**Draft or Update Your Cover Letter**

 Due: July 7th, 2017

 Questions: mbacareer@willamette.edu

 We know from surveys that only 50% of recruiters and hiring managers read cover letters. That’s right—50% will flip the page and go directly to the resume. But the 50% who read it say it is VERY important in their decision when selecting candidates for interviews. Recruiters tell us that they want to see passion and learn something about your style that might not be clear from your resume. Your cover letter is an opportunity to showcase your interest in a role and highlight your qualifications with a story.

Employers are reading your cover letter as a sample of your writing ability and are looking for detail orientation, spelling, grammar as well as whether it flows well and captures the readers’ attention. Your cover letter and story should be customized for the job/internship you are seeking. The goal is always to get the reader to invite you to interview.

**Steps to Draft or Update Your Cover Letter**

**Pick any job of interest and write a cover letter as if you were applying for that role.**

Handouts to help with this assignment:

* *Appendix 1: Willamette MBA Cover Letter Template*
* *Appendix 2: Cover Letter Examples*
1. **Understand the Job Description**: Read the job description and highlight all the key competencies the employer is looking for. For example, many employers have a section titled “Qualifications” or “Knowledge, Skills and Abilities.” You might highlight things like “teamwork,” “analytical skills,” “leadership,” and “communication.”
2. **Determine Your “Fit”**: Next, read about the organization, especially what the “Careers” pages say about their culture. Read recent news for any insights into the organization’s strategy. Think about what type of person they need and who would fit into the organization.

Look at the list of highlighted items and the qualities you thought about in Step 1. Then think about how you fit this role. Distill the list of competencies down to just three major headings that match your background and experience. This will be your *value proposition* or theme for your cover letter. For example, you might select communication, teamwork, and analytical skills.

1. **Tell Your Story**: Brainstorm a story that demonstrates your “fit” for the job. This is your opportunity to show the employer that you have the competency and experience to succeed in the role. Begin writing Paragraph 2, which is a story demonstrating the three things you highlighted in your value proposition or theme. Your story could be from work or volunteer roles. At the end of your story, make sure to relate it back to the job. For example, “My experience in X will enable me to Y at your organization.”
2. **Close Your Letter**: Next write Paragraph 3, which is a pretty standard closing. Restate your value proposition or theme and your interest in the role. See the sample cover letters.
3. **Write Your Introduction**: Your first paragraph introduces you and your story. Show your passion for the organization by letting the reader know that you have done some research. As a Willamette student, typically you will have attended an Employer Spotlight (company information session) or met with an alumnus/alumna before applying. If you are applying to a job, your opening paragraph should state which you position you are applying to, who you are (your value proposition or theme), and why you are interested in this role (passion for the role/company). See the sample paragraphs.
4. **Clean it Up:** Finally, make sure your cover letter is in standard business format with block paragraphs, the sender’s name and address, the date, and the recipient’s name and address. See the sample cover letters.
5. **Save and Submit**: Upload your cover letter to GradLeader. Select the top left tab, “My Profile,” and then choose “Cover Letter Manager.”

**Appendix 1: Willamette MBA Cover Letter Template**

Your First and Last Name

 Your Address

 Your City, ST Zip Code

Date

First and Last Name, Title

Name of Company Street Address of Company

City, ST Zip Code

**Re: Job Title and Job Number (optional)**

Dear Mr. or Ms. (Last Name of Employer Contact):

**Paragraph One:** This is the most important part of your cover letter. Hiring managers are busy and will not read too far to see why you are writing. Clearly and succinctly state here WHO you are (first- or second-year MBA candidate at Willamette University), WHICH position you are applying for (associated job number), HOW you heard of the position (your referral source, name of employee you have spoken with), WHAT you know about the position/company (show you have done your research and are passionate about the company), and WHY you are a strong candidate for the job (your value proposition—your top three skills/strengths that that they are looking for). If this paragraph jumps out and grabs the reader, he or she will continue. If not, the reader will not read further.

**Paragraph Two:** Tell a story focusing on what you can do for the company, not a summary of all your experience. Give specific examples/stories of how you have demonstrated your value proposition (mentioned in Paragraph One) and added value to former employers. Mirror the language of the job description and draw on your company research to emphasize the benefits to the employer of hiring you. SHOW that you are a good match for them. Again, employers appreciate customization to their company as well as your efforts to be concise. Keep your letter positive and show your enthusiasm for the position. Close, by telling the reader how the story you just told is relevant to how you will be a great candidate for this role.

**Paragraph Three:** Your final paragraph should WRAP UP the letter and present a CALL to ACTION. Reiterate your value proposition (stated in Paragraph One). Thank the reader for their time and express your interest in hearing back from them soon.

Sincerely, (or Best Regards or Respectfully) ¶ (leave three space here as if you were to sign your name above the printed name)

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Your First and Last Name

 Your phone

Your email address

**Appendix 2: Cover Letter Examples**

Sally Student

3303 Watson Ave NE

Salem, OR 97301

January 23, 2016

Paul McCartney, Controller

Daimler AG

4747 North Channel Ave

Portland, OR 97217

Dear Mr. McCartney:

It is with great enthusiasm that I am writing to apply for the Financial Analyst summer internship at Daimler AG posted on Willamette’s Career Management website. In reviewing your growth strategy and talking with financial analyst Mia Surlaw, I was particularly interested in Daimler’s plans to launch more than 30 new passenger car models by 2020 and its commitment to sustainability. Through my finance courses and work experience, I have gained expertise in operations finance that would be useful in analyzing the production requirements for manufacturing new models and meeting stringent environmental regulations.

Over the past year, I applied my analytical skills as part of an MBA student team working with the Oregon State Department of Transportation. My contribution involved analyzing traffic flow statistics and determining the impact of a major highway improvement, which helped the department schedule construction around peak congestion periods and minimize the project’s environmental impact. I also strengthened my teamwork skills and an ability to work well with people from many different countries, thanks to Willamette’s diverse student population. I am currently enrolled in advanced finance and statistics course, and I invest time outside the classroom honing my financial skills by actively participating in the student-run Atkinson Finance Association. I believe this knowledge and recent experience would be useful in this role.

I would enjoy meeting with you to further discuss how my financial, operations and collaboration skills would be a good match for this internship. I will follow up with you in two weeks to see if you would like any additional information or have any questions. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sally Student

(503) 222-2222

sstudent@willamette.edu

Joe Student

3303 Watson Ave

Salem, OR 97301

January 23, 2016

Ringo Starr, VP of Product Development

Nike, Inc.

1 Bowerman Dr.

Beaverton, OR 97005

Dear Mr. Starr:

As a first-year Willamette University MBA student, I am would like to be considered for the Product Development Summer Internship Program. I learned about the program from Product Development Manager Lucy Allotrope, who participated in Willamette’s recent Employer Spotlight on Nike. I was particularly interested in the data she shared showing one of Nike’s key growth opportunities is to expand its market share among millennials. As a creative millennial with excellent strategic analysis and marketing skills, I am eager to work with Nike to increase its market penetration in that segment.

While working as a consultant for the Boys and Girls Club, I led a team in creating a new product out of waste materials based on market research indicating consumers would prefer buying products that help the environment. Using market and financial analysis, we forecast the product would generate $13,000 in additional revenue for the club, while also improving its reputation as an environmentally responsible organization. The Boys and Girls Club board members unanimously approved our marketing plan and proposed budget, saying our work had exceeded their expectations.

In my coursework, I have continued to develop my expertise in analyzing new markets and designing products tailored to specific customer segments. Nike has always impressed me with its ability to create apparel for a wide range of demographics. As a summer intern, I would like to use my creativity, marketing experience and analytical skills to help Nike continue its successful portfolio. I welcome the opportunity to interview for the Internship Program and look forward to hearing from you soon. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Joe Student

(503) 222-2222

jstudent@willamette.edu

Alex Student

3303 Watson Ave. NE

Salem, OR 97301

January 23, 2016

George Harrison, VP of Human Resources

Hewlett-Packard Company

3000 Hanover St

Palo Alto, CA 94304

Dear Mr. Harrison:

I am a first-year student at the Willamette University MBA program, planning to pursue Hewlett-Packard’s Human Resources Summer Internship Program. While attending your Employer Spotlight and hearing from Eleanor Rigby, I was impressed with HP’s commitment to transparent employee communications and innovative use of online tools to improve the employee experience. I would love the opportunity to contribute my communications skills, human resources knowledge and technology expertise to help HP deliver on its commitments.

In my role last year as vice president of our Society of Human Resource Management chapter, I initiated new social media tools to increase event participation and solicit top-notch guest speakers. This year I actively participated in student consulting team tasked with helping a local transit company design a new human resource policy which encourages greater employee engagement and open communication. After presenting our ideas to company executives, they adopted the policies as part of their new human resource charter. Throughout the project, I contributed ideas for improving internal communications and applying new tools to make the company’s HR processes more efficient. I would love to have an opportunity to make similar contributions to HP.

I look forward to hearing from you and am available for an interview to discuss how my technology and communication skills and my human resources experience would benefit HP. Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,

Alex Student

(503) 222-2222

astudent@willamette.edu