



**PSECCO**

Polar Science Early  
Career Community Office



# Creating a Stellar Job Application: CVs, Cover Letters, and Strategic Networking

November 20, 2025



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## In this space, we agree to...

- Be curious and listen to understand
- Show respect and suspend judgement
- Strive to make space for others to speak, especially the quieter voices and those with different viewpoints from our own
- Consider how our social and institutional positionality may affect the impact of what we say and our awareness of what the potential impact may be
- Look for opportunities to build/expand on ideas with others; acknowledge common ground as well as differences
- Be purposeful and to the point
- Advocate if we feel like an unsafe space has been created

# Land acknowledgement



Photo credit: Meghan Sharp





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## Overview of the Call

- PSECCO introductions & welcome
- Jimena Ugaz presents on CVs, cover letters, and using LinkedIn for networking
- 15-minute Q&A session





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## Meet our speaker!



**Jimena Ugaz** serves as the *Talent Acquisition and Training Manager* at the Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences (CIRES), where she plays a key role within the HR Department.

Her responsibilities include guiding hiring teams on legally sound and effective recruitment practices, promoting professional development, and leading initiatives as part of the CIRES Mentoring Program Committee.

# Agenda

- Job Search Strategy
- AI in the Job Search
- Cover Letters
- Resume/ CV Formatting
- LinkedIn & Networking
- Feedback and Q&A



# Job search strategy



Acknowledge the landscape



Be clear on industry, title, salary, and timeline



Identify specific companies



Align CV, cover letter, and LinkedIn profile



Discipline: Structure, time off, community



Data: Track applications, rejections, interviews



# Talent

The Talent Management Institute defines talent as  
**“A person with high-level technical skills and the potential to lead a team”**

Integrity & Accountability

Leadership

Adaptability

Innovation


Effective Communication






# AI as a tool for employers

- Analyzing job ads for unbiased language before posting
- Masking demographic data in CVs and cover letters to mitigate biases
- Parsing and extracting information from CVs for easier comparison
- Recognizing equivalent skills across different terminologies
- Using keyword algorithms to match candidates to job descriptions and to rank them
- Assessing writing quality, alignment with company values, sentiment, and intent
- Using predictive analytics on past hiring data to estimate future performance



# Leveraging AI for your job search



Ask Copilot to identify the main 5 functions in a job ad.



Feed specific paragraphs into the tool to discover redundancies



Prompt Copilot to correct your grammar; ask for suggestions to be highlighted

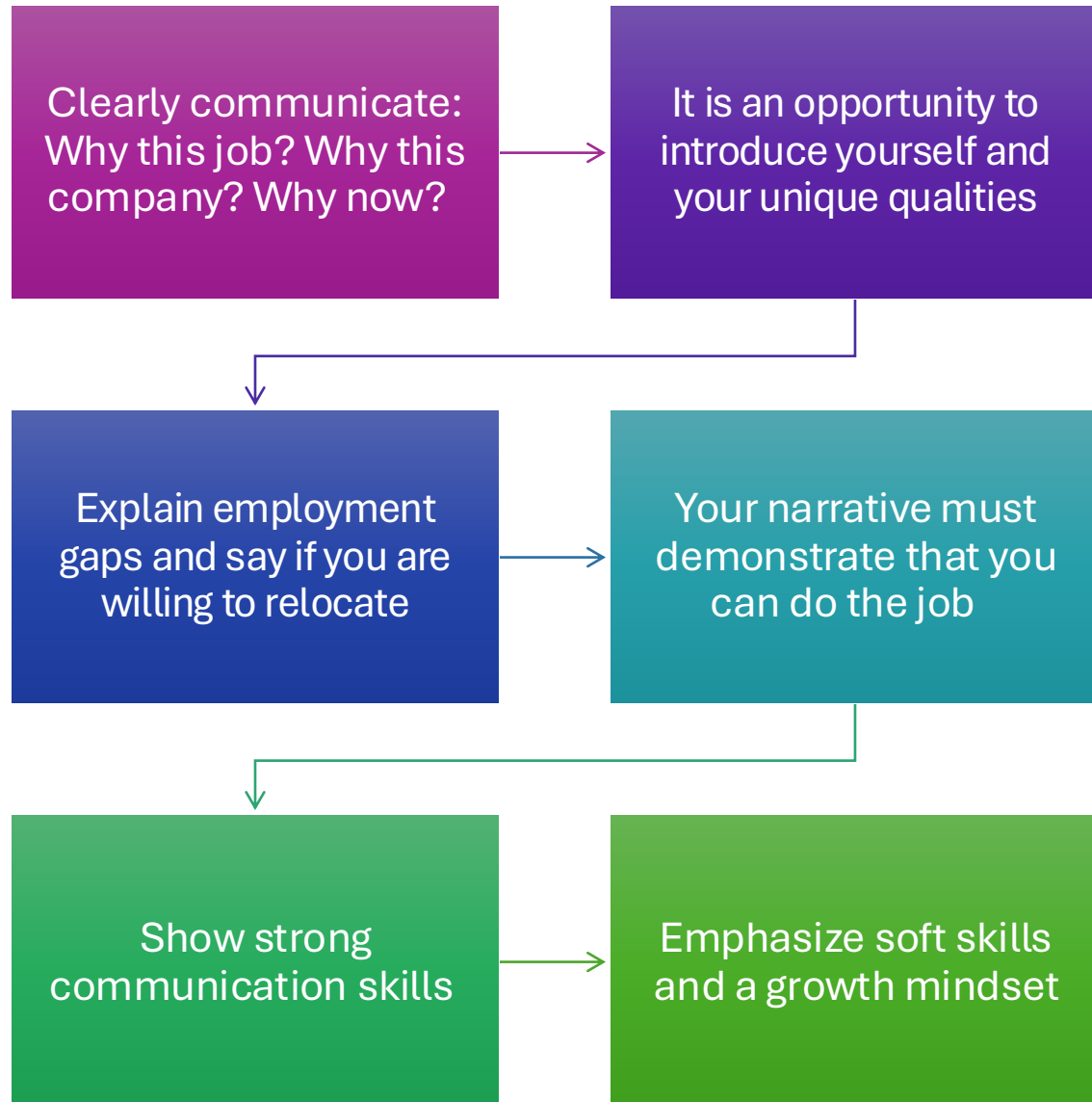


Make sure you review all content for hallucinations



Use AI for mock interviews

# Tips on cover letters (industry)





# Cover Letter (industry): The first paragraph

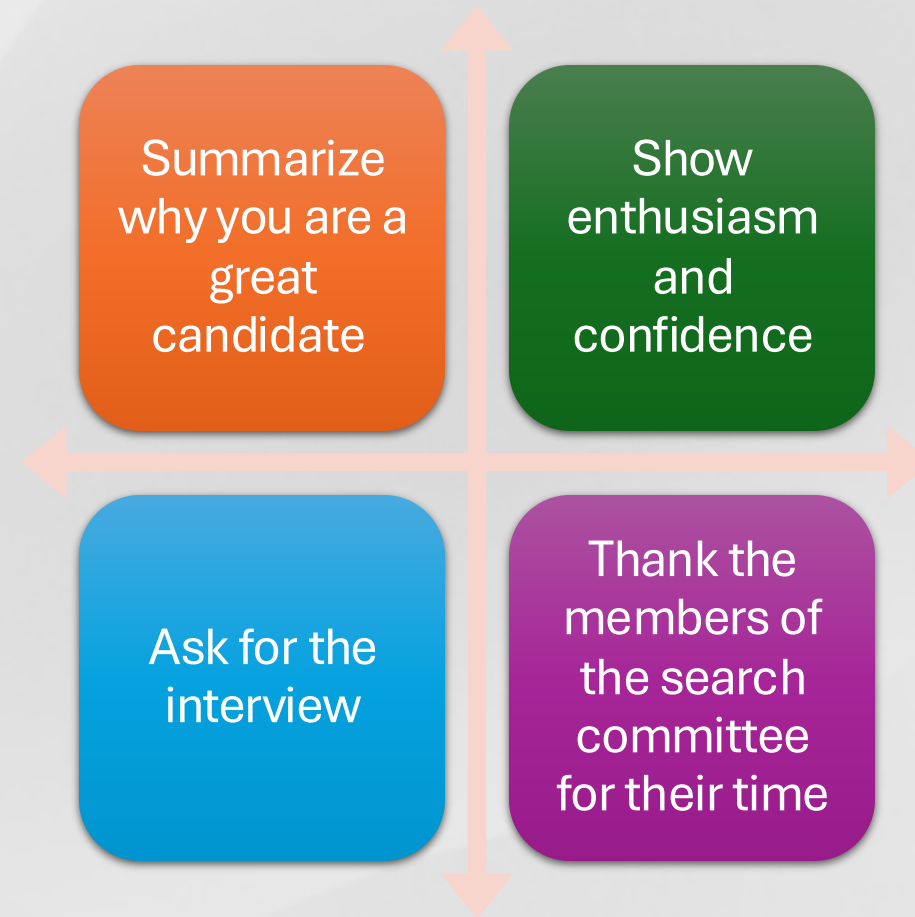


# Cover Letter (industry): The main body



# Cover Letter (industry): Final paragraph

(credit Jenny Foss)





# Cover letters (academic institutions)

- Recommended length is 1-2 pages
- Address it directly to the search committee Chair if possible (Dear Dr. Smith)
- In the opening paragraph: State the position to which you are applying and show your enthusiasm for the institution.
- For positions in the U.S, speak of all three areas: Research, teaching, and service.
- Start with and emphasize your research, main contributions, and future direction (for research-focused institutions). Discuss your doctoral dissertation if applying to Assistant Professor roles; focus on key publications for more senior positions.
- State your teaching philosophy, pedagogical preparation, and robust teaching experience (for teaching-focused colleges and universities). Emphasize your ability for mentorship.
- Mention service to the institution and the profession through participation in committees, institutional initiatives, and external engagements.
- In the closing paragraph, reiterate your interest and availability to further discuss the role. Thank the members of the search committee for their time.

# Resume format (industry)

- Use a simple [template](#)
- Test the format: Does the resume populate correctly in the application?
- Use standard fonts (Arial, Calibri, Times New Roman)
- Mirror the job description using terminology from the posting
- Use a logical structure that aligns with job expectations
- Use action verbs and quantify achievements



## Resume format (continued)

- Extension: 1-2 pages (avoid pictures/ boxes/ tables/ drawings)
- Include a Summary
- Include a Skills or Core Competencies section
- In the Experience section, include 3-5 duties per job title
- Use the **WHI** formula: What?/ How?/ Impact?
- Use strong action verbs and metrics
- For experience prior to 2010, list as “Additional experience” (2-3 duties)
- Education: You can redact the year of graduation



# Academic CV

## Length

From 3 to 8 pages

## Order

Education should go prior to experience

Academic appointments should precede industry jobs

## Content

Publications (or a selection)

Presentations (or a selection)

Service (to profession/ community)

Grants and Fellowships

Professional Memberships



# LinkedIn

- You must have a LinkedIn account if you work or are looking for a job:

[Here is how to sign up and get started](#)

- LinkedIn allows you to build a professional network
- Recruiters use LinkedIn to search for talent (*Open to Work* banner)
- Join organizations and local chapters
- Comment on articles of interest
- Reach out to professionals working on similar fields
- Connect with local employees at companies of interest

## **LinkedIn Premium for a fee**

- Suggests job matches
- Offers analytics on the jobs to which you are applying
- Often allows you to reach out directly to the job poster
- Includes LinkedIn Learning options for upskilling



# Resources for building your LinkedIn profile

- [Create your LinkedIn profile](#)
- [Building a LinkedIn profile](#)
- [Optimizing your LinkedIn Profile](#)
- [Getting Started Profile Quick Tips](#)
- [Optimizing your LinkedIn profile for recruiters](#)
- [LinkedIn Quick Tips](#)

# Upskilling

- **Gain job-relevant skills from industry leaders**

[Career Academy Boulder](#) gives you access to free career training and certification programs from leading companies including Google, Meta, IBM, ADP, Amazon, HCI and more. Learning programs are free of charge (Project Management, Data Analytics, Human Resources Specialist...)

- **Eligibility**

Current CU Boulder students, staff and faculty are eligible to access Career Academy programs. Sign up using your Identikey.



# Networking

- What is your objective?
- Go to presentations, career fairs, and conferences

## Use LinkedIn

- For relationship building and to show interest in colleagues' work
- To join relevant organizations that may host annual networking events
- Identify local top companies of interest; reach out to employees for informational interviews
- Ask for **referrals**:

(It is estimated that 50-80% of hires come from referrals, although referred applicants represent less than 10% of the candidate pool).



# Take-Home notes

- 
- Many companies have paused or decreased recruitment
  - The job search will be long; the market is competitive
  - Build your professional network
  - Take breaks, weekends, exercise, go outside

***Don't take it personally because AI is incapable of empathy***





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# Creating a Stellar Job Application: Q & A



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## Stay involved with PSECCO!

- December 15 – 19 – AGU social for early career researchers, 2 sessions!
- Explore our [AGU Polar Sessions & Events](#) google document!
- Connect with us via:
  - Email: [psecco@colorado.edu](mailto:psecco@colorado.edu)
  - Newsletter: <https://psecco.org/join-psecco-community>
  - Social media (BlueSky, Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook): @polarsecco