

A cover letter introduces you and your qualifications to prospective employers. Next to your resume, the cover letter is the most important document in your job search. Contact the Career Center for assistance in creating and perfecting your cover letter.

Cover letters should answer the following questions:

- What position are you seeking, and how did you hear about the position?
- Why are you interested in the position and organization?
- What skills or attributes do you bring?
- What specific skills / knowledge / experiences uniquely qualify you to meet the employer's needs?

Cover Letter Checklist

- Review sample cover letters before you begin writing. Optimal Resume has several samples that you can access by creating an account with your Calvin e-mail address (<https://calvin.optimalresume.com>)
- Personalize each letter to the position and organization. If you do not know the name of the person to whom your letter should be addressed, call the organization and ask. Addressing a specific person is best, but other acceptable greetings include "Dear Hiring Manager" or "To Whom It May Concern".
- Use the header from your resume and use a font style and font size to match your resume.
- Keep the letter short. Three to five paragraphs will help hold the employer's interest.
- Explain how you can fill the company's needs, not what the company can do for you.
- Vary your sentence structures (i.e., don't start all of your sentences with "I"). Challenge yourself to use as few personal pronouns as possible.
- Do not close the letter without identifying what you will do next. Request an interview. Show initiative by offering to follow-up or giving a specific timeframe when you plan to call.
- Proofread. Bring your letter to the Career Center to have someone else proofread it.
- When sending the resume and cover letter by e-mail, you can either attach both the cover letter and resume (as PDF documents), or you can treat the body of the e-mail as your letter. Delete the address block, and keep the letter brief and professional. You do not need to sign e-mailed cover letters.

Cover Letter Outline

First Paragraph

- State the reason for writing
- Name the specific position or type of work for which you are applying and indicate from which resource (career development office, website, personal contact, etc.) you learned of the opening
- If you have a personal connection to the position or employer, such as a referral from a current employee, make that evident

Cover Letter Outline (cont.)

Middle Paragraph(s)

- Highlight related experience, education and activities
- Use specific examples to emphasize accomplishments and relevant skills
- Present a direct match between your qualifications and the job requirements by using keywords from the position posting; however, do not simply restate the job description back to the employer
- Express enthusiasm and demonstrate you have done your research by including information about why you are interested in the position and/or organization

Closing Paragraph

- Reiterate that you are a strong or qualified candidate for the position
- Refer to your enclosed resume if you have not already and indicate your interest in an interview
- Indicate how and when you will follow up
- Include a statement expressing your appreciation for the employer's time and consideration

Darnell Begay

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Grand Rapids, MI 49546
616-526-6000
darnellbegay@gmail.com

May 30, 2019

Dear Mr. Carter:

Please accept the attached resume for the Systems Analyst position that was advertised on the Spectrum Health website. I recently graduated from Calvin University with a major in economics and a minor in computer science, which together equip me with the technical and big-picture knowledge that is essential for the Systems Analyst role. I am confident that I can effectively meet the needs of your organization because of my academic background in computer science and my previous experience working in the healthcare technology sector.

Last summer I was a technical services intern for Epic, a healthcare software company, where I gained knowledge of a key software system Spectrum Health uses. Throughout that internship, I effectively managed many conflicting responsibilities as I supported the development of a new financial management process for the payroll department. Throughout the internship, I was recognized for my efficiency, accuracy, and creativity.

Throughout my time at Calvin, I also worked as a student consultant in the computer lab, which strengthened my customer service and communication skills. As a Systems Analyst, these customer service skills will greatly benefit the productivity and collaboration that is necessary for effective analysis of tech systems. Additionally, my computer science coursework has developed my abilities in analyzing problems and implementing effective solutions.

Not only am I a strong candidate because of my experiences, but I also share many of the values that represent Spectrum Health's organizational culture, such as excellence, accountability, integrity, and teamwork. Because of these shared values, Spectrum Health is my top choice and I believe I would be a valuable addition to your team.

If you're looking for someone who has excellent project management skills, customer service experience, and a knack for solving problems, I would love to tell you more about my qualifications for this position. I will contact you within seven days to further discuss this position and the possibility of an interview. If you have any questions, please contact me at (616) 526-6000 or darnellbegay@gmail.com. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Darnell Begay

Leslie Brown

616-526-6000 ▪ leslie@students.calvin.edu
3201 Burton St SE ▪ Grand Rapids, MI 49546

April 21, 2019

Forest View Hospital
1055 Medical Park Dr. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

Dear Hiring Manager:

When I saw the opening for the case manager position at Forest View Hospital, I was thrilled because I know that your organization is committed to providing mental health services with compassion and respect in a safe and supportive environment. I look forward to the possibility of contributing my social work education and internship experience to the team of professionals at Forest View Hospital.

The following examples show how I have developed strong interpersonal skills, direct counseling experience, and the ability to work effectively and efficiently as a team member:

- As a social work intern in an urban hospice agency in downtown Chicago, I have experience establishing rapport with, counseling and supporting families and individuals through extremely difficult situations using cognitive behavioral therapy and a task-centered approach. Many of my clientele also suffer from severe and persistent mental illness and/or substance abuse.
- I am a former student and facilitator of an interviewing and basic counseling course for upper-level social work majors at Calvin University that focuses on empathic listening and a non-judgmental frame of reference. The framework of the course is based upon the strengths-perspective and utilizes solution-focused techniques.
- Working as a student assistant in the Calvin University admissions office provided me with four years of experience working as a productive, organized, and responsible member in a teamwork setting.

These experiences, combined with my passion for helping others improve their mental health and well-being, make me an excellent candidate for your position at Forest View.

I look forward to the possibility of an interview. I will contact you within the next week to follow up. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Blessings,

Leslie Brown

Leslie Brown

KATHLEEN JOHNSON

3201 Burton St SE • Grand Rapids, MI 49546 • 616-526-6000 • kjohnson@gmail.com

March 23, 2019

Ms. Jane DeHaan
Cascade Township Library
2870 Town Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

Dear Ms. DeHaan:

I am writing to express my interest in the Youth Services Librarian position at Cascade Township Library, which I heard about from a library employee, Cheryl Jones. My experience and education make me an excellent candidate for this position.

My past work experience in both private and public libraries has given me the knowledge required to immediately contribute substantively to your organization. While working at Calvin University's Hekman Library for the past four years, I have become adept at assisting patrons who have requests and questions. In addition, my volunteer work in various branches of the Kent District Library system has prepared me to navigate efficiently in library settings. I have enjoyed serving my community and enriching the lives of others with the abundance of library materials available, and I hope to be able to do this at Cascade Township Library as well.

With a bachelor's degree in English from Calvin University, my educational background has also prepared me to successfully meet the needs of your library. My strong oral and written communication skills, together with a comprehensive knowledge of literature, qualify me to serve as a helpful resource for your library patrons. Finally, I have extensive experience working successfully with computers, and I am comfortable with and quick at learning new computer programs.

I look forward to further discussing this position with you and how I can contribute my skills and experiences to Cascade Township Library. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Warmly,

Kathleen Johnson
616.526.6000
kjohnson@gmail.com

Juanita Rodriguez

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Grand Rapids, MI 49546

616-526-6000
juanita@students.calvin.edu

Dear Ms. Smith:

I am delighted to submit my application for the position of Rehab Technician at Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital. As a junior Kinesiology major at Calvin University, I have demonstrated an aptitude for customer service, problem-solving, and empathy through rigorous coursework, work experience, and extracurricular activities, and I hope to contribute my qualifications to bring compassionate, exceptional care to your patients.

Specifically, I would bring to this position:

Exceptional communication and interpersonal skills. My current work as a Resident Assistant requires exceptional interpersonal communication—both through facilitating one-on-one meetings and facilitating group events. My supervisor has praised me for this talent numerous times and has asked me to lead a communication training for other resident assistants. With my warm spirit, tender heart, and great interpersonal skills, I would let every patient feel valued and encouraged, and I would help them feel like they are part of the larger family of Mary Free Bed.

Strong teamwork skills. Throughout my time at Calvin, I have consistently shown myself to be an excellent team player. In a recent group project for one of my courses, we completed peer evaluations. One of my groupmates noted that I, “[was] an effective leader for the group, helping to ensure that everyone’s voice felt heard and valued—all while keeping us on task.” Because excellent health care services depend on the capacity of their staff to work together well, I believe my strong teamwork skills have shown that I would be able to quickly and successfully integrate into your team to maximize the experiences of your patients.

Great work ethic. During college, I have balanced many non-academic responsibilities while maintaining strong grades in my coursework. For example, during the full year when I was taking (and excelling in) organic chemistry, I was working ~12 hours per week, volunteering as a soccer coach every weekend, and starting a new student organization (which, I’m proud to say, now has almost 20 members!). Now that I have cut back on some of my extracurricular responsibilities and am looking to work in the rehab field, I believe my demonstrated capacity to juggle multiple responsibilities and performing them well will allow me to effectively navigate the demanding workload that comes with working in rehab. This capacity to manage stressful situations and conflicting tasks will certainly give me the wherewithal to continue providing great care for your patients, even amidst busy and stressful workloads.

Given my strong interpersonal skills, patience, and hard work ethic, I strongly believe that I would be a great asset to the Mary Free Bed Family, and I would love the chance to talk further about my qualifications for this position. Please feel free to contact me with questions at juanita@students.calvin.edu or 616-526-6000. I hope to hear from you soon!

Sincerely,
Juanita Rodriguez