this particular employer.** Remember that the employer already knows that you need experience or the job; indicate why you are interested in the organization, expressing genuine enthusiasm, if possible, in working for the organization. Also, explain why you are a unique candidate and would be a valuable addition. Employers like to hear what they can gain by hiring you in addition to hearing what you hope to gain from them. Show how your education, experience, interests, etc., match the employer's needs. Highlight significant, relevant portions of your résumé, but do not repeat the content of your résumé. If you are responding to an advertisement, summarize how you meet the qualifications stated in the ad.

It is at this point in your letter that **proper construction** is most important. Remember your basic writing rules: each paragraph should begin with a broad topic sentence that states and assertion; the sentences that follow provide evidence that back up your assertion. Do not merely provide a “laundry list” of tasks you have accomplished or job experiences. Tell the employer why he/she should find you an appealing candidate (“My interest in patent litigation is demonstrated by my work experience while in law school”; “I feel that my academic and work successes support my candidacy for your associate position”) and then provide specific examples from law school, work or other experiences that support your topic sentences.

Last Paragraph: The Closing and Salary Information

This paragraph should be up to three sentences. State that you want to interview/meet to discuss the position. Take responsibility for action – you may want to state that you will call on a specific day to follow up, or offer to send additional material if needed by the employer. Follow-up is critical, so be sure to do what you say you will. Finally, be sure to thank prospective employers for their consideration and/or assistance.

Salary Requirements: The closing paragraph is also an appropriate place to respond to any requests for salary requirements/history. If a job advertisement requests that you provide such information, you should address this issue without stating a dollar amount or even a range. Providing a salary amount can eliminate you from consideration if it is too high, or limit your ability to obtain a higher salary if you are offered the position. Often you do not have enough information to determine what the position would pay. You should try to postpone the salary issue until further into the interview stage. However, to demonstrate that you are aware of the request and that you are detail oriented, include a sentence in your closing paragraph that states something to the effect of: “My salary requirements are negotiable.”

What kind of paper should I use?

Use the same paper stock for your cover letters and envelopes that you use for your résumé paper; use 25% to 100% cotton paper in white, off-white, or very light gray.

Are there any special tactics regarding out-of-town job searches?

When applying to out-of-town employers, note in your letter that you plan to be in town “later this month,” “the week of October 17,” etc. Most employers will be more likely to interview you if you indicate that you will be traveling to their area. Also, note why you are interested in that geographic region (e.g., you are a native, went to college in the area, have family/friends there); employers want to see a demonstrated commitment to their geographic area. See also OCPD’s handout, *Long-Distance Job Searches*.

COVER LETTER OUTLINE

The following outline of possible topics is designed to help you brainstorm before putting pen to paper. They are ideas for inclusion – do not use them or the sample letters verbatim or your letter will end up looking exactly like those of all of your peers.

1. Attention: Why are you contacting this organization or person, and why are you interested in this employer in particular?

- You are applying for [POSITION TITLE]
- The employer focuses on [PRACTICE AREA]/[TYPE OF PRACTICE]
- The employer is well-regarded in [SPECIFIC PRACTICE/FIELD]
- You are interested in the breadth of the employer’s practice and potential ability to observe different areas (larger law firms or organizations containing numerous practice groups)
- The opportunity to serve the public appeals to you (government; judiciary); you are deeply committed to [PUBLIC CAUSE] (public interest)
- You wish to gain as much “hands-on” experience as possible (smaller firms and organizations; government)
- You read in [PUBLICATION] (newspaper, book, legal periodical) about the employer/practice area/other item of interest to the employer
- Quote a recent publication and relate the quotation to your job search; Ex. “The July 2004 issue of *The American Lawyer* identified legislative practice as the “bread and butter” of many Washington, DC law firms. It is my understanding that [LAW FIRM] houses one of the most reputable legislative affairs practices in the country; therefore, I hope to contribute my Capitol Hill experience and demonstrated commitment to the policy arena to your firm in particular.”
- A personal contact referred you to the employer; i.e., “Catholic University Law Professor David Lipton suggested that I contact you about the possibility of employment with [ORGANIZATION].”
- If you are applying to employers out of this geographic area, state your connection to the geographic region

2. Fit: Why are you the right person for the job; Why should the employer hire you?

- Your coursework at law school; mention specific courses related to a particular practice area, including substantive/doctrine courses, clinical, internships, and simulation courses which show that you realize a legal education is more than just classroom work
- Your legal work experience, both in specific substantive and procedural areas and more generally in the hurly burly of the practice (summer jobs, clinics, internships, school year jobs, etc.), which developed your **job/legal** skills (the skills are the important part – don’t forget to mention them!)
- Your nonlegal work experience that is related to a specific practice area or the legal field in general, i.e., a former securities broker wants to be a securities lawyer; an IT consultant worked one-on-one with clients, made presentations and developed communications skills

that are also essential to attorneys. (See also OCPD Handout, *Second Career Attorneys: Job Search Strategies*.)

- Qualities that set you apart from other candidates. Any educational, work, or extracurricular experience that is somewhat unique to the typical law student
- Avoid stating a “laundry list” of your academic or work experiences; i.e., “I did _____ my first year; I worked at _____ my second year; etc.” Instead, state the connection between the experience and the position for which you are applying, or why the experience was important; i.e., “My experience last summer at _____ was particularly useful because it provided behind the scenes exposure to the entire litigation process” (applying for position in litigation practice). Organize your thoughts by legal skill rather than by chronology.

3. Follow-up

- Initiate follow-up so as to maintain some control of the process. This prevents you from not waiting passively for a response from lawyers who are so busy they might not answer your letter, and shows that you understand how busy they are. Consider stating in the last paragraph that you will follow up in a specific time frame (no more than 2 weeks), or merely follow up on your own without explicitly stating your intention
- Offer additional materials for their review (writing samples, etc.) as they require
- Thank them for their time and consideration in reviewing your credentials

***An Additional Recommendation: Recordkeeping:** Be sure to construct a simple chart for yourself with four columns: name of employer; date of initial contact letter; deadline for follow-up contact (no more than 2-3 weeks from date of letter); and remarks: what did they say when you called, i.e., we’re not hiring, call back in 2 weeks, let’s meet, etc; be sure to put in your impressions, too: tone of voice, etc. **Don’t miss the follow-up deadline!**

ACTION VERBS FOR RÉSUMÉS AND COVER LETTERS

accelerated	conducted	estimated	leased	reconciled
accomplished	conceptualized	evaluated	lectured	recruited
accrued	considered	examined	led	reduced
achieved	constructed	expanded	licensed	regulated
acquired	consulted	expedited	listed	related
adapted	continued	experienced	logged	replaced
addressed	contracted	experimented	maintained	replied
administered	controlled	explained	managed	reported
advised	converted	explored	matched	represented
allocated	convinced	expressed	measured	researched
analyzed	coordinated	extended	mediated	responded
answered	corrected	filed	met	revamped
appear	counseled	filled	modified	reviewed
applied	counted	financed	monitored	revised
appointed	created	focused	motivated	saved
appraised	credited	forecasted	moved	scheduled
approved	critiqued	formulated	named	selected
arbitrated	cut	fostered	negotiated	served
arranged	dealt	found	observed	serviced
assessed	decided	fathered	opened	set
assisted	defined	graded	operated	solved
assumed	delegated	granted	ordered	sorted
assured	delivered	guided	organized	sought
attended	demonstrated	handled	oversaw	spearheaded
audited	described	helped	participated	specified
awarded	designed	identified	perceived	spoke
bought	determined	implemented	performed	started
briefed	developed	improved	persuaded	streamlined
budgeted	devised	incorporated	planned	strengthened
calculated	devoted	indexed	prepared	studied
cataloged	diagnosed	initiated	presented	submitted
chaired	directed	influenced	processed	substituted
changed	discussed	innovated	procured	suggested
classified	distributed	inspected	programmed	summarized
closed	documented	installed	prohibited	supervised
coached	drafted	instructed	projected	surveyed
collected	dramatized	insured	promoted	tackled
combined	earned	interpreted	proposed	targeted
commented	edited	interviewed	provided	taught
communicated	eliminated	introduced	published	tested
compared	encouraged	investigated	purchased	toured
compiled	endorsed	involved	pursued	trained
completed	enlarged	issued	qualified	translated
composed	enlisted	joined	ranked	transported
computed	ensured	kept	rated	traveled
conceived	entered	launched	received	treated
concluded	established	learned	recommended	turned

updated
used
visited
worked
wrote

SAMPLE COVER LETTERS

20 E. Maple Drive
Bethesda, MD 90210
November 12, 2008

Sam Seaborne, Esq.
Executive Director
Environment R Us
10 M Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 90210

Dear Mr. Seaborne:

As a first-year law student at Catholic University's Columbus School of Law, I am interested in employment opportunities with your office this summer. I heard you speak at last month's Public Interest Panel Presentation and was impressed by your organization's work in the area of environmental conservation.

My volunteer activities as an undergraduate, coupled with my work experience with Trees International, have provided me with a strong background in environmental issues ranging from biodiversity to pollution control. At Trees International, I led the campaign to raise school children's awareness of biodiversity issues in the Amazon. In addition, I researched and evaluated legislative initiatives aimed at preserving diversity among species; thus, I am quite adept at swiftly gathering comprehensive information through legislative research. My volunteer work with the H2O Group further augmented my desire to work in the conservation field. This background in environmental issues, as well as the research and writing skills gained in law school, have provided me with a solid foundation that would allow me to make a valuable contribution to your organization.

Enclosed is my résumé for your review. The opportunity to meet with you to discuss summer employment would be greatly appreciated. I will contact your office during the week of December 5 in hopes of scheduling an interview. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Josiah Bartlett

Enclosure

1234 University Way
Arlington, VA 22201
November 18, 2008

Charles Young
Recruiting Coordinator
Sampson & Lamp
1236 Pearson Lane, Suite 210
Richmond, VA 20000

Dear Mr. Young:

A native of Richmond, I plan to return to the area to practice securities law after graduation in 2011 from Catholic University's Columbus School of Law. I would like to clerk for Sampson & Lamp this summer following the completion of my first year of law school, as it is my understanding that Sampson & Lamp's Securities Group is one of the most reputable in Richmond. My interest in securities and financial institutions practice stems from my involvement as an active attendee at lectures and events sponsored by the Corporation, Finance and Securities Law Section of the District of Columbia Bar Association, of which I am a student member, and my work experience in the banking industry.

I feel confident that my academic background and work experiences will allow me to make a positive contribution to your Securities Group. As a summer associate with two years of experience in American Security Bank's management training program, I am able to bring to the firm an insider's knowledge of a traditional lending institution. On the academic side, a rigorous, full year legal research and writing course and an undergraduate degree in English from the University of Richmond have sharpened my research and communication skills. In March, I will strengthen my advocacy skills by participating in the first-year moot court competition. I am looking forward to the challenge of applying my skills, interest and knowledge as a contributing member of a practical legal environment this summer and am confident in my ability to succeed at Sampson & Lamp.

Please find enclosed a copy of my transcript and a résumé for your review. The opportunity to meet with you to discuss your summer associate program would be welcomed. I will be in the Richmond area the week of November 28th and will call early next week in hopes of arranging a time to meet during that week.

Sincerely,

Madeline Hampton

Enclosures

1234 University Way
Arlington, VA 22201
May 1, 2008

C. J. Gregg, Esq.
Sheppard & Manning
4322 K Street, Suite 200
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Ms. Gregg:

Professor John Smith suggested that I contact you regarding the opening for a summer associate in your expanding litigation department. I understand that Sheppard & Manning's litigation department is divided into three practice groups, and that summer associates rotate through each group over the course of a summer. My hope is to gain as much exposure to varying kinds of litigation as possible this summer; thus, your program is particularly appealing to me.

My developing interest in litigation is demonstrated by my work and academic experiences. As an intern with the Alexandria Commonwealth Attorney's Office, I assisted prosecutors by interviewing witnesses and prosecuting criminal and traffic cases in General District and Circuit Court. In addition to the moot court competitions highlighted in my enclosed résumé, I recently received the Best Oralist award for the Dean's Cup Competition at Catholic University's Columbus School of Law. I am eager to build on these experiences and contribute the skills and knowledge that I have acquired as I begin my career as a litigator. Sheppard & Manning's reputation for quickly integrating new attorneys into the litigation team makes your firm especially attractive to me. I am eager to gain courtroom experience and know that your firm would provide that exposure.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you in person to discuss the possibility of employment. I thank you for your consideration and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Tobias Ziegler

Enclosure

1234 University Way
Arlington, VA 22201
May 20, 2008

Leo McGarry, Esq.
General Counsel
Child and Family Services
Callahan Foundation
1236 Pearson Lane, Suite 210
Washington, D.C. 20000

Dear Mr. McGarry:

Cynthia Miller suggested that I contact you. Over the past semester, Cynthia and I have spoken extensively about her experiences as an intern with Child and Family Services. Because I hold a deep interest in the strengthening of American families, I would like to work for the Callahan Foundation this summer as a part-time clerk.

It is my understanding that your organization seeks a sharp, diligent and compassionate law clerk with excellent research and writing skills who is able to successfully prioritize and complete a variety of tasks under demanding conditions. I am confident that I meet the above criteria. My past work experiences have helped me to develop the skills necessary to perform well in an organization such as yours. For example, my work as an Account Representative at Leo Burnett strengthened my work ethic of persistence and attention to detail. It also taught me how to handle multiple tasks, to work well as a team player, and how to produce a quality product under intensely demanding time constraints. This year, in my lawyering skills class, I became very efficient at researching and writing on a wide variety of issues and was awarded "Best Brief" for my submission in the St. Ives Moot Court Competition. Further, my volunteer hours with the House of Ruth have helped shape my fervent desire to be an active participant in the movement to preserve American families. I have no doubt that I will be able to utilize these skills at the Callahan Foundation and make a valuable contribution to your staff.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss your summer law clerk program. I can be reached during the day at (202) 555-5555. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Josh Lyman

Enclosures

49 Apple Grove Way
Farmland, VA 20004
July 1, 2008

Mr. Alan P. Smithfield
The Honorable Joseph Smith
Chief of Staff,
U.S. House of Representatives
312-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20000

Dear Mr. Smithfield:

It was a pleasure speaking with you yesterday. As we discussed, I am submitting my résumé for the Legislative Counsel position with your office. I received my Juris Doctor degree from The Catholic University of America in May 2008, and will sit for the Maryland Bar Examination later this month. I feel that I am uniquely qualified for this position, given my extensive experience in the public policy arena.

The Legislative Counsel position is of particular interest to me for many reasons. Your office offers a stimulating and appropriate environment in which to apply my knowledge of communications law and the legislative process. My work experience in the communications industry is extensive, including comprehensive exposure to both broadcast and common carrier issues. Thus far, I have advocated positions from the standpoint of a Baby Bell telephone company, from Capitol Hill and from the FCC. I am a dedicated professional with excellent writing, research and analytical skills. Although I have not been employed in the communications arena in the recent past, I have kept abreast of the relevant issues through the news, contact with colleagues involved in the communications industry, and my active involvement on the Federal Communications Bar Association's Legislation Committee. As a hardworking and industrious individual with a genuine interest in the field, I would quickly compensate for any deficiency. I believe these factors, combined with motivation and diligence, make me the perfect candidate for this position.

I look forward to an opportunity to meet with you. Please find enclosed a copy of my résumé for your review. I can be reached during the day at (202) 310-0000. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sally G. MacIntosh

Enclosure

6429 Livingston St., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20061
(202)364-9980
May 1, 2008

Nicole Rose
Hiring Coordinator
Human Resources Division
Federal Labor Relations Authority
607 14th Street, NW, Suite 430
Washington, DC 20005

Re: Position Announcement No. FLRA-01-22

Dear Ms. Rose:

I write to apply for the position of General Attorney, or Law Clerk Trainee until passing the Virginia bar examination. I will receive my Juris Doctor degree from Catholic University's law school at the end of this month and plan to sit for the bar exam in July. My ultimate career goal is to serve the public through federal government service, and I hope to accomplish this by helping your office promote fair labor practices in our country.

As you can see from the attached résumé, I have achieved significant academic and practical exposure to labor law issues while attending law school. Through my internships with the United Mine Workers of America and the Office of the Solicitor at the U.S. Department of Labor, I developed a deep appreciation for this area of work. I researched and analyzed many labor-related matters for staff attorneys and wrote lengthy memoranda and opinions detailing my findings. I was also able to explore the application of the ERISA statute to the workplace through my summer clerkship with the Pension and Welfare Benefits Administration. In addition to my hands-on experience with the labor law field, I have thoroughly enjoyed my labor law coursework at Catholic University. I feel that the Federal Labor Relations Authority is an ideal place for me to establish my labor law career and am confident that my qualifications will enable me to be an immediate asset to your organization.

I have enclosed my résumé and a list of references for your review and would be happy to provide a writing sample and transcript at your request. Thank you for your consideration; I look forward to speaking to you in the near future.

Very truly yours,

Joseph A. Fox

Enclosures

1234 Antings Way
Fairfax, Virginia 22288
(703) 555-1111
August 20, 2008

The Honorable Colleen Kollar-Kotelly
U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia
333 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Judge Kollar-Kotelly:

I write to apply for a judicial clerkship in your chambers beginning in September 2009. I am a third-year student at The Catholic University of America, Columbus School of Law and have served as a judicial intern to The Honorable Catherine Blake, judge in the Arlington County Circuit Court. I have thoroughly enjoyed my legal education thus far, and hope to deepen my understanding of the intricacies of the law through a federal clerkship.

My internship with Judge Blake and my opportunities to use my legal writing skills as a member of the *Journal of Contemporary Health Law and Policy* have been exceptionally rewarding experiences. Each has provided me a unique opportunity to examine various aspects of the law, sharpen my analytical skills, and gain exposure to and familiarity with a wide array of legal issues and practices germane to the federal judiciary. I have benefited immeasurably from the strong emphasis that Judge Blake places on thorough and efficient legal research and the clear and concise writing of legal opinions and memoranda. My legal writing has been enhanced over the past year as I have drafted a note suitable for publication related to the District of Columbia's Patent's Bill of Rights. My internship and journal experiences have instilled within me a passion for the law and a healthy respect for its pervasive influence on the people it governs.

I am firmly committed to acquiring a commanding proficiency in the practice of law and am eager to include as part of my commitment a clerkship with you. I am confident that my efforts would be beneficial to you and provide me with a challenging opportunity to grow both intellectually and professionally. My academic and work experience have taught me the importance of meeting deadlines, working independently, and maintaining a positive attitude and a professional demeanor. I sincerely believe that my skills and experience have prepared me to serve you, and I am ready and eager to commit myself to that task.

Please find attached a résumé, two letters of recommendation, two unedited writing samples, and an official academic transcript. Should you require any additional information, I am available at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Enclosures

Lauren Smith

TOP TEN COVER LETTER MISTAKES

1. **MISSPELLING A FIRM'S NAME** - Check the job listing, NALP Directory or organization's web site for correct placement of commas, etc.
2. **THE "BOTCHED MAIL MERGE"** - When a mail merge matches the wrong firm name with the right address, or vice versa.
3. **SENDING LETTERS TO AN OLD HIRING CONTACT** - Check the NALP Directory or the organization's web site for up-to-date information.
4. **MENTIONING PRACTICE AREAS NOT PRACTICED BY THE ORGANIZATION** - Shows you did not do your research.
5. **COURIER FONT** - CG Times New Roman is the appropriate font for a standard business letter.
6. **USING "MR./MS." AND "ESQ." SIMULTANEOUSLY IN THE ADDRESS BLOCK** - If you use "Esquire" after the name of the hiring attorney, it is incorrect to use "Mr./Ms." before the person's name.
7. **ARROGANT LANGUAGE** - By using concrete examples and/or anecdotes to support your assertions about your skills, you create an aura of objectivity.
8. **SENDING COVER LETTERS WITH TYPOS, MISSPELLED WORDS OR GRAMMATICAL ERRORS** - Don't forget - this is a writing sample!
9. **FORGETTING TO SIGN YOUR LETTERS** - Don't.
10. **SUBSTITUTING "Resume" FOR "Résumé."**

G:\LCS\HANDOUTS\COVERLET

rev. October 29, 2008

© 2001, The Catholic University of America. All Rights Reserved.