
Cover Letters

Career Services Office
University of Notre Dame
Law School
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INTRODUCTION

Our goal in the Notre Dame Law School Career Services Office is to prepare you with the skills you will need in order to find a job that will lead to a meaningful and satisfying career. One of the most important skills that you must develop is writing a cover letter that will accompany the resume that you send to any potential employer. By reviewing and preparing your cover letters following the guidelines below, you will be well on your way to securing the type of work that interests you, with an employer that values your unique qualifications and attributes.

LETTERS

Beginning with law school and continuing after graduation, you will find that much of your communication with employers will be in letter form, either by mail or e-mail. In every letter you write, the approach you take, and the language with which you state your interest, will help the reader decide whether or not to consider you for employment.

The goal of each letter should be to reflect your personality while getting your message across clearly and succinctly. Because the tone of correspondence (especially from lawyers) can be impersonal, you can differentiate yourself favorably by writing letters with a warm and personalized tone, yet with a business-like approach.

COVER LETTERS

You will write a particular type of letter - a cover letter - to accompany your resume whenever you submit it in response to a known opening or as part of a broader-based canvassing. The cover letter is especially important, because it is the first writing sample that an employer will see. It is also an important supplement to your resume, because it allows for flexibility, tailoring, and amplification that is not always possible in the resume.

The cover letter itself should be no longer than one page and no more than three (3) paragraphs. You should indicate your short or long term goals, briefly state your qualifications and reasons for applying, and identify your availability for interviews. In addition, you should cover any pertinent

information not presented in your resume and/or highlight an aspect of your resume to which you wish to draw the reader's attention. Distinguish any unique attributes or credentials that make you a desirable candidate. You will add credibility to your request for consideration by personalizing each cover letter and referring to the recipient's practice, because it will reflect the time you have spent in analyzing the firm's practice, and state how your skills fit into that practice.

Make certain the cover letter is well written and error free. Pay special attention to grammatical and spelling accuracy. At this point in time, most cover letters and resumes are sent via email. If you use traditional mail, use the same paper for your cover letter as you use for your resume -- good quality 8-1/2" x 11" bond paper that has at least 25% cotton content. Sign each original letter; never send a photocopy. White paper is considered the most professional for the legal profession. No letter that contains an error or a corrected error should be sent. A standard business format should be followed. Use a colon to punctuate the salutation. Examples of cover letters and sample sentences are included in the latter part of this booklet.

Whenever possible, avoid mass producing your cover letters. A letter that reflects careful research on an individual employer will convey your interest better than a "generic" letter. Your prospects for employment will vastly improve if you selectively choose prospective employers to contact. Let the letter reflect your individuality by describing what is particularly appealing to you about an employer. For example, let the employer know if you have read some of its recent cases. Use the current news features available on both Westlaw and LexisNexis. Up-to-date knowledge in an employer's field is a big plus. You may wish to scan the headlines or read current issues of periodicals in an employer's area of practice. The Internet is an invaluable tool in accessing newspapers and other periodicals, and the Law School's library subscribes to many periodicals and may have issues you are seeking. For example, check the Internet and the law library for periodicals on environmental law if you are seeking a position in the environmental law field. If you expect employers to give you special attention, you must first expend time and effort to find out about them. The extra time is worthwhile in the long run.

If you send multiple letters, be certain that all the employers in the mailing practice the same type of law, have approximately the same number of attorneys, and practice in the same geographic area. Write your letter to one specific employer and then make any minor adjustments necessary to make your letter appropriate for all other similarly-situated employers. Remember that mass-produced letters neither impress the employers nor encourage special consideration of your application. Make every attempt to target the mailing to a group of homogenous employers, so that it appears as individualized as possible.

You will achieve better results if you write a specific letter for each employer in which you are interested. Change portions of both the first and second paragraph in order to make the letter specific to a particular employer. In the first paragraph, indicate why you are applying. In the second paragraph, indicate why the employer should hire you and why you are qualified for the job that is available. Elaborate on items in your resume. Emphasize certain other items of information, especially anything that differentiates you from a “typical” law student. Add information that is not mentioned in your resume. For each employer, include information about yourself that is relevant to that employer and delete that which is irrelevant. Doing these things strengthens your resume and distinguishes your cover letter from the literally hundreds of other letters of application the employer receives.

Always address each cover letter to a specific person – never “Dear Hiring Partner” or “To Whom It May Concern”. You should ideally address the letter to the individual who has the power to hire, to your personal contact, or to a Notre Dame (or college alma mater) graduate, always with a “cc” to the employer’s recruiting coordinator. If you are responding to a notice for an advertised opening, write to the person designated. When you are targeting your search to a specific geographic or practice area, consult directories that list the appropriate contact name, including NALP’s *Directory of Legal Employers*, found at <http://www.nalp.org/nalpdirectoryoflegalemployers>, or other publications in Career Services. Conducting a targeted search on *Martindale Hubbell* via LEXIS is also useful. When you obtain information derived from a resource such as *Martindale Hubbell*, be certain to check each firm’s website for the name of the hiring partner, or telephone employer offices and ask the name of the hiring partner, the spelling of that name (even Smith can be spelled different ways) and ascertain whether the

hiring partner is a Mr. or Ms. If the name of the hiring partner is not available, send the cover letter and resume to the employer's recruiting coordinator. Sending a copy of your application to a Notre Dame alum at the firm can also be helpful.

CONTENT

Cover letters should be brief and direct. Do not use flowery language, and do not restate information contained in your resume unless there is something in your background that would be of particular importance to the employer -- you grew up in that city, your family lives in the city, you worked in the area, etc. Your letter should fill gaps in your resume, such as your available dates for employment, bar status, and any other pertinent information not included in your resume.

In your letter, state five important things:

(1) **The reason you are writing.** Indicate the position that you seek (e.g., a summer clerkship or associate position). If someone recommended to you that you approach the employer, include that information in your cover letter, especially if the employer knows that person. Such a statement implies that the person making the referral believes that you have qualities that merit consideration by the employer. For example, "I am a second-year student at Notre Dame Law School interested in a summer associate position with [name of firm]. Sally Smith recommended that I contact you directly about such a position."

(2) **The reason you are interested in the employer's location.** Particularly in smaller markets, you must convince an employer that you have ties to the region, such that the employer has good reason to believe that you intend to stay there for the long term. For example, you may explain that you grew up or went to college in the area, your fiancée lives there, and so on.

(3) **The reason you are interested in the employer.** For example, explain your desire to be with a firm with a strong tax practice, or your interest in firms that focus on civil rights.

(4) **The qualities that explain why the employer should hire you.** Remember that the employer will receive resumes from many law students with very similar academic credentials. What sets you apart from every other law student, in a way that will improve the employer's business? If you have

military leadership or entrepreneurial experience, a relevant foreign language skill, or any other quality that is relevant to the employer's success, here is your chance to explain it. Perhaps you have a unique undergraduate background, or a compelling personal story; let the employer know. The goal is to make you stand out as a person – not just another law student – who will help the employer succeed.

(5) The dates you will be available to interview.

If the employer is some distance away, inform the employer that you will be in the city during a certain week and request an appointment at that time. Note that you may want to tell the employer that you will be in its city during the weeks of fall, winter or spring break – even if you do not have any current intention of being there – because the employer may be willing to visit with you if you are “already in town.” But be careful: use this approach only if you have the means to follow through and will be able travel to the city in question. If after two weeks you have not heard from the employer, you may follow-up by telephone to be certain your materials arrived, ask if additional materials are needed to help them evaluate your credentials, and to ask if an interview time can be scheduled.

Finally, regarding "less than positive" information: Do not try to explain "negatives" -- low grades, late application, etc. Any explanation will sound defensive and your cover letter will lose the positive tone it is meant to impart. Instead, ask one of your references to prepare a letter that can be included with each application sent. The reference person will be in a better position to present the "negative" in a positive way -- you overcame the challenge or did other things in spite of it.

SUMMARY

Your composition of the cover letter depends on the specifics of the job, the request you are making, your personality, and how well you convey messages about yourself in writing. Your cover letter should show that you are courteous, thoughtful, and that you know how to deal with an employment application. The cover letter gives you the opportunity to convey that you carefully chose this employer, you are a distinctly interesting and qualified person, and a desirable candidate who deserves a closer look by the employer.

Examples of letters and a listing of useful sentences follow to serve as guidelines, but try to develop your own style. Read all of the examples. One sentence in any of the letters or the listing may be applicable to you and may help you form your own cover letter.

Don't hesitate to contact any member of the Career Services Office with any question, or to have us review a draft of your cover letter(s). We are here to support you in your job search, and we welcome the chance to help you develop this very important professional skill.

OUTLINE OF A COVER LETTER

Your Address
City, State Zip

Date

Title and Name of Contact Person
Employer Name
Address
City, State Zip

Dear Mr., Ms., Judge last name of contact person:

First Paragraph: Tell why you are writing; name the position for which you are applying, and tell how you heard of this opening. If you have a personal referral, mention your contact here. Indicate why you are interested in working for this employer. If you have lived in the area or know it well, mention this. Specify your interests in the type of work the firm does. Describe what is particularly appealing to you about the employer.

Second Paragraph: If you have had experience, courses, publications or clinic experience, be sure to point out what particular achievements you have accomplished that relate to the employer's field or type of work. Indicate why you are qualified for the job. Emphasize pertinent items on your resume; add information that is not specifically mentioned on your resume. Include information that is pertinent to the job for which you are applying.

Third Paragraph: Restate your interest in working for the employer. Have an appropriate closing to pave the way for an interview. Indicate your willingness to interview personally by stating when you will be in the area or by offering to make yourself available at the employer's convenience. You may wish to indicate that you will call the employer's office within a specific week to try and schedule an interview. Thank the employer for his/her consideration.

Sincerely,

(leave 4 blank lines for signature)

Your name in print

Enclosure

EXAMPLE OF LETTER FOR
**FIRST-YEAR STUDENT APPLYING FOR A
SUMMER ASSOCIATE POSITION**

456 Main Street
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

December 1, 2011

Ms. Zoe S. Employer
Baker, Cook & Bottlewasher
123 "I" Street
Chicago, Illinois 60606

Dear Ms. Employer:

I wish to apply for a summer associate position with your firm. Having attended college in the Chicago area, I plan to practice in the city with a smaller-sized firm after I graduate in 2014. Baker, Cook & Bottlewasher's concentration in labor law meets my goal of pursuing a career in this field.

Every summer throughout college, I worked in the offices of United States Steel and was promoted to a management position before my junior year. This experience allowed me to see the interplay between supervision and employees from the corporate viewpoint. I gained considerable experience in research and writing while serving as a research assistant for Professor _____. Further, the legal writing program at Notre Dame is extensive. In addition to training in legal research, we prepare memoranda, complaints and an appellate brief.

I am very interested in serving as a summer associate with Baker, Cook & Bottlewasher and will be pleased to discuss my qualifications in an interview scheduled at your convenience. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Sylvia A. Smith

Enclosure

(See page 18 for more sample sentences.)

EXAMPLE OF LETTER FOR
**FIRST-YEAR STUDENT APPLYING FOR A
SUMMER ASSOCIATE POSITION**

456 Main Street
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

December 1, 2011

Mr. Brian M. Smythe
Smythe, Wilson & Brown
1551 Broadway
New York, New York 10020

Dear Mr. Smythe:

Please consider the enclosed copy of my resume as an application for the position of law clerk with your firm. I learned from the Notre Dame Law School Career Services Office that you plan to hire a first-year law student next summer, and was pleased to discover that your firm practices in the area of municipal law. That area is of particular interest to me.

As an intern for the City of New York during college, I helped create and evaluate the city-wide facility needs assessment survey. Participating in this survey gave me a greater understanding of the New York community even though I have lived in the city all my life. My coursework in law school has further expanded my knowledge [of what??] and the extensive legal writing and research classes at Notre Dame have further improved my communication skills.

I am very interested in serving as a law clerk at Smythe, Wilson and Brown and would appreciate the opportunity to further discuss this matter during an interview. I will be in New York from December 15 through January 9 and can interview then at your convenience. An electronic interview can also be arranged as Notre Dame has video conferencing capability. I hope to have the opportunity to talk with you soon.

Sincerely,

Shelby C. FirstYear

Enclosure

(See page 18 for more sample sentences.)

EXAMPLE OF LETTER FOR
**SECOND-YEAR STUDENT APPLYING FOR A
SUMMER ASSOCIATE POSITION**

456 Main Street
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

August 15, 2011

Ms. Erin C. ContactPerson
Thunder & Lightning
1987 Grand Avenue
Kalamazoo, Michigan 48909

Dear Ms. ContactPerson:

Please accept the enclosed resume as an application for a 2012 summer clerkship position. My family resides in Kalamazoo, and I wish to practice in the city after I graduate in 2013. After talking with attorney John Thompson, I am convinced I would enjoy being associated with Thunder & Lightning, as I am interested in practicing at a firm with such a wide range of practice areas. Mr. Thompson suggested that I write to you.

Having variety in my work is important to me, and is exemplified in my pursuit of a liberal arts undergraduate education. I am taking a broad range of courses at Notre Dame Law School in order to provide greater assistance to clients with diverse problems. Last summer I clerked for a solo practitioner and worked on family law, bankruptcy, criminal, real estate and estate planning issues. That experience reaffirmed my interest in a general practice firm.

I travel to Kalamazoo on a regular basis and will be pleased to schedule an interview at your convenience. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for considering my application.

Sincerely,

Maya Z. Jones

Enclosure

(See page 18 for more sample sentences.)

**SECOND YEAR STUDENT -- REAPPLYING TO AN EMPLOYER
ORIGINALLY CONTACTED LAST YEAR**

456 Main Street
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

August 3, 2011

Mr. Lawrence M. Brown
Land and River
7832 Tomahawk Drive
Tucson, Arizona 98765

Dear Mr. Brown:

As you requested last March, I am applying for a clerkship to commence next May. I remain very interested in clerking for Land and River, and your work in corporate finance continues to be of particular interest to me. However, at this point in my legal career, I find a number of practice areas inspiring and am also interested in other practice areas.

Having attended college in Tucson, I am very familiar with the area. My work as an accountant with Arthur Lybrand enabled me to forge friendships and contacts in the Tucson community. My law school courses at Notre Dame have included Business Associations, Accounting for Lawyers, and Securities Law. Additionally, I further strengthened my writing this year by developing a paper on the financial implications of a more global economic community.

Because the enclosed resume is merely an overview of my qualifications, I hope that I will have the opportunity to talk with you in person. To that end, I plan to be in Tucson October 16 - 20. I will call your office toward the end of September to see if an October interview can be scheduled. I appreciate your invitation to reapply this fall and look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,

Christopher A. Johns

Enclosure

(See page 18 for more sample sentences.)

**EXAMPLE OF LETTER FOR SECOND YEAR
APPLYING FOR SUMMER CLERKSHIP**

456 Main Street
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

September 1, 2011

Mr. Jerry A. Wheat
Miller & Wheat
12 LaSalle Street
Chicago, Illinois 60601

Dear Mr. Wheat:

I wish to clerk for your firm next summer. As a life-long resident of the Chicago area, I plan to practice in the city after I graduate in 2013. The areas of litigation and bankruptcy are of particular interest to me, and reading First National Bank vs. USZ increased my interest in your firm. I have enclosed a resume as an application for a 2012 summer position.

My accounting degree was enhanced through my work as a business manager for my college newspaper. My position as assistant manager not only improved my communication skills but also my ability to resolve problems quickly and effectively. I find that Notre Dame Law School has provided ample opportunity to further hone my skills. Some of the courses I will take before graduation are: trial advocacy, debtor and creditor rights, complex civil litigation and deposition skills. I believe I could be an important addition to your firm and welcome the opportunity to clerk for you next summer.

I am very interested in clerking for Miller & Wheat. Because I return home regularly, I can interview at your convenience. Thank you in advance for your careful consideration of my application. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Michaela H. O'Toole

Enclosure

(See page 18 for more sample sentences.)

CONNECTION IN THE FIRM
SUMMER CLERKSHIP APPLICATION

456 Main Street
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

February 14, 2012

Mr. Gage M. Rivers
Air, Sky and Rivers
233 Gateway Center
St. Louis, Missouri 68701

Dear Mr. Rivers:

I am writing at the suggestion of (connection) regarding possible employment for this coming summer. When I complete my legal studies at Notre Dame, I plan to practice in St. Louis. I am interested in labor law and hope to pursue a career representing management interests, and your firm is of particular interest to me.

I am currently enrolled in _____ and anticipate taking _____ and _____ as well. I worked as a law clerk last summer in the Chicago Regional Office of the National Labor Relations Board. (Here indicate specific work done. Do not simply restate information on your resume. Instead, expand on resume information.) I believe this experience combined with my course work will enable me to contribute to the work of Air, Sky and Rivers.

I will be in the St. Louis area from March 4 to March 11 and am available to interview during those dates or any other time that may be more convenient for you. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Erin C. O'Shea

Enclosure

(See page 18 for more sample sentences.)

**EXAMPLE OF LETTER FOR SECOND YEAR
APPLYING FOR SECOND SUMMER CLERKSHIP**

456 Main Street
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

September 1, 2011

Ms. Ann Marie Canseco
Jordon, Anderson & Canseco
853 Busch Gardens Drive
Tampa, Florida 30404

Dear Ms. Canseco:

I wish to apply for a summer associate position with your firm. Jordan, Anderson & Canseco came to my attention through my research at Notre Dame Law School for summer employment opportunities, as I have a special interest in tax and estate planning practice. I first read your partner, Charles Jaydon's, article on elder law and then learned of your firm's representative clients and excellent reputation.

My ultimate goal is to become a tax attorney. The two years I spent as an internal auditor at Arthur Waterhouse and my summer clerking position with Earnest Whitney provided considerable exposure to tax issues. **

Tampa has a special appeal because I have family and friends in the area. I appreciate your consideration of my qualifications and will travel to Tampa for an interview at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Patricia I. Williams

Enclosure

**** Note: This cover letter is brief on paragraph 2 where you should state your experiences, courses, papers/publications, clinical experience, moot court, mock trial, client counseling, etc. for the type of work sought. You are encouraged to develop this paragraph according to your particular situation.**

SECOND YEAR APPLYING FOR SUMMER CLERKING POSITION

456 Main Street
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

September 1, 2011

Mr. Tremayne A. Sunn
Lamp, Light and Sunn
234 Ohio Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Dear Mr. Sunn:

I wish to apply for one of your law clerk positions next summer. The four years I spent at Purdue University convinced me that I should practice in central Indiana, and my interest at Notre Dame Law School in patent law prompted me to contact you. I learned of your name while doing research for the Giles Sutherland Moot Court Competition.

With a background in electrical engineering, I am seeking a clerkship that will utilize my experience as well as strengthen the skills I have acquired in law school. I will be glad to provide a copy of the paper on Cell Phone Patent Applications that I am preparing for my patent and trademark seminar.

I will be visiting Indianapolis the second weekend in October and will call your office in the hope of scheduling an interview Friday or Monday. Thank you for considering my qualifications.

Sincerely,

Gary P. Taylor

Enclosure

(See page 18 for more sample sentences.)

EXAMPLE OF LETTER FOR **THIRD YEAR**
ASSOCIATE POSITION APPLICATION

456 Main Street
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

February 14, 2012

Mr. Richard A. Mortar
Wood, Brick and Mortar
923 Market Street
San Francisco, California 94111

Dear Mr. Mortar:

I understand through our Career Services Office that you are seeking an associate to begin work this June. After reviewing the information you provided to Notre Dame Law Schoolthe office, I was pleased to learn that a substantial amount of your practice involves products liability. I have had some exposure to this area of law and would welcome the opportunity to practice with your firm.

I am writing my third-year seminar paper on the products liability system and have represented clients through the law school clinic. Through the clinic, I managed my own caseload, prepared complaints and argued motions. My course work in complex civil litigation, torts, and medical malpractice may also be of particular interest to you.

I wish to associate with your firm and welcome an opportunity to interview with you. I will be in San Francisco over our spring break, March 7-14, and can interview with you at anytime during that week or any other time that may be more convenient for you. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Leigh D. Wilson

Enclosure

(See page 18 for more sample sentences.)

**EXAMPLE OF LETTER APPLYING FOR
FULL-TIME ASSOCIATE POSITION**

456 Main Street
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

September 15, 2011

Mr. Anthony T. Kilroy
Gauge & Pressure
6349 Central Avenue
Sacramento, California 98909

Dear Mr. Kilroy:

Your firm's involvement in medical malpractice and tort law is of particular interest to me. I wish to be considered for an associate position following graduation from Notre Dame Law School this May.

My concentration during law school has been in litigation, and tort law has been attractive to me since my team won the regional Moot Court competition. Our case involved complex tort issues, and my writing of portions of the appellate brief further strengthened my skills. Additionally, as a member of the Moot Court Board, I assisted other students as they prepared for competition. The clerkship I held last summer with Dewey, Cheatham and Howe also underscored my interest in medical malpractice and tort law. My degree in nursing and experience at St. Generic Hospital should enable me to provide you assistance in medical malpractice cases.

I plan to visit my parents in Sacramento for a long weekend October 11 through 14, and I would appreciate an opportunity to interview with you during that time. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sally Forthe

Enclosure

**EXAMPLE OF LETTER FOR THIRD YEAR
APPLYING FOR AN ASSOCIATE POSITION**

456 Main Street
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

September 1, 2011

Ms. Erika M. Miller
Miller & Thompson
1679 Connecticut Avenue
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Ms. Miller:

As a third-year law student graduating next May, I wish to apply for an associate position with Miller & Thompson. Communications law is of particular interest to me, and I am extremely impressed with the broad range of your firm's communications practice.

As a member of the Notre Dame Law Review, I published an article concerning the integration of electronic cable-system technology in newspaper publishing. I worked with newspaper and radio productions, both as an undergraduate and law student at Notre Dame, and in the area of communications law during the summer of 2011 at Johnson & Johnson, LLP.

I will be in Washington from October 10 to October 15 and hope to meet with you then. I will telephone your office the week of September 22 to determine if an interview will be convenient at that time. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

James C. North

Enclosure

(See page 18 for more sample sentences.)

**MAY GRADUATE -- ALREADY TAKEN THE BAR
APPLYING FOR AN ASSOCIATE POSITION**

456 Main St.
Notre Dame, Indiana
46556

August 1, 2011

Mr. Jerry A. Jones
Little, Casey & Sunshine
1000 Merchandise Mart
Chicago, Illinois 60606

Dear Mr. Jones:

I recently graduated from Notre Dame Law School and took the Illinois Bar Examination in July. I wish to associate with your firm and have enclosed a resume for your consideration. I have enclosed a copy of my resume for your review. I am available to clerk while I await my bar results and anticipate being admitted to practice.

The areas of practice that are most interesting to me are labor law and taxation. My degree in accounting enabled me to obtain a clerkship with Benson & Hodges the summer after my first year of law school. On my return to Notre Dame that fall, I began clerking for Phillip & Morris. I gained considerable practical experience in the area of taxation through both positions and researched labor law issues at Phillip & Morris. My law school courses include: International and Comparative Labor Law, International Taxation, and Tax Law and Policy.

I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the possibility of a permanent position on your legal staff. Because Notre Dame is in close proximity to Chicago, I can interview at your convenience. Thank you for considering me. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Lawrence M. English

Enclosure

(See page 18 for more sample sentences.)

First Paragraph -- some beginnings:

- Your article entitled " _____ " published in this month's issue of _____ caught my attention. I was particularly interested in the emphasis you placed on _____.
- You may recall that we met last month at the _____ in _____. We had the opportunity to speak at the reception.
- While talking to _____ about your firm's _____ practice, he suggested that I send you my resume and contact you personally.
- As a life-long resident of Indiana and student at Notre Dame Law School, I have retained strong ties to the state during my employment with _____.
- While discussing career opportunities in the southeast with Professor _____, she discussed your firm and suggested that I contact you directly.
- Professor Rice suggested that I write to you about a clerkship with your firm.
- It recently came to my attention through the Notre Dame Law School Career Services Office that you are seeking applications for summer associates.

Second Paragraph -- another approach:

- My experiences include participating in the Moot Court competition and clerking full-time this summer with (firm name).
- After rigorous competition, I was asked to become a member of the Moot Court team. Additionally, clerking for a local law firm has provided valuable experience that will increase my productivity in the future.
- I believe that I possess the unique qualifications to work in your firm, including _____

Third Paragraph -- what next and close:

- Because a resume is merely an overview, I would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you at your earliest convenience to discuss employment opportunities. I look forward to your reply.

JUDICIAL CLERKSHIP COVER LETTERS

Judicial clerkship cover letters should be kept brief. The cover letter is simply the conduit for your application materials; allow your application materials to convey your pertinent information. Your cover letter should contain the following information:

- 1) Your status as a student at Notre Dame Law School and your year of graduation.
- 2) The judicial term for which you are applying (e.g., “I am writing to apply for a position as a law clerk in your chambers for judicial term 2012/2013”).
- 3) The items that are enclosed with the cover letter (e.g., “Enclosed please find my resume, transcript, writing sample and a list of references who will provide letters of recommendation under separate cover”).
- 4) Your contact information with mailing address, phone number and e-mail address, and a sentence indicating that you would like to discuss your candidacy at an interview scheduled at the judge’s convenience.
- 5) If you plan to be in the location of the court on a certain date, this information should also be included in the cover letter.

Above all, you must avoid making any grammatical or typographical errors in your cover letter or in any element of your clerkship application. Additionally:

The Cover Letter & Envelope Address:

Ensure that you correctly address your cover letter and envelope with the proper titles and salutation lines. See examples below:

The Honorable Sheila M. O’Brien
Illinois Court of Appeals
Room 1906 North
160 North LaSalle Street
Chicago, IL 60601

The Cover Letter salutation:

Always use the appropriate title (e.g., Judge/Justice/Chief Justice) followed by the judge’s last name:

Dear Justice O’Brien:

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

Informational interviewing is a method by which you can build a professional network, find a mentor, search for the right job, and make helpful contacts. Informational interviewing not only provides you with an avenue to explore career paths, but is a way of discovering at least 50% of the available jobs – jobs that are not advertised.

Informational interviewing is **not** job interviewing. Don't schedule informational interviews with the hidden agenda of a job interview. Most people will see through your plan, and you may not get what you need – cooperation, advice, support and referrals. Some of the reasons for doing informational interviewing given by Martha Stoodley, author of *Information Interviewing*, are:

-Establish and/or expand your professional “network,” and

-Everyone with whom you establish a contact will also be looking for a job for you if you make a good impression, thank them, communicate openly about your abilities and goals, and stay in contact with them – making your search more efficient.

Informational interviewing is one of the most important things you can do for your career, both in the short and long term. You will establish a network with your soon-to-be peers and colleagues that can continue and expand during your entire career.

SAMPLE LETTER
REQUESTING AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

456 Notre Dame Avenue
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

November 1, 2011

Ms. Knowledge Expert
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
841 Chestnut Building
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107

Dear Ms. Expert:

Given your experience with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, I would like to talk with you about career choices and opportunities in the field of environmental law. As a second-year Notre Dame Law School student with an undergraduate degree in biology, I wish to direct my legal career toward environmental policy administration. Last summer I clerked for Flowers, Field & Stream in Los Angeles and assisted with the researching and writing of the Orange County water management project.

During the week of November 24, I will be visiting my family for Thanksgiving and would like to meet with you for twenty minutes. On November 7, I will call your office with the hope of scheduling a meeting time. I appreciate your consideration of my request in light of your demanding schedule. I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,

Christine E. Lee

NOTE: Don't over-extend your welcome. Stick to the length of time you set for the meeting.

LETTER FOR
GATHERING CONTACTS IN THE AREA

456 Notre Dame Avenue
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

December 1, 2011

Ms. Christine E. Nemo
Hailey, Mickey & Nemo
123 LaSalle Street
Chicago, IL 60604

Dear Ms. Nemo:

I am seeking your advice. I plan to practice in Chicago after I graduate from Notre Dame Law School in 2014 and hope to work in the city next summer. With my background in business, business law has a special attraction to me, and gaining experience and exposure to this area of law is particularly appealing. With your knowledge of the city's legal community and experience in practice, as well as your first-hand knowledge of Notre Dame, any advice you wish to share would be extremely useful.

I will be happy to talk with you in person, by telephone or communicate by e-mail, whichever is more convenient for you. My contact information is included on the resume I am enclosing, in the hope that learning my background will be helpful to you.

I welcome an opportunity to talk with you and hope to hear from you soon. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael B. Sinclair

Enclosure

SAMPLE
THANK YOU LETTER

456 Main Street
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

April 12, 2012

Mr. Brian M. Wordsworth
Addison & Clark
6349 Gage Avenue
Sacramento, California 98909

Dear Mr. Wordsworth:

Thank you for interviewing me for a (summer associate, law clerk, or associate) position last Friday. I appreciated the tour of your Sacramento offices and found your description of the firm's practice most informative. The interview served to reinforce my desire to become a (summer associate, law clerk, or member) of Addison & Clark.

I would be pleased to provide any further information to help your firm reach a positive decision concerning my application. Thank you again for your kindness and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Anne M. Davis

SAMPLE
THANK YOU LETTER

456 Main Street
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

October 12, 2011

Mr. Peter F. Gossard
Dykstra & Gossard
1987 Grand Avenue
Kalamazoo, Michigan 48909

Dear Mr. Gossard:

Thank you for meeting with me last week regarding employment opportunities with your firm. I especially appreciated our discussion on international law and of the legal job market in Kalamazoo. Meeting with (name all names) of Dykstra & Gossard reinforced my desire to join your law firm after graduation next May.

I have enclosed a transcript and writing sample for your review. In addition to the references listed on my resume, Professor Geoffrey Bennett, Director of Notre Dame's London Law Program, has indicated he would like to serve as a reference.

Thank you again for your consideration. I look forward to talking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Michelle H. Liu

Enclosures

SAMPLE
THANK YOU LETTER

456 Main Street
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

October 12, 2011

Mr. Anthony T. Sunn
Lamp, Light and Sunn
234 Ohio Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Dear Mr. Sunn:

I enjoyed our meeting on October 10 and wish to thank you and Ms. Light for an informative morning. I particularly appreciated learning more about _____ and the opportunity to meet other members of the firm.

I understand that the hiring committee will meet at the end of this month, and I look forward to hearing from you then. I welcome the opportunity to join Lamp, Light and Sunn.

Sincerely,

Erin C. Jahns

NOTE: A thank you letter can be sent to each attorney with whom you interview **IF** you are able to make each letter somewhat different by following up on a portion of your conversation or providing additional information that an interviewer wanted. **HOWEVER**, if all the letters would be the same, send one letter to the person who arranged the interview, frequently the hiring partner or recruiting coordinator, and express thanks to the other people with whom you interviewed -- but **name** (and spell correctly) **all** the other people with whom you interviewed **or** don't attempt to name everyone. A misspelling or another error on a thank you letter can eliminate you from further consideration.

-Optional-

SAMPLE FOLLOW UP LETTER:
NO OFFER ... THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION...

-Optional-

456 Main Street
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

December 15, 2011

Mr. Christopher A. Summer
Gauge & Pressure
6349 Central Avenue
Sacramento, California 98909

Dear Mr. Summer:

Thank you for informing me of your hiring decision. While I regret the lack of an offer at this time, I do understand that you cannot hire an unlimited number of people. I continue to be very interested in working for your firm and ask that you contact me if another opening should occur. I hope Gauge & Pressure has an excellent year, and again, thank you for all the consideration you gave me as an applicant.

Sincerely,

Trish I. Maynard

NOTE: "Thank you for your consideration" letters are also appropriate in answer to a letter from an employer saying they are sorry, but they cannot make an offer. Use your discretion. Obviously, if you get a form letter from a firm you never met, an answer is not required. But where a relationship had begun (an interview was held), sometimes a letter expressing your regret and your understanding can be a good idea. You never know when an additional opening will occur.

ASKING FOR AN
EXTENSION OF A DEADLINE
REGARDING AN OFFER OF EMPLOYMENT

1. Restate your interest in the employer.
2. Express appreciation for the offer.
3. Indicate that you are considering other employers and ask for an extension of time in order to better evaluate all options.
4. Ask for one week, two weeks, whatever is the minimum (or reasonable) amount of time you need in order to make a decision.
5. When you make your decision, immediately inform the employer -- even if it is to decline the employment offer. Declining an offer is always better to do by telephone and then follow up with a letter.

**DEADLINE EXTENSION REQUEST
REGARDING AN OFFER OF EMPLOYMENT**

456 Main Street
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

October 11, 2011

Mr. Marc C. Wheat
Miller & Wheat
12 LaSalle Street
Chicago, Illinois 60601

Dear Mr. Wheat:

I appreciate your interest in me for a summer associate position. I am delighted to receive your offer of employment and am very interested in working for your firm. However, I am considering other employers at this time and am not prepared to make a final commitment. Understanding that you must make some decisions too, I would like an extension of time until November 1, and will communicate that decision to you. I hope that this is acceptable to you; if not, please let me know as soon as possible. Thank you again for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lewis A. Marksman

SAMPLE ACCEPTANCE LETTER

456 Main Street
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

November 14, 2011

Ms. Shelby C. Brown
Smythe, Wilson & Brown
551 Market Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Dear Ms. Brown:

This letter confirms my acceptance of your offer to join Smythe, Wilson & Brown as an associate following my graduation in May 2012. I am delighted with the prospect of working with you and look forward to joining the firm. I will contact you before graduation regarding my work schedule and bar examination preparation.

Sincerely,

Myra Chambers

And to your Network of Contacts...

Thank you for your support during my recent job search. I have accepted a job as _____ at _____.

I sincerely appreciate your help and support.

GUIDELINES FOR ACCEPTING AN OFFER

1. Reflect your enthusiasm for the position.
2. Mention the starting date and other arrangements agreed upon. If no specifics were decided upon in the initial offer, you should indicate that you are looking forward to meeting with them to decide the starting date, etc.

DECLINING AN OFFER

456 Main Street
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

November 14, 2011

Ms. Piper S. Wilson
Smythe, Wilson & Brown
551 Market Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Dear Ms. Wilson:

This letter confirms our telephone conversation and my decision to decline the offer extended by your firm to become an associate following my graduation from Notre Dame Law School in 2012. I sincerely appreciate your interest in me and wish to reiterate that this decision was not an easy one to make. However, I will associate with Wiley and Coyote in Phoenix to pursue my interest in environmental law and litigation.

Thank you for your consideration and patience.

Sincerely,

Kristopher A. Walkeen

DECLINING AN OFFER

456 Main Street
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

December 14, 2011

Ms. Michaela M. Jackson
Smythe, Wilson & Brown
551 Market Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Dear Ms. Jackson:

Thank you for extending an offer to join your firm as a summer associate. As we discussed, your firm was of keen interest to me but, after careful review, I decided to accept another position and must decline your offer.

Thank you for your kindness extended to me during the recruiting process.

Sincerely,

Erin C. Worthington

CONCLUSION

As with any professional, each lawyer is responsible for his or her own career development. Your skills at interviewing are an important part of obtaining the job that you want, but your skills at cover letter- and resume-writing are instrumental in getting you that interview. We in the Career Services Office are dedicated to helping you develop each of those skills. If you have any questions about any of the material in this booklet, would like us to review any of your written material, or want to discuss any aspect of your career development, please call, email, or stop by our office.