

▶ Commerce Career Services

Rouss & Robertson Halls, Suite 407 ♦ 434.924.7986 ♦ www.commerce.virginia.edu/career_services

Job Search Letters

Commerce Career Services Office Tips for Effective Correspondence

This handout contains guidelines for writing effective job search correspondence, including...

- **Cover letters.....page 1**
- **Thank-you letters.....page 9**
- **Offer acceptance/decline letters.....page 11**
- **Informational interview letters.....page 14**

The Cover Letter

A cover letter is a vital tool in marketing yourself to prospective employers for several reasons:

- An effective cover letter will draw attention to your qualifications and experiences that are most relevant to the position for which you are applying.
- Employers often use letters to assess the written communication skills that you will need for any position.
- A letter provides you the opportunity to convey to a potential employer your interest, enthusiasm, and other personal attributes that are not easily expressed in a resume alone.

The cover letters you write can play important roles in helping you to gain interviews through on-Grounds interviewing and your own off-Grounds search. For these reasons, it is important that you prepare your written job search correspondence with as much care as you used when constructing your resume.

Cover Letter Handout-General Guidelines

When should I send a cover letter?

Pay attention to times when you need to send a cover letter to a potential employer or contact. If you are conducting an on-Grounds job search a cover letter may not always be required. It is important to note that unless requested, cover letters cannot be submitted through the CAVLink system. If you are conducting an off-Grounds job search sending a cover letter will provide the employer with helpful information to complement the resume. A cover letter can convey your interest for a position and indicate that you are a “match” for the position.

What should my cover letter say?

- Why you are writing and how you learned about the organization or opportunity
- Why you are interested
- Why you are qualified and would be a good “match” for the position
- How you plan to follow up with the employer
- Do not restate what is on your resume
- Emphasize personal attributes/strengths related to qualifications for the position

How do I begin to compose the letter?

Use your own words! Resist the temptation to compose your letter simply by replacing a few words in the attached samples. Remember, the purpose of your letter is to showcase your individual strengths and your own written communication skills. Use the sample as a guide, but be unique.

To whom should the cover letter be addressed?

If possible, address the cover letter to a specific person, not “Dear Sir/Madam” or “To Whom It May Concern.” If contact information is not available on CAVLink, use a position title (e.g. Dear Internship Coordinator or Dear Recruitment Manager). Make sure to use current information.

How long is a cover letter?

Cover letters should not exceed four paragraphs or one page in length. They should be clear and use concise sentences and short paragraphs. Use proper business format when constructing your cover letter.

What is the best way to print and send my cover letter?

Print the cover letter in the same font and on the same type of paper as your resume. The cover letter and resume may be folded for mailing. Use envelopes that match your cover letter and resume. Make sure to use good-quality paper with a good-quality printer.

Sample Format for a Cover Letter

Your Street Address
City, State, Zip
Date

Contact Person's Name
Position Title
Company
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Mr./Ms. _____:

In the first paragraph, indicate why you are writing and where you heard about the position. Make sure to include the specific position title for which you are applying. If an individual or personal contact referred you to the organization, be sure to mention the name in the first or second sentence. Then provide a brief explanation of your interest that reflects your research into the organization. Keep the first paragraph brief and attention grabbing.

In one or two paragraphs, detail how you can contribute to the company. Show how your qualifications, skills, and attributes will benefit the firm. Make sure not to reproduce your resume in this space, but highlight your most pertinent experiences. If you have access to a position description or job listing, specifically address how your background matches the qualifications they are seeking. You might even list your qualifications in the same order that the criteria were listed in the job description. Your objectives here are to demonstrate that you are a "match" for the position and to stimulate enough interest that the contact person will want to read your resume. Create a "need" for yourself at the company, and indicate your willingness to contribute to the organization.

In the closing paragraph, you should suggest the next step. If this is an off-Grounds opportunity, mention your desire to arrange an interview. Indicate that you will call at a particular time, usually within two weeks, and then follow up. Thank the person for his/her time and consideration of your credentials.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Full Name

/your initials
enclosure

Third-Year Student Writing for a Summer Position

100 Brandon Avenue

Charlottesville, VA 22903
December 4, 2001

Ms. Jane Smith
Recruiting Coordinator
Kimberly-Clark Corporation
1400 Holcomb Bridge Rd.
Roswell, GA 30076-2199

Dear Ms. Smith:

I am writing to express my interest in a summer internship as a marketing intern at Kimberly-Clark Corporation. I have chosen to contact Kimberly-Clark because of my strong interest in the corporation. Based on my research of the company, I have found that Kimberly-Clark has a strong commitment to the communities where its employees live and loyalty to the YMCA. The YMCA has played a large role in my life and I have participated in the *We Build People* campaign and worked as a camp counselor.

My concentrations in finance and marketing at the University of Virginia's McIntire School of Commerce have prepared me well for this internship position. Through my coursework I have steadily progressed in my understanding of marketing concepts, marketing strategies, and decision making. Last semester, I worked in a team of five individuals to market a new product to individuals in Asia. Our team worked together to strategize and compose a marketing plan and proposal. I collaborated with my team members and played a significant role during the discussion session after our presentation. I believe that my personal attributes and strong organizational and interpersonal skills will serve as an asset to the Kimberly-Clark Corporation.

I will be in Georgia during the week of March 7-18 and would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you further about the position. I believe that my qualifications would be a match for the marketing internship. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sandra L. Cooper

/slc
Enclosure

Third-Year Student Writing for a Summer Position

12 Wertland Street
Charlottesville, VA 22904

October 2, 2007

Sandy Smith
Smith, Paris, and Huddle
One Main Street
Stoughton, MA 22222

Dear Ms. Smith,

I am writing to express my interest in the possibility of a summer 2008 internship position or seasonal employment with Smith, Paris, and Huddle. Presently, I am a third-year student at University of Virginia's McIntire School of Commerce, concentrating in finance and management. Although I do not believe SP&H has a formal internship program, I am contacting SP&H because of my keen interest in all aspects of commercial aviation and a strong desire to use my research and analytical skills in the field of aviation consulting.

Commercial aviation has been my passion since I was young, fostered by my extensive worldwide travels and reflected in my work experience with airline and airport operations and my airline collectibles hobby. Over the past few years, I have purposefully sought out internship positions within the aviation industry to gain a better understanding of the field. This past summer I had the unique opportunity to intern with the low-cost startup, Skybus Airlines, in its Operations Department. There I used historical flight times and routings to analyze and create adjusted block times for future flight scheduling. As an intern at the Charlottesville-Albemarle Airport Authority working for the airport director, I conducted several marketing research projects. In addition, my internships with the Columbus Regional Airport Authority and NetJets provided exposure to charter, cargo and commercial operations. All of these positions have required research and analysis, including spreadsheet problem solving, and strong written communication skills.

The knowledge gained through these experiences, combined with my course work at the McIntire School of Commerce, has prepared me well for a possible internship. This summer at SH&E, I would look forward to expanding my knowledge of the commercial aviation industry, while applying my research and analytical skills to become a productive contributor.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to discussing my qualifications with you and the possibility of internship opportunities available for the summer of 2008.

Sincerely,

Dominic DeAngelis

Fourth-Year Student Attaching a Letter for On-Grounds Interviewing

756 14th Street
Charlottesville, VA 22903
February 5, 2002

Ms. Sally Smith
College Recruiting Specialist
Verizon
1320 North Court House Road
9th Floor
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Ms. Smith:

I am writing to express my interest in the technology specialist position for which you will be conducting interviews at the University of Virginia on March 7. Having the opportunity to learn about your decision support and benchmarking programs, I hope to apply my experience to the technical track program. I attended an information session that Verizon held at the Boar's Head on February 4 and spoke with a representative, Mr. John Brown. My conversation with Mr. Brown has reaffirmed my interest in the company.

As a Management Information Technology concentrator at the McIntire School of Commerce, I have become more familiar with the hardware, software, and technical concepts that enable computer systems to solve business problems. In my classes, I have received continual practice in strategic analysis and decision-making. To complement my educational background, I have worked as a summer intern at SNL Securities in Charlottesville and also as a lab consultant in the computer lab at the McIntire School. My leadership activities include a role as the president of the McIntire Information Technology Group. This position requires me to maintain a Web site, recruit new club members, plan programs, and work closely with employers. My educational background, combined with my experience, provides me with the necessary skills to make a positive contribution to your organization.

Thank you for your review of the attached resume. I hope to have the opportunity to interview with you when you are here in Charlottesville.

Sincerely,

Peter J. Cunningham

/pjc
enclosure

Fourth-Year Student Seeking Full-Time Employment Off-Grounds

Todd Rush
toddrush@virginia.edu

Present Address

34 Jefferson Park Avenue
Charlottesville, VA 22903
(434) 111-2222

Permanent Address

111 Surrey Court
Atlanta, GA 30309
(404) 123-4567

March 5, 2002

Mr. John Housden
Vice President, Human Resources
BellSouth Corporation
1155 Peachtree Street, NE
1917 Campanile
Atlanta, GA 30309-3610

Dear Mr. Housden:

I recently spoke with Margaret Stallings, who encouraged me to contact you regarding possible openings in the Marketing Research Department. Margaret mentioned that due to demand, the department is expected to expand this year. I would like to be considered for any new positions that may be created with this expansion.

I would bring to BellSouth Corporation what I believe is a strong background in market research and some very valuable experience in your industry. In my coursework at McIntire, I have frequently worked as part of a team to develop comprehensive marketing plans for real-life products. Through these projects, I have learned how to develop research proposals, collect and analyze data, and create effective growth strategies. In addition, this past summer I worked for The Dow Chemical Company, researching one of its product lines. At Dow, I helped design a market survey for a new product, surveyed potential customers by telephone, and processed the results. Drawing on my background as a marketing and finance concentrator, I believe that my skills and attributes would be a good match for BellSouth Corporation.

I would like to discuss my qualifications with you personally at your convenience. My schedule is flexible, and I travel home to Atlanta quite frequently. I will call you within the next two weeks to see if an interview can be arranged. Thank you in advance for reviewing my attached credentials.

Sincerely,

Todd M. Rush

Graduate Student Writing for Full-Time Employment
--

444 Ivy Road
Charlottesville, VA 22903
September 2, 2001

Ms. Andrea Brown

Area Director of Campus Recruiting
Ernst & Young
8484 Westpark Drive
McLean, VA 22102

Dear Ms. Brown:

I am writing to express my interest in employment with Ernst & Young for a full-time accounting position. I will be graduating with a Master of Science in Accounting degree this May from the McIntire School of Commerce at the University of Virginia.

My undergraduate degree is in business with concentrations in accounting and global analysis from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. I decided to continue my present course of study in accounting after working for KPMG in New York as an auditor. During my years of work in the accounting field I have become skilled in the areas of audit and tax accounting.

I honed these skills further as an intern last summer at PricewaterhouseCoopers in New York as an audit associate. In this role, I was able to assist clients with solving business problems from locations all over the world. I am now hoping to combine my undergraduate and graduate education in my next position. I am also interested in the opportunities to travel and utilize my language skills in French and Chinese.

Ernst & Young particularly appeals to me because your company is “a global leader in professional services.” I am seeking a position in which I can contribute by working both individually and as a member of a team. I believe that my strong quantitative, verbal and analytical skills will be an asset to Ernst & Young.

Thank you for reviewing my credentials. I look forward to meeting you when you come to Charlottesville in October. Please do not hesitate to contact me beforehand if any additional information is needed.

Sincerely,

Jane E. Lane

/jel
enclosure

Thank-You Letter

Follow-up with employers is a critical step in the interviewing process. It is important to send a thank-you note to employers immediately after the interview. A well-written, timely thank-you letter tells an employer something important about your personality—that you are courteous and thoughtful. Thank-you letters are used to reconfirm and reinforce your interest in a position. They can also provide a format where you can clarify answers you gave in an interview. E-mail is one appropriate method of sending a thank-you letter, but make sure to use proper business format. Sending a thank-you letter via e-mail can be useful for getting your correspondence to an employer quickly, particularly if you expect to hear back

from the employer soon after the interview. Additional options include mailing a neatly handwritten thank-you letter on a note card or typing a formal thank-you letter.

General Guidelines

- Always send a thank-you letter to people who have spent time interviewing you or providing you with information about careers.
- If more than one person interviewed you, a thank-you letter should be addressed to the key decision maker and one to the coordinator of the visit. Both letters may be added to your candidate file, so personalize each letter.
- In your letter to the coordinator, be sure to thank by name each of the individuals with whom you interviewed.
- Reinforce how you see yourself fitting into the organization and satisfying the requirements of the position. Creating a “match” between yourself and the position.
- Although this is a business letter, be personal to the extent that you are comfortable. You may wish to refer to one of the highlights or one of the specific points discussed during the interview; by doing so, you will create a more personal letter and may refresh the interviewer’s memory of you and the interview.
- Keep it brief—no more than one page and three to four paragraphs.
- If you are sending a thank-you letter by mail, make sure to use appropriate stationary.

Thank-You Letter

36 College Avenue
Charlottesville, VA 22903
February 3, 2001

Mr. Brad Larson
Manager of College Recruitment
Hecht's
685 North Glebe Road
Arlington, VA 22203

Dear Mr. Larson:

Thank you for the opportunity to interview with you on-Grounds at the University of Virginia on October 28. Our meeting has solidified my interest in working as a merchant intern for Hecht's.

After speaking with Scott Stringfield, who interned with your company last summer, attending a company presentation and speaking with you, I have confirmed my belief that the May Company would be a wonderful working environment to learn and grow. I am confident that my experience in retail and the knowledge I have gained through my Commerce education at the McIntire School would enable me to contribute to your cohesive and professional team of retailers. After my interview I have concluded that the prospect of working for Hecht's is an exciting one because of the fast-track merchandising career path. My enthusiasm and strong interpersonal skills will make me a good fit for the position.

Again, thank you for your time and consideration. If you need any additional information, please feel free to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you in the next few weeks.

Sincerely,

Andrew D. Carter

/adc
enclosure

Accepting or Declining a Job Offer

You have the option of providing written documentation to confirm your acceptance or decline of an offer. Letters responding to offers are used to maintain positive, professional relationships with employers.

General Guidelines

Is it appropriate to call or send a letter first?

Always respond to an offer by telephone first, and then follow up with a letter.

What should an acceptance letter include?

The letter should include basic details such as job title, starting location and date. Other details such as salary, relocation agreement, benefits, and other bonuses should be included in your offer package you receive from the employer.

A statement of appreciation for the opportunity to join the organization and become part of the “team.”

What should a letter declining an offer include?

- A statement of appreciation for the offer
- A reason for declining the offer
- A statement, if appropriate, that leaves the door open for some possible future contact

What format should I use for constructing the letter?

Use proper business format and be brief when constructing an acceptance or decline letter.

Letter Accepting a Job Offer

10 Old Reid Road
Charlottesville, VA 22903
December 14, 2001

Ms. Joy Bowman
Personnel Officer
MassMutual Financial Group
1295 State Street
Springfield, MA 0111-0001

Dear Ms. Bowman:

I am writing to confirm my acceptance of your offer to become a credit research analyst at MassMutual Financial Group. As stated in your offer letter that I received on December 5, my starting salary will be \$40,525, with an added allowance of \$2,500 for moving expenses to be mailed upon receipt of my acceptance letter. I will report to work on June 1 in Springfield.

I am extremely pleased to be given the opportunity to work for MassMutual. It will be enjoyable to utilize my analytical skills as well as my accounting and finance background to assist with investments. I look forward to the challenges ahead.

Thank you for your kindness and consideration in working with me during the recruiting process. My positive experience is one of the major factors in my decision to accept your offer. I look forward to being on your team.

Sincerely,

Carol B. Bradley

/cbb

Letter Declining a Job Offer

17 Oakhurst Circle
Charlottesville, VA 22903
March 5, 2002

Mr. Phil Gerald
Personnel Director
Wachovia Corporation
100 North Main Street
Winston-Salem, NC 27150

Dear Mr. Gerald:

Thank you for your kind offer to become a banking operations associate at Wachovia's Charlotte office. As I mentioned over the telephone, I regret that I have to decline the offer. I have chosen to take a position with an organization closer to my home in Northern Virginia.

I am very impressed with Wachovia and the company's commitment to customer service. You and all of the individuals with whom I met during my visit treated me with kindness and respect. I truly am honored to have been selected for a position at Wachovia. As I continue in my career, I hope to keep the lines of communication open with your company.

Thank you again for your offer, and I hope to have the opportunity to see you in the future.

Sincerely,

Kathryn S. Cole

Letter Requesting an Informational Interview

Informational interviews are a wonderful opportunity to obtain further information about different careers and network with individuals in the field. The letter should clearly state that your purpose is to gather advice and information, not to obtain a position. Attaching a resume to the letter will give the contact a frame of reference for your experience and background. The letter should introduce you and prepare the reader for the follow-up phone call or visit. Using the University Career Assistance Network (UCAN) is an excellent tool for obtaining career-related information from UVA's alumni. The UCAN database can be utilized by all UVA students by setting up an account at: (<http://hoosonline.virginia.edu/ucan>).

General Guidelines

- Introduce yourself and your reason for contacting the person.

- Explain how you acquired the person's name.
- Briefly explain your background and your interest in the person's field.
- Provide details of when and how you will be contacting the person for a time to meet.
- Use proper business format and be brief.
- Follow up after the informational interview and send a thank-you note to the individual who assisted you.
- Follow up with your contact concerning the outcome of your search.

Sample Letter Requesting an Informational Interview

28 East McBee Street
Charlottesville, VA 22903
February 1, 2001

Ms. Christine Poole
Consultant
Booz-Allen & Hamilton
8283 Greensboro Drive
McLean, VA 22102

Dear Ms. Poole:

I am a third-year student concentrating in finance and marketing at the McIntire School of Commerce at the University of Virginia. I also have a minor in economics from the College of Arts and Sciences. I located your name using the alumni database, UCAN, at the University of Virginia. Recently I spoke

with Carl Hill, who works at your McLean office, about potential careers in consulting. He suggested that you could offer some valuable information on this matter. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to speak with you and learn more about your career path in consulting.

I have shown interest in the consulting industry through my participation in the UVA on Wall Street's NY Consulting trip this past January 2001. After attending the trip, I believe that my analytical abilities, interpersonal communication skills, and strong work ethic will be a match for positions in consulting.

I will be arriving in Northern Virginia for fall break October 14-17. I will call you next week to see if we can arrange a time when we could briefly meet. Attached you will find my resume to provide you with information concerning my educational and work experiences. Thank you for your consideration of my request for career information, I look forward to communicating with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Danielle E. Brown

/deb