CSUSM
STAFF CENTER

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Resume and Cover Letter Considerations

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS:
- Know your audience and their expectations. There is no one ideal resume or cover letter format
- Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) are used by many companies and organizations to screen for keywords. Formatting is important.
- Marketing/Personal Brand: Your resumes and cover letters are marketing documents to showcase your authentic, personal brand and should be targeted toward specific positions.
- Alignment with Employer: Research the organization and specific department. Clearly articulate how your relevant strengths, experience, education, and accomplishments set you apart from other candidates and would help you perform the specific role. Use the job description as a reference as you brainstorm and write.
- Save the documents under your name, organization name, and position.

RESUMES:
- For ATS, avoid templates and start with a Word document
- Recommend 1-2 pages
- ½ inch to 1-inch margins, without headers, footers, tables, or columns
- 16-18 point for name, 10-12 point for body of resume
- ATS-friendly Fonts: Garamond, Calibri, Cambria, Georgia, Helvetica, Verdana, Arial
- For ATS, black font color and no logos or graphics recommended. For creative fields, create a separate resume to showcase design skills.
- Maintain enough white space to easily read the resume. Double-space between different positions or categories. Single-space within positions.
- Career Target with Job Title (or Summary of Qualification): Three lines or fewer. Good place to highlight key qualifications and accomplishments tailored to position. Quantify relevant experience. Include relevant skills underneath.
- Recommend presenting information in a singular column, with information listed horizontally.
- Include name and contact information at the top of document.
- Experienced employees: List your experience first, with education underneath. Focus on your most relevant experiences. With less experience, list education first.
- Experience (about 7-10 years, longer if relevant): include title, dates, employer/organization, and city, state
- Use action verbs. No personal pronouns. Include relevant keywords from the job description and add accomplishments and metrics when possible.
- Additional categories: committees, professional associations, volunteer experience, skills, certifications
- Include full degree names and institutions
- CVs are typically longer: highlight education, teaching, research, campus service, publications, presentations
- For ATS Systems, test your resume by savings as a TXT file. Content lost in the transition from Word to TXT will likely be missed.

COVER LETTERS
- One-page letter, business letter format: name and contact information at the top (similar to resume format), today's date, block mailing address to hiring manager, Dear …, and then three to five paragraphs.
- First/opening paragraph: What is your hook? Identify the position that you're applying to and why you're interested in this position and organization. Identify your top one-two most relevant qualifications that stand out. State how you learned about the position, especially if it's a referral.
- Middle paragraphs: Elaborate on your relevant qualifications and how they meet the employer's needs. Make a clear connection between when and where you've developed the requested skills and experience and how these would enable you to perform the role.
- Closing paragraph: Reiterate your interest in the position. Thank them for their time and interest.
- Signature: Close with Sincerely, signed name, and typed full name.