UNC Kenan-Flagler Business Communication Center Cover Letter Guidelines

STYLE AND CONTENT

Opening Paragraph

Your first paragraph should (likely, but not necessarily, in this order):
- State somewhere in the paragraph what role you're applying for
    o Note: for on campus recruiting, you do not need to state that you're a first-year MBA student at UNC Kenan-Flagler (you should state this for off-campus recruiting, though). And if you're a dual degree student, always include that information.
- Clearly communicate *why* you're interested in the role/company (try to mention at least one specific thing you learned about the company or position from your networking conversations and/or research; see below for more tips on mentioning conversations)
- Briefly preview your own work experience (ideally linking it to why you're interested in the role or to show how your experience/values align with the company)
- Mention 2-3 (no more than 4) people you've interacted with and how/why those interactions were valuable or contributed to your interest?
    o You do not need to list every company event you attended (esp. company presentation, as that's expected). You can specifically mention 1 or 2 or say something like "through various interactions with [company] representatives on and off campus…"
    o When deciding which people to name, prioritize:
        ▪ People you had the richest interactions with (individuals who would actually remember and vouch for you!)
        ▪ Individuals who work in your preferred office location (if applicable)—especially important for consulting
        ▪ Individuals who likely have a "say" in the hiring decision (for example, people who are part of the official UNC recruiting team or managers you might be directly working for)

Body

Highlight 3 skillsets/qualities/abilities/experiences that are *relevant* to the role and/or company:

- Each bullet point/heading should be descriptive and specific to the company and position.
    o For example, "Analytical Skills" or "Teamwork and Leadership." Try to use specific/descriptive language that matches wording the company/job posting uses.
    o You might also consider using more descriptive, slightly longer headings to focus on actions that you'd be doing in the role. If you do use longer phrases, be sure to do so for all 3 paragraphs; and your bolded phrase should, ideally, not exceed ½ a line of text.
        ▪ E.g., "Using data to drive decisions."
- All of the bolded bullet points/phrases should have parallel construction? E.g., they should all be noun phrases, verb phrases, adjectives, etc.
- All bolded phrases should capitalized and punctuated consistently. Capitalizing just the first word or all major words is fine; just be consistent! Typically, a colon is used after the bolded word/phrase.

Provide a relevant and specific example for each highlighted skill/attribute:

- Think of each paragraph as a mini STAR story.
- Make sure the story is relevant to the position you're applying for.
- Be careful not to just regurgitate a resume bullet point. The cover letter should elaborate on the resume bullet points and show how the experience/skill relates to the position and/or company.
- If the paragraph doesn't highlight just one specific project/accomplishment, make sure it clearly communicates how your collective experience has prepared you for a specific task or role (e.g., discuss how you've worked with many diverse, global teams throughout your career).
- Consider ending each paragraph with a link to how that experience or skill will enable you to contribute or succeed at the company. (You can also do this in your closing if it feels too contrived or formulaic at the end of each paragraph.)

Closing

Wrap-up your bullet points/link experiences to company:

- In one summary sentence, clearly articulate how your skills and experiences will help the company.
  - You can do this at the end of each body paragraph/example or at the end of all of the examples.
  - Ideally, the link to the company will be specific, not generic. E.g., *not* "I'm confident these skills and experiences will enable me to succeed at [company]." Instead, the student should think about how they can help the company achieve its goals or solve its/its clients' problems.

Next steps/ask:

- Briefly express your desire to talk more about your experience and interview with the company. No need for anything unique here!
- You do not necessarily need to include your phone number and email address if that info is included in the header at the top of the page.

FORMATTING AND LOGISTICAL ISSUES

Check to ensure:

- You have appropriate margins (ideally 1-inch, no less than 0.75 inches) and text size (font size of 10.5 – 12); less than 1 page in total length

- Your header matches your resume header; letter may not have your name in large, bold font at the top of the page, but you should include your contact info (email, phone, LinkedIn) on the right with a horizontal line underneath (all the way across the page)

- Date and company contact info. In general, you just need the company name and physical address (not recipient name and title) in the address block. You may choose to omit the company mailing address to save space, since all letters are submitted virtually. However, avoid filling the entire page with text, as recruiters won't want to read it. Including company mailing address forces you to include some white space.

- Correct/appropriate salutation. The letter should ideally be addressed to a specific person if at all possible, writing "Dear Mr./Ms. [first and last name]," or "Dear Ms./Mr. [last name]," (a comma or colon is fine). If you're unsure if the recipient is a male or female, you can drop the Ms. or Mr. If you cannot find a specific name, then consider one of these options:

  - Greetings,
  - Dear Hiring Manager,
  - Dear Hiring Team,
  - Dear MBA Recruiting Team,
  - Dear UNC Recruiting Team,
  - Dear [Position Title] Hiring Manager,
  - To Whom it May Concern,

- Alignment: All paragraphs should be left aligned and left-justified; ddo not indent first line of paragraphs. Bullet points should be slightly indented and left justified.

- Sign-off: Sincerely, Best regards, or Regards are all safe options. Include 1 blank line between the sign-off and your name. No need to include an actual signature.

- Be sure to save/send your final document as a pdf.

- Proofread your letter *diligently*! Consider having a friend proofread as well. Even a single typo or grammatical error can give a recruiter a reason to eliminate you from the pool of candidates.