A successful cover letter “hooks” an employer in the first paragraph. The first few sentences should show that you’ve done your research about the job or internship and the organization, and should make an employer want to learn more about you. A cover letter is also the first writing sample that an employer sees from you. Make every word count and make sure the final version is polished and error-free. You can review student cover letter samples on the CareerLAB website.

**Before You Start**
1. Research the position. What are its key responsibilities? What skills, knowledge and qualities are listed in the posting?
2. Research the organization. What is its culture? Its history? Its strategic goals? How do they describe themselves and what sets them apart? You can find this information online and through informational interviews.
3. Identify your most relevant skills and competencies. Then create “stories” from your experience that illustrate your competencies in the required areas.
4. Download and complete the Resume/Cover Letter/Interview Prep Sheet from the CareerLAB website.

**Formatting Basics**
- **Font** – Use 12 point standard font (Times Roman, Garamond, Verdana, Helvetica, Arial).
- **Spacing** – Set document margins to 1” all around. Center your letter on the page and left justify all text.
- **Heading** – Use business letter format and use the same heading as your resume.

**Writing the Letter**
- **Be specific** – Tailor each letter to the position and employer. This shows the employer that you are truly interested in the job and that you took the time to research the organization.
- **Whenever possible, address the letter to a person** – Spell names correctly.
- **Be concise** – Keep it to one page. Be clear and avoid using flowery or boastful language.
- **Complement your resume** – Rather than repeating information from your resume, tell specific stories and use examples. The tone should be what you can do for the employer, not what they can do for you.
- **NEVER be negative** – Don’t apologize for not yet possessing a skill they would like to see.
- **Proofread, Proofread, Proofread** – Typos signal a lack of attention to detail.
- **Come to CareerLAB Sun. to Fri., 1:30-3:30 pm** – To get a critique with a Peer Career Advisor (see Handshake).

**First Paragraph**
- Name the specific position for which you are applying.
- Indicate how you learned of the position, especially if from a contact.
- State why you’re interested in the position and the employer. Take time to personalize this in your own words. Build a connection to the particular position by referencing the specific research you have done about it and about the organization.
- Create a one- or two-sentence pitch describing why hiring you benefits the employer (rather than why this position is a perfect fit for you).

**Second and/or Third Paragraph(s)**
- Indicate WHY you are a good fit for the position. What skills & competencies do you possess that will benefit them?
- Explain how your academic experiences provided you with relevant skills.
- Describe experiences that illustrate your skills (jobs, internships, leadership roles, etc.).

**Last Paragraph**
- Reiterate your interest in the organization and position.
- Indicate that you are available to discuss your qualifications in a personal interview.
- Close by stating that you hope to hear from them, and reiterating your contact info.