I need a cover letter! WHAT do I need to do to get assistance?

1. **USE** the following guidelines, suggestions and samples as you **CREATE** or **UPDATE** your cover letter.
2. **SEND** a copy of your completed cover letter to careerservices@bethelcollege.edu as a Word attachment.

A staff member will then be assigned to you, and they will contact you via email letting you know that your cover letter has been received. Please note that cover letter editing is done on a first come-first serve basis, so it could take up to three weeks for your cover letter to be edited.

Once this step is completed, you will be invited in for an appointment where you will receive suggestions and additional tips on improving your cover letter.
For some reason it gives us kittens if we have to write a cover letter. The question I’m always asked is: “Do I have to write a cover letter?” and hands down the answer is a resounding “YES!!!” Think of it as a courtesy. Your cover letter is introducing your résumé and inviting the employer to take a look. So if you’re going to dangle the proverbial carrot, you must be intentional in what your letter says.

This means generic cover letters aren’t going to cut it! You send out a generic cover letter and you’re going to get generic results.

Let me let you in on a little secret. The cover letter is not about you. “WHAT?!”

Let me say it again - the cover letter is NOT about you. It’s about the COMPANY you are applying to! Employers want to know - what are you going to do for ME and my company? How are you going to solve MY company’s problems?

The successful job seeker is the one who gets this and tailors their cover letter to the specific job!

“How long should my cover letter be?” NEVER longer than one page! You want to get to the point and this can actually be accomplished in three paragraphs.

**Cover Letter Construction**

**HEADING:** Cut and paste heading from your résumé directly to your cover letter. Choose the same font used on your résumé. It’s like socks...you want everything to match!

**SALUTATION:** Make sure you address your letter to a specific person! Do NOT put: *To whom it may concern.* Show some gumption and pick up the phone and find out who the hiring manager is and how to spell their name! Granted, it is not always possible to find out the person’s name, but at least make an attempt! If necessary, use “Dear Hiring Manager:” When using a person’s name, stay in a formal vein with “Dear Mr. Richards:” A woman’s name can be tricky. Do you use “Miss” or “Mrs.”? Err on the safe side by using “Ms.” unless you are certain of the contact’s name.

**PARAGRAPH 1:** Be specific as to what you are applying for and how you heard about it. If you have a name to drop, now is the time to do it.
If you start out a cover letter with “I am applying for blah-blah-blah position. Please find my résumé enclosed.” you should really be flogged! Remember, you’re dangling a carrot! At the same time you don’t want to go to the extreme and say “I am so excited to apply for...” because now you sound like a puppy that’s about to piddle on the carpet!

But capturing the attention of an employer with **WHY you want to work for their company is your key goal with your first paragraph.** This may require some research on your part. Google the company—what do the latest media releases reveal about this company, or its employees? What does the company’s mission statement reveal? What is unique or special that stood out to you about this company? Be sincere as to why you want to work for them. Employers are continually annoyed with applicants who obviously know nothing about their company or what the company does.

**PARAGRAPH 2:** This is where you answer the employer’s questions: “Why do we want you? What do you bring to the table?” And the smart job seeker takes that job description and makes relevant connections to his job experiences and skills. In essence, demonstrating how he is the ideal candidate. Remember to be brief—you want to respect the employer’s time and your goal is to get them to read your résumé.

**PARAGRAPH 3:** This is your summation paragraph and where you ask for that interview. Make sure to tell them how to best connect with you. If you tell an employer you will contact them in a week, you had best keep that promise. If you do not, you have lost all sense of integrity, and your word is mud. Finally, thank them for their consideration and time.

Your letter is written! Yee-haw! But you need to run a couple of quick tests to see if it’s ready to go.

1. Earlier we said the cover letter is not about you, it’s about the company. The “I & MY Test” is a perfect test to run to see if you have succeeded. If you have 17 sentences and 15 of them start with “I” or “My”, that cover letter is about you! Make some simple edits to the beginning of your sentences and it changes the focus.
2. Have you made yourself look like the ideal candidate by acknowledging requirements or qualifications the employer is looking for?
3. Read your letter aloud. Did you strike a balance by showing enthusiasm, but retaining a professional, yet conversational tone? If you sound robotic, or like you cut and pasted your letter directly from the internet, you need to go back to the drawing board.
September 15, 2012

Karen Wagner  
Human Resource Manager  
RSM McGladrey  
130 S. Main Street, Suite 140  
PO Box 7015  
South Bend, Indiana 46601

Dear Ms. Wagner:

As a Bethel College senior, I am looking forward to graduating in May with a double major in accounting and economics/finance. When I discovered that RSM McGladrey will be conducting interviews on campus in October for summer interns, I immediately began researching your company. A firm that exemplifies a long history and a competitive spirit is where I want to invest my energies! I would be available to work full-time from May 10 through August 15, 2013.

As a tour guide for Bethel’s Office of Admission, I have been developing both problem solving skills and interpersonal skills. Dealing with the diverse concerns of students, parents, and faculty, I have become adept at operating with the proper mix of authority, diplomacy, and tact. With the positions I have held on campus, while carrying 19 credit hours, I have proven time and time again that I am a diligent person, a hard worker, and a quick learner. Not only do I bring communication skills to the table, but I bring the business knowledge needed to succeed. Understanding the internal controls and workings of banking has given me a new practical knowledge of business. But I know there is more to learn.

I would be honored to be considered for a summer internship with RSM McGladrey. With my academic background and willingness to learn the ropes, I know you will not be disappointed. Please feel free to contact me at either (555) 555-5555 or at braden.heaney@comcast.net. I would love to sit down and discuss how this can be beneficial to both of us. I look forward to hearing from you soon. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Braden Heaney
October 12, 2012

Cindy Walsh, Director
Valley Center of the Deaf
5025 East Washington Street, Suite #114
Phoenix, Arizona 85034

Dear Ms. Walsh:

As a senior in the Sign Language Interpreting program at Bethel College, my internship is fast approaching. When I requested Phoenix as a potential practicum site, I was encouraged by graduates who told me of their positive practicum experiences at your agency. My professor, Angela Myers, informed me that she contacted you about my request and found that you are willing to review my tape. I am thrilled by the prospect of working with your mentors and learning from them how to better serve the deaf community in my professional future as a sign language interpreter.

Thus far my professional interpreting experience has included three years at an Interpreter Training Program in the Metro Detroit area and two years at Bethel College’s ITP in Indiana. These educational experiences have broadened my understanding of the depth and intensity of the interpreting profession. My work at the doctor’s office has given me good problem solving skills, as well as interpersonal skills and experience in a medical setting. In addition, I am eager to learn and excited to have an opportunity to grow with VCD.

Thank you for consenting to review my practicum tape and consider taking me as an intern. I look forward to the possibility of working with your agency. Thank you, again, for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ava Stone

Enclosure
May 11, 20xx

Mr. Edward Bradford Jr.
Principal
Riley High School
1902 South Fellows Street
South Bend, Indiana 46613

Dear Mr. Bradford:

Hard-working, caring, and dedicated. These are a few of the qualities that embody teachers of Riley High School and the South Bend Community School Corporation. These are characteristics that I possess and hope to instill into my classroom. As a new Bethel College English Education graduate, I am confident that my solid educational foundation and the experiences gained through both student teaching and playing softball for x years would make me an ideal candidate as an English Education teacher.

I have completed over seventy-five hours in Education Practicum within the South Bend, Penn-Harris-Madison, and Mishawaka School Corporations with the majority of the time being spent in secondary English classrooms. Each experience has taught me more about what being a teacher truly is: using the knowledge you have acquired to affect the students you come in contact with. My field placements gave me the opportunity to use personal experiences to connect with the students I had the pleasure of working with and allowing a relationship to build from each encounter. This created a classroom community where the students shared more openly and showed a genuine interest in the presented material resulting in higher summative and formative assessment scores.

I am eager to become a teacher at Riley High School in the South Bend Community School Corporation so I can give back to the community that has given me so much. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and discuss employment possibilities that would benefit each of us. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely Yours,

Your Name
February 4, 2013

Terri Kosik, M.Ed., Executive Director
Early Childhood Development Center
Saint Mary’s College and the University of Notre Dame
10 Child Care Center
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

Dear Ms. Kosik:

In the fall of 2011 I began my field work with the Early Childhood Development Center-Notre Dame, and have developed a deep appreciation for the positive and caring environment. These teachers genuinely care about each child’s self-confidence and their love of learning. This dedication to one’s students cannot be gleaned from a textbook and left an indelible stamp on shaping me into the teacher I wish to be. Mrs. Grall recently suggested that I submit my resume, so it is with great excitement that I wish to apply for a teaching position at ECDC-ND.

In May, I will graduate with a double major in Early Childhood Education and Spanish. Bethel College’s education department, as well as my classroom experience under the direction of Miss Sarah Latham, has given me a strong foundation. During my time at the ECDC-ND, I have been able to teach three different times in varying subject areas. These opportunities, as well as teaching pre-school Sunday school classes on a regular basis, have allowed me to develop the patience necessary for working with young children.

I am confident that my training and experiences would make me a valuable asset to the multifaceted teaching community at the Early Childhood Development Center - Notre Dame. I would be honored to be considered for this position and look forward to meeting with you for an interview to discuss the possibilities of working together. You may contact me at (555) 555-5555.

Thank you for your kind consideration and time. I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Susannah Griffin
November 19, 2012

Mr. Chris Craft  
Title  
Lake City Bank  
Xxxxxx Money Bags Avenue  
City, State Zip  

Dear Mr. Craft:

Recently Dr. Pete McCown brought to my attention that Lake City Bank has an opening for a credit analyst. As a double major in both Business Administration and Economic/Finance from Bethel College, I would be honored to be considered for this position. Please consider this my formal application.

Bethel has prepared me with an educational foundation to handle the technical aspects of being a credit analyst. The greatest asset that I can offer Lake City Bank is my understanding that:

- The customer comes first
- The value of honesty and integrity matter
- A strong work ethic built on a firm foundation of moral values is rare today

I credit the years I spent growing up on a farm, and selecting a Christian college that focused on not only academia, but on building character, as to why I hold myself to these values. I realize I have much to learn, and am ready to learn the ins-and-outs of being a credit analyst, and to give it 110%.

This position is more than just crunching numbers. It is about working as a team, developing a relationship with clients, and providing accurate quality work on analyzing data. So far, the majority of this letter has focused on my personal attributes, but to me, Lake City Bank would not have been successful for over 137 years if they did not put such a high value on the “person”. Lake City Bank’s mission of “providing highly personalized community banking” and list of core values, lines up similarly to the core values I hold myself too. THIS is why I am excited to have the opportunity to apply to a local bank that cares about the community as much as Lake City Bank does.

I am eager to meet with you and discuss how I could contribute to the Lake City Bank team. You can reach me at 555-555-5555 or email me at susan.richmond@bethelcollege.edu. My schedule is flexible as I am willing to work around my classes and duties as a resident assistant. Thank you for your time and for considering me for the credit analyst position.

Sincerely,

Susan Richmond
February 23, 2012

Lydia King, Nurse Recruiter
Indianapolis VA Medical Center
1481 West 10th Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46202

Dear Ms. King:

Recently, we spoke on the phone regarding the application process for the VA Medical Center. Thank you for clarifying that I cannot “officially” apply until I have passed the NCLEX-RN exam, which I am hoping to accomplish by late May. After pouring over your website, I was pleased to see the phrase: Serving those who served. This resonates with me because it captures what I believe to be the heart of nursing – service. I would be honored to start my nursing career and “serve those who served” by joining the team that cares for the men and women who have served my country. Please find enclosed my resume.

In April 2012, I will graduate from Bethel College with a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing. Academics and athletics have gone hand-in-hand throughout my college career, and I have worked hard to maintain a 3.9 GPA. As a successful 4-year NAIA volleyball player and 2-year captain of our team, I learned to be resourceful by developing the team budget and creatively finding ways for our team to operate in the black. During my freshman year, I was fortunate to have a professor encourage me to pursue publication for a research paper I had written. Now, as I end my senior year, I will be honored for my academic and leadership accomplishments by being inducted into Sigma Theta Tau International.

Extra-curricular experiences enhanced my ability to communicate with supervisors and fellow teammates. Last spring, Bethel’s administration presented me with the “Presidential Servant Leadership Award” recognizing my service to the college. During the summer of 2011, I was able to spend a month in rural Honduras working in the health clinic at an orphanage and using my Spanish to assist in providing community-based health care to those in the nearby mountain communities.

Thank you again, Ms. King, for your time in explaining the VA’s application process. I will complete the official application after taking the NCLEX. In the meantime, if you have any questions, you may reach me at (555) 555-5555 or katherine.raider@sbcglobal.net. I look forward to talking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Katherine Raider