

what books they teach, and whether they are lecture or seminar format. You can attain this information from department web sites, college catalogues, syllabi, academic directories, and by asking questions.

Research Universities and Other Four-Year Colleges

Discuss your research first. They are interested in the intellectual quality of your mind as well as your ability to publish research. So explain your work, talk about how your work would benefit a particular university, and its significance to the academic community.

Community Colleges

Discuss your teaching experience and philosophy first. They are interested in the intellectual quality of your mind, but they need to be convinced that you can communicate your ideas effectively to a diverse array of students.

Be knowledgeable about the community and district in which the community college is located. Discuss your ability to provide the particular community/district's needs. Tell them about community involvement.

Talk about your research. Community Colleges still want to know what scholarly interests you bring.

General Tips

Address your letter to a specific person. Find out who the department chair is or who heads the search committee.

Apply early. Your information is more likely to get a thorough look if it arrives ahead of the final round of applications. (Most cover letters receive approximately 20-30 seconds of review.)

Send only what the committee requests, but indicate that you are willing to furnish the committee with additional information, such as sample syllabi (from courses you have taught or envision teaching), writing samples, etc. (and references).

Refer to important information on your CV. Do not assume that the search committee will see all the information on your CV. It is respectful and acceptable to point out what is important.

Ask to see sample cover letters (and CV's) of recent hires and of colleagues. Have a variety of letters to show your range.

Links to Samples

Sample Academic Cover Letter, Paul Saint-Amour - letter to Pomona College search committee for the position of Associate Professor of English.

Purdue OWL: Academic Cover Letters

This page includes helpful information to supplement this handout, as well as a generic sample letter.

