Writing CVs and Cover Letters for Academic Positions:

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Fields
Agenda

• Faculty and search committee perspectives
• Self analysis of your background
• Relevancy of both documents
• Tailoring and refining your documents
• Best recommendations for each section
What does the search committee do with these materials?

• Apps reviewed individually

• Committee consensus

• Documents are skimmed to make the first cut

Pedigree
Fit
Productivity
Reputation
Ability
Collegiality
Think Like a Search Committee!

First
Take 2.5 minutes to individually review each application
Identify elements that stand out for you
5 minutes

Then
Share your opinions with your “faculty partner” and compare notes
5 minutes
Prioritize Your Elements

### Job Application Self-Analysis

1. Identify "one" key element in each area that you would want to emphasize on your CV. If you don't have an item to add to an area, skip over it and move on to the next.
2. In the 'Ranking' column, rank order the elements in terms of your strongest applicant characteristics to the job for which you are applying or considering applying.

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<th>Ranking</th>
<th>CV Element</th>
<th>Primary emphasis</th>
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What is a Curriculum Vita?
“the course of one’s life (career)”

Relevant professional history and a marketing tool

- Used to apply for teaching/academic research positions
- Supporting document for grant proposal
- Required document for departmental reviews (promotion/tenure)
- Audits or accreditation reviews
Academic cover letter structure

• 1-1.5 pages in length

• Conservative sales document *tailored to a position*

• Writing quality important
Chair, Faculty Search Committee  
Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry  
California Polytechnic Institute  
200 Maxim Street  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407

Dear Committee Members,

I wish to apply for the faculty position in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at California Polytechnic Institute advertised in the December 17th issue of Science. Currently, I am a postdoctoral fellow at the University of California at San Francisco in the Department of Pharmaceutical Chemistry under the direction of Dr. Jean-Pierre Raffarin.

My primary research goals are directed toward understanding the basis for molecular recognition at the atomic level using physics-based computational methods. As a postdoctoral fellow at UCSF and as a graduate student at Indiana University under the guidance of Dr. Lionel Jospin, I have balanced method development for computational structure-based drug design with the application of these powerful tools to relevant viral and natural targets. My future research plans are aimed at one-sentence to discuss near term research goals. My ultimate aim is to two–one sentence(s) to discuss long term research goals.

Beyond my research successes (including nine papers to date and others in preparation) I have been fortunate to obtain a wide range of teaching experiences. As my curriculum vitae indicates, my teaching style has included teaching assistant, instructor, guest lecturer, and mentor. I received the Indiana University Julia Childs Teaching Award as well as the Indiana University Kofi Annan Memorial Prize for best Ph.D. thesis. My experience with outstanding mentors has made me realize just how important one good teacher can be to a student. I will work hard to be that teacher for you.

Enclosed are my curriculum vitae, publication record, teaching and research statements, and proposed research budget. Letters of recommendation are being sent under separate cover, and, if desired, I would be happy to provide letters in support of my teaching. Please do not hesitate to contact me if further information is needed.

Sincerely,

Francois La Rouchefoucauld
Department of Pharmaceutical Chemistry  
University of California at San Francisco  
600 16th Street, Box 2240  
San Francisco, CA 94143-2240  
(415) 123-4567

Review job description, website, faculty profiles.  
Use words/phrases directly from job description
Cover Letter Anatomy

Paragraph 1:
- Statement of what you're applying for that shows you've read the job description.
- Be succinct.

Paragraph 2:
- Your best argument as to your fit.
- How job is launching point for your career.
- How you plan to meet stated department needs.
- The best fit between what you offer and what they asked for.

Paragraph 3 & 4:
- Your second and third best arguments.
“My work on X fits perfectly with your department's interest in Y…”

“The job posting expressed particular interest in candidates who could do Y. Not only do I have expertise in teaching Y, Z and Q, I also would be interested in developing or teaching courses in A and/or B, which would complement the department's existing offerings in C.”

“I was trained in M, N and O, cutting edge methods in the area of research highlighted in the job posting.”

“My interests overlap closely with Dr. B and Dr. E. If I were to join the department, one of my first steps would be to discuss their interest in collaborating on research in Area Z.”
CV Elements

- Name, address, phone, email, website
- Education (graduate, undergraduate)
- Relevant Experience
  - Research
  - Teaching
  - Mentoring
  - Clinical
- Honors and Awards
- Grants and Fellowships
- Publications
- Presentations - Posters, talks, invited talks
- Memberships or Professional Societies
- References
Optional Elements

- Research Interests
- University Service or Leadership
- Community Service and Outreach
- Contributions to the Profession (contributed to reviews)
- Additional Training or Professional Development
- Languages
- Licensure, Certification, Registration
- Community Involvement
First Things First: Contact Info

Name
Your Address
Departmental Address
Phone
Email
Website
Education & Honors

Education (graduate, undergraduate)

• Degree, University, field/major, date of completion/milestone
• Concentrations or other relevant information
• Dissertation/thesis title
• Dissertation/thesis advisors
• Key distinction tied to degree (“BS with Honors”)
Ordering Experience

**Depends on emphasis**

- **Research-intensive:**
  - List *relevant* research experience section (or grants/fellowships) first

- **Teaching-intensive:**
  - List *relevant* teaching experience before research experience
  - Describe *relevant* teaching-related activities
Research Experience

• Your title, department, dates
• University/Institution, location
• Advisor name
• Research project title
Teaching Experience

- University, location, department, dates
- Your title, course title
- 1-sentence description of course content, size, level of students
- 1-sentence description of your role/responsibilities
- May highlight teaching awards, recognition
Mentoring Experience

- Mentee’s class level, dates
- Project title
- Resulted in [publication/poster/presentation]
Publications

- **Bold (highlight)** your name so that it is easy to find in the line-up
- Indicate if article was featured in “news” of a journal

**PUBLICATIONS**


Teaching Emphasis

Order of sections matters:

1. Teaching Experience
2. Research Experience
3. Mentoring Experience

- Point out undergrads who co-author publications
- Pedagogical training (if you’ve done this)
- Teaching interests (keywords or course names)
- At least 1 reference should speak to teaching/mentoring
Formatting Tips

Consistency

• Same font throughout entire application
• Headings, dates, etc. placed/formatted the same throughout
• List all sections in reverse chronological order
  • If “older” experience is more impressive, consider whether you can create a sub-category that would put that experience at the top.
• Put most important info toward the left
• Avoid long lines of content (try to break into multiple lines)
More on Formatting

- Bold
- *Italics*
- Underline
- **ALL CAPS**
- Larger font
- Spacing
- Text alignment

**Page 1 is prime space!!**
Control What You Can Control

You can control the first impression w/CV & letter.

• Do your research

• Tell your story with your cover letter

• Create a CV that supports that story

• Follow standards, but *tailor to your own job search.*