

# Career Center

## Graduate Student Example Cover Letter

Dr. Marlo Gervaise  
Provost' Office  
Stratham College  
1745 University Drive  
Gainesville, FL

September 5, 2013

Dear Dr. Gevaise,

I am writing to express my strong interest in the Assistant Director of Data Analysis role. As I have studied the role description, I have become increasingly excited at the degree to which my experiences align with the key role requirements across the board. From my graduate work translating big data into useful information, to the complex process, policy, and interpersonal issues I navigated to complete that work, to my hands-on experience with non-profits, I believe the fit is a compelling one.

The skills I acquired in researching and writing a dissertation in South American Cultural Studies will be enormously useful in this position. During my research in Uruguay, I became adept at navigating large data sets and translating themes in the data to useful information. During my dissertation I assimilated and analyzed over 6,500 pages of discourse, identifying patterns within that mass of text-based data and pulling out conclusions around those themes. I believe that this experience strongly foreshadows the work I would do as Assistant Director of Data Analysis, and speaks to my ability to convert data to actionable information.

Beyond my skill with parsing and analyzing data, I bring a grounded approach to solving complex problems. During my doctoral field studies, I was often faced with problems that required multiple solutions. As a result, I learned to bring several solutions to the table, anticipate objections and prepare responses, and meet each issue with a plan, a contingency plan, and a back-up contingency plan. I believe that these skills will inform and enrich my work in researching and tracking potential donors.

Finally, I have hands-on experience working in donor development. Over the course of my 2012 internship with the Wake County United Way, I analyzed the organization's efficacy and wrote reports for prospective donors, which I presented in regional road shows; thus, I effectively provided a combination of research, marketing, and donor-facing support. From core data analysis, to complex problem solving, to field-based experience with donor development, I believe that my skills and experience make me an ideal candidate for this position.

I would relish the opportunity to take these skills to such a prestigious and forward-thinking organization such as Stratham College. Not only am I an ideal fit for the position but, as a graduate of Duke University, I also bring first-hand knowledge of the power and value of a liberal arts education, and would be delighted to represent an institution like Stratham. Finally, Stratham's commitment to encourage "students to grow personally, professionally, and philosophically" and to "make a lasting mark" resonates strongly with me. The school's commitment to this type of personal and social growth can only be continued with a strong endowment. I want to be a part of the team that fosters that mission.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Ellie M. Clampett



# Internship Position

Ms. Gillian Notelovitz  
Intern Coordinator  
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights/Leadership Conference Education Fund  
1629 K Street, NW, 10th Floor  
Washington, DC 20006

October 10, 2013

Dear Ms. Notelovitz:

As a first-year Ph.D. student in Political Science at Duke University, I am writing to express my sincere interest in a Summer 2011 internship with the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and the Leadership Conference Education Fund. After speaking with several of my professors, I determined that the Leadership Conference internship provides an ideal opportunity for me to work and grow as I look to gain real-world experience in the policy arena. The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights is an important and influential coalition, and one to which I believe I can contribute my analytical skills and academic training.

My strong writing and research skills make me well qualified to perform the work and meet the challenges of an internship with the Leadership Conference. My background in the study of American politics began during my undergraduate career, also at Duke University, where I earned a B.A. in Political Science and African & African American Studies. I conducted independent research on topics such as racial attitudes, political institutions, and policy outcomes as a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow. As a Ph.D. student, I am working toward certification in the fields of Political Behavior & Identities and Race, Ethnicity, and Politics. My studies focus on civic discourse and the ways in which beliefs, attitudes, and social identities influence political decision-making, as well as the salience of race in American politics.

The pursuit of my bachelor's and doctoral degrees in these fields has helped me to develop my organizational and communication skills, as well as a nuanced understanding of political analysis, policymaking, and a number of other key issues facing disenfranchised communities. Furthermore, my prior internships and involvement as a student leader have provided me with substantial experience communicating and collaborating with people at all levels and across disciplines within organizations, successfully serving as a member of a team, and working with diverse groups of people.

My commitment to social justice and advancing research in racial and ethnic minority politics, coupled with my demonstrated skills, shows that I am ready and motivated to gain experience at the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and the Leadership Conference Education Fund this summer. Thank you for considering my application.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Haskins

## Postdoc Example Cover Letter for Biological and Biomedical Sciences

Dear Dr. Portnoy,

Opening paragraph: outline purpose of letter, provide brief background, mention connections to that faculty member

Body paragraphs: discuss your background, research experience, and what you want to accomplish as a postdoc, and how you would contribute to their research

Closing paragraph: summarize qualifications and skills, mention possible ways to meet or talk

I am writing to express my interest in pursuing postdoctoral studies in your laboratory, particularly to investigate how pathogens adapt to a range of intracellular environments, and how cells respond. I am a graduate student in the laboratory of Raphael Valdivia at Duke University, where I investigate mechanisms of pathogen modification of host cell biology. You may recall that Raphael expressed to you my interest in your laboratory last fall.

*Chlamydia trachomatis* is an obligate intracellular pathogen that manipulates host cellular pathways to ensure its proliferation and survival. This is achieved through significant remodeling of the host cell's internal architecture from within a membrane-bound vacuole. Due to a previous lack of robust genetic tools, the mechanisms by which *Chlamydia* induces these cellular changes remain poorly understood. Using tools and resources for *Chlamydia* genetics recently developed in our lab, I identified InaC as a necessary factor for the assembly of an F-actin structure surrounding the inclusion. InaC associates with the vacuolar membrane where I found it recruits Golgi-specific ARF-family GTPases. Both actin dynamics and ARF GTPases regulate Golgi morphology and positioning within cells, and I discovered that InaC acts to redistribute the Golgi to surround the *Chlamydia* vacuole. Taken together, my findings suggest that *Chlamydia* places InaC at the vacuolar-cytosolic interface to recruit host ARF GTPases and F-actin to form a platform for rearranging intracellular organelles around the pathogenic vacuole.

I am compelled by cellular and molecular mechanisms of the evolutionary arms race between intracellular pathogens and their hosts. My goal is to become an independent academic research investigator. In my graduate work, I have investigated how a pathogen manipulates host cells from within a vacuole. However, pathogens interact with host cells from a variety of different cellular environments and host cells must correspondingly react to a range of pathogen niches. *Listeria monocytogenes* samples a remarkable range of distinct cellular environments and is also highly amenable genetically, making it an ideal model in which to investigate how pathogens and host cells detect and respond to pathogen habitation of, and transition between, distinct intracellular environments. I believe this to be a fundamental question in pathogenesis and your lab is one of the leaders in this area, as highlighted by your group's elegant studies on PrfA activation and autophagy inhibition.

Please consider that my investigative qualities of independence, creativity, and critical thinking; my technical skills in microscopy (quantitative, live-cell, high throughput and high content), genetics, cell culture, protein-protein interactions and mass spectrometry; and my experience in cell biology and microbial pathogenesis would be an asset to your laboratory. I have attached my CV and would be delighted to talk to you about your work and how we could work together to advance it. If you would like to meet with me, I will be in the San Francisco Bay Area in late April.

Sincerely,



Marcela Kokes