OPCD Podcast: Episode 26 - “Resources for Creating a Cover Letter” (4/16/2015)
Interview with Ms. Levy Daniel, Career Coach within the Office of Professional and Career Development, Harbert College of Business

Voiceover: So we told you there were some cool cover letter resources heading your way. And if you’ve been liking the resume packet on TRL you’re gonna love this. We’re talking cover letters made easy and made better here on the Harbert College OPCD Podcast. Stick around!

TRL is your go-to site for internship postings, job searches and various career resources. How to create an effective cover letter is now on that list and here to take us through those new resources is Ms. Levy Daniel. She’s one of the career coaches here in the OPCD and she’s got the details on two different cover letter options - the executive style, which is one that you may not be as familiar with, and the traditional style.

L. Daniel: The traditional style is what you’ve always seen, it’s broken down into three paragraphs and it’s exactly like you know it to look. But the executive summary is a lot different. You’re going to talk about things very similar to how you do in the traditional style but the real difference comes in the second part of this cover letter. This is where you break things down almost into a table that has bullets as well. Things are very simple and very easy to see for the recruiter and it’s very easy for you to see and write as well. So you’re going to break it down into one column has “your needs” which is talking about the job you’re applying for. So you’re going to write it from the perspective of the reader, so what are the reader’s needs? And then how do you meet those needs, what are your qualifications to fit whatever it is that they’re requesting.

Voiceover: To take a look at this layout check out jobs.auburn.edu. And don’t rule out using either option because there are actually times where it could benefit you more to use one style over the other.

L. Daniel: The one thing I will say, if you’re torn between the two, we do have both styles for a couple of reasons. The main reason being that in the traditional style, a lot of times students may not be really super qualified for a job. They may be excited about it, they may think “I have some qualifications, but I’m not really, really qualified.” The traditional style does a better job of hiding that. Executive summary style template is really going to expose those mismatched areas where you’re not exactly the most qualified. It’s going to really highlight that. So we recommend that you go with the traditional style if you’re not really, really qualified because it’s not putting it in bullet form right next to each other showing how you meet, or don’t meet, the qualifications.

Voiceover: Good information to have! If you do decide to go with that executive style and need a little more info on the specifics, simply flip over to the annotated examples in that packet.
**L. Daniel:** Just like the resume, there are actually two annotated versions of this cover letter. The executive summary is something very new to students, it’s new to a lot of professionals. Any section that you might be struggling with has what information should be included in that section. There is a lot there but you don’t have to read every single square of it. If you feel like you are familiar with how to do a section just go to the sections that you need help with.

The next annotation is going to be page 7 of 7 of the packet and you’ll see little colored boxes on the side. The colored boxes correspond with the job description and the highlights on the job description so you’re able to see how those highlights get incorporated into the cover letter.

**Voiceover:** One word of caution before you jump into using this layout: you should never use recycled resume material and highlights as your executive style bullet points.

**L. Daniel:** Whenever you are working on the executive summary style and you’re trying to talk about your qualifications and it’s going to be bulleted at that point. It’s very tempting, I know, to try to use bullets that you’ve already made to take a short cut, don’t do that. Your really need to make sure that the bullets are not a repeat of your resume. You want this document, this cover letter, to draw someone in. You want it to be it’s own thing that offers it’s own amount of value and information and really the goal of the cover letter is to have them turn to your resume. So you’re wanting to give them just enough information that entices them to turn to the next page, which would be your resume.

**Voiceover:** And on last thing to remember, no matter which style you end up choosing.

**L. Daniel:** The key to really doing a great cover letter is that it is personalized to the job you’re applying for. I do not recommend that you have one cover letter that you send to every job you apply for. That is probably one of the biggest mistakes that students make. They see it as a shortcut, that a company won’t know the difference because they’re not going to be comparing cover letters with their competitor. But it is really obvious whenever you’re reading a cover letter that it’s not personalized. Which is why this packet is set up the way that it is, in that the first step requires that you highlight aspects of the job description that you feel make you qualified for the job or you feel interested in about the job.

**Voiceover:** As always the OPCD is here to help if you’ve got questions beyond what we’ve talked about today. To find out more about how to schedule a resume and cover letter appointment with Ms. Daniel check out the previous podcast episode on composing a cover letter. And of course walk in hours are available daily in Lowder 101. I so appreciate Ms. Daniel taking the time to hang out with us today and I’ll see ya next time here on the OPCD podcast.