Cover Letters 101 Workshop

APS workshop

Nicole Gauthier, Monica Lewandowski, Elisha Allan-Perkins, Karen de Silva, Lisa Beirn, Kimberly Gwinn, Rachel Melnick, Melissa Molho, Susan VanTuyl, Misbakhul Munir, Faith Ayobami, Anissa Poleatewich

Workshop Objectives:

The purpose of this workshop is to learn what makes an effective cover letter that provides a great first impression of a job candidate.

Agenda

- Introduction and Presentation (15 min)
- Group Activities (1 hr)
- Q&A Session (10 min)
- Course Evaluations (5 min)

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What is a Cover Letter?

- A potential employers first introduction to you
- Serves as a writing sample to show how well you communicate in writing
- Allows you to demonstrate why you will be a great fit for the position
- Shows your personality and what you can bring to the position
- Gives you an opportunity to address or explain anything that is/is not in your CV
- Opportunity to show your enthusiasm for the position
- A one- or two-page document that introduces you to a potential employer
  - Limit to 1 page for industry/government
  - Usually 2-3 pages for academia, dependent on position type and your experience
- Written in the style of a formal business leader with a header, salutation, body, and signature
- Usually part of requested materials for a job application

Cover Letter Format

- Keep it single-spaced
- Add a space between all paragraphs
- Keep margins standard
- Align paragraphs at the left
- Center the letter on the page
- Use a standardized sign-off such as “Sincerely”, or “Best regards”
- Include your signed name (optional)
- Combine your cover letter with all your application materials into a single pdf

Cover Letter Sections

The Header

Laccaria Montana 2114 Botrytis Lane Rhizoctonia, Missouri 00001 555-358-5101 Lmontana@gmail.com	Your contact info should come first. Include name, address, phone number, and email
November 16, 2023	Write out the full date
Hiring Manager University of Nowhere 2 Pineapple Street Narnia, USA 0002	Company contact info
Dear Hiring Professionals,	Greeting. Name specific person if possible. Use Dr. if appropriate, avoid Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss

- Use standard formatting for a formal business letter
- Make sure your email address is professional and permanent
- Address the letter to the search committee chair or the person evaluating applications, whenever possible (refer to the job application to find this information)
    - Be sure to use Dr. if appropriate, but avoid Mr./Mrs/Ms./Miss (instead use Dear First Name Last Name)
    - If you do not know specific person, consider using Dear Hiring Manager (Industry/Government) or Dear Search Committee (Academia)

The Body

- Introduction Paragraph (1st paragraph)
    - State who you are and the purpose for your letter
    - Specify why you are interested in said position
    - Provide an overview of main strengths
- Support Paragraphs (2nd and 3rd paragraphs)
    - Compliment your resume by giving examples of your experience
    - Highlight aspects of the job that compare to your skills or experience
    - Show that you are a good match for the organization- convince them you're the right hire

The Closing

- Closing Paragraph (4th paragraph)
    - Restate why you are a good candidate and your interest
    - Include contact information not already in the header
    - Thank the reader for their time
    - Sign-off and signature
        - Use standard valediction, such as "Sincerely"
        - Leave several spaces for you to sign your name or add a digital signature

Cover Letter Tips

Present yourself professionally

- Make sure you have followed any guidelines in the application instructions (such as length)
- Email address is appropriate and permanent
- Letter is written clearly and concisely
- Letter has been proofread for spelling and grammatical errors by yourself and other people
- Diversify the action words you used
- Show your enthusiasm for the position
- Make sure your letter is tailored specificaly for the job to which you are applying

Using A.I. to generate your letter

- A.I. technology can often generate a very good framework for a cover letter (example page 24)
- Be careful that the writing style reflects your own style
- Overall quality may be reduced
    - Make sure you still customize the letter
    - AI-generated letters can sometimes lack important details and personality

What Not to Do

- Do not include:
  - Gender
  - Age/Birthday/Marital Status
  - Citizenship (for government positions you will be asked this within USAJobs.gov, many agencies will ask you about eligibility to work)
  - Picture
  - Hobbies
- Avoid using titles like Mr./Sir/Mrs./Ms. (use Dr. if appropriate)
- Do not send a generic letter, make sure you discuss the specific position
- Do not simply state your credentials, but provide examples
- Do not put a whole grant proposal in or repeat information from your other application documents (teaching/research/extension statements). instead synthesize/briefly summarize points
- Avoid informal language, such as contractions or slang

Introductory Email

- For positions where application materials are submitted via email, a short communication/introduction may be necessary for the email body
  - Not a substitute for the cover letter
  - Polite and formal

Application for position XXXX

hiringmanager@XYZcompany.com

Application for position XXXX

Dear Hiring Manager,

Please find attached my application materials for position XXX at your company. Thank you for your time and consideration and I look forward to discussing my application with you.

Sincerely,

Rhizoc Tonia

Rhizoc Tonia, Ph.D.
Postdoctoral Researcher
University of Narnia
Wardrobe, Narnia 012345

(555) 555-5555

Cover Letter By Discipline

- Academia
  - Generally required
  - Usually 2-3 pages depending on your experience and the position

- Industry
  - Usually not required, but preferred
  - Normally one page
  - As with the CV/resume, be sure to use exact keywords from the job advertisement to help pass through the HR screening software (e.g. ATS) or HR person

- Government
  - Rarely used, not needed unless job posting specifically requests it (e.g.post-doc positions)
  - Model like an industry letter (no more than a page)

Tailoring your CV to the Position

Reading the Job Description

- Same process used for tailoring your CV
- Look for:
  - Position title: reveals experience level needed
  - Field of study: stress your knowledge in this area
  - Position split: spend time highlighting these areas (if split is 80% research, 20% teaching spend the majority of your cover letter discussing research, then teaching)
  - Other requirements/preferred qualifications
  - If you are unsure of anything; find out!
    - Contact hiring manager
    - Ask your mentor

Demonstrating That You Are a Good Fit

- Identify how your background aligns with the role. Connect any dots
- Tell the institution why you are in interested in specifically working for them
- Explain why *you* should be hired
- Don't just repeat your CV/resume
  - Highlight specific qualifications
  - Give more details on any CV/resume items more
- Explain any gaps
    - Knowledge Gaps: If the position is looking for someone to work on pineapple, this a chance to explain how your work on another tropical crop/field crop/etc translates into working on pineapple
    - Skill Gaps: How you have quickly mastered new technical skills before and will be able to learn desired job skills
    - Time Gaps : If you have taken career breaks or break in education you can address it here if appropriate

Activity #1: Evaluate Cover Letters

On the following pages, you will find sample cover letters, written based on the same CV (also below). You will review these letters and discuss as a group to determine what are the strengths and weaknesses of each letter. Ultimately you will decide as a group which cover letter is most effective.

There are two sets of cover letters. In the first set, assume you are a member of the search committee at OMG University looking to hire an Assistant/Associate Professor in plant pathology. The position is 50% research, 40% extension, and 10% teaching with a research program studying pineapple disease in Narnia, please see full job advertisement below. This is the academia packet.

In the second set, assume you are a member of the hiring team and are evaluating cover letters for the Plant Pathologist, Research Scientist position at BetterVeg. The position seeks an individual with experience developing disease bioassays to conduct phenotypic testing in pineapples, please see full job advertisement below. This is the industry packet.

Note: based on time your instructor may choose to have you only work on one set in your group or you may work on one set and then the next.

Discussion Questions

- **Which cover letter has an appropriate header?**

- **Is the greeting/salutation appropriate in the cover letters?**

- **Which cover letter has a strong opening paragraph? Why?**

- **Which cover letter body stands out? Why?**

- **Does the applicant address any gaps in their CV effectively?**

- **Does the applicant show enthusiasm for the position?**

- **What stands out about the closing?**

- **Formatting?**

- **Which letter gets the interview?**

Set #1: Academic Job Advertisement

Assistant/Associate Professor of Plant Pathology

Job Category:
Faculty

Position Type:
Full Time

Required Education:
XyZ Degree

WORK LOCATION: ABC Research Station, OMG University

POSITION DESCRIPTION: This is a full-time 12-month, tenure-track position with a 50% research, 40% extension, and 10% teaching appointment. The primary focus of the position is pineapple disease management in Narnia.

The successful candidate will be expected to develop a research program focused on pineapple disease management at the ABC Research Station, as well as assist in research on other tropical crops. Included in these efforts, he/she will be expected to work collaboratively with faculty from the OMG University's Plant Pathology Department in addressing industry needs and coordinating pineapple variety development. The candidate will be expected to fully participate in the Department of Plant Pathology graduate program and serve as a major advisor and on advisory committees for Ph.D. and M.S. students. Successful candidate will acquire funding to support these research activities. Results of research should be published in peer-reviewed journals and other scientific/technical publications.

Extension activities will include, but not be limited to, the development of educational materials and programming (including distance learning and social media) that focus on practical solutions to pineapple disease problems for a broad range of commercial stakeholders. The candidate must interact with commodity and agricultural industry partners to identify, develop, and implement critical research projects. These include growers, county extension agents, and industry partners. Collaboration with research and extension faculty within the empire of Narnia, as well as with national experts on issues of shared interest and importance will be encouraged as well as formal participation in multi-disciplinary, regional, or national initiatives. The candidate will work closely with other Extension and research multi-disciplinary teams and allied agencies such as the Narnia State Department of Agriculture and the Pineapple Commodity Board to develop team approaches to address disease issues of concern for pineapple in Narnia. Extension and outreach responsibilities will also include north and south Narnia and will focus on pineapple disease management. Technology transfer and outreach to stakeholders must be accomplished through web-based content, social media, agricultural trade magazines and traditional extension methods (newsletters, blogs, oral delivery, and formal extension publications).
Teaching responsibility will include development and teaching of at least one course per calendar year (10% effort). This graduate course will be designed to provide information on plant pathogens, their biology and their impact in society.

QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS: Qualified candidates must have a XyZ degree in plant pathology or closely related discipline from an accredited college or university. Applied, field experience working with fungal pathogens in the areas of disease epidemiology, management, or related research areas are preferred. The applicant must demonstrate effective oral and written communication skills. Knowledge of public relations and media experience are highly desirable characteristics. Candidate should demonstrate the ability to work with diverse clientele, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, or veteran status.

Applications should include the following: (1) a letter of application stating interest in this position and qualifications, (2) a curriculum vita, (3) a personal statement of Extension and research interests, (4) a teaching philosophy or teaching portfolio; (4) official university transcripts noting date of the XyZ degree, and (5) letters from four references. Review of applications will begin on 01/01/2022, and the position will remain open until a suitable candidate accepts the position.

Set #1: Academic Cover Letter #1

UNIVERSITY
OF SOMEWHERE
Department of Plant Pathology
2114 Botrytis Lane
Rhizoctonia, MO 0001

January 21, 2024

Search Committee
OMG University
2 Pineapple Street
Narnia, USA 00002

Dear Search Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to apply for the Assistant/Associate Professor of Plant Pathology position advertised in Phytopathology News. Attached you will find all the required documents as requested in the advertisement.

Both my MS and PhD degrees are in plant pathology, with a focus on disease management. My PhD dissertation research centered on the identification and management of sources of pathogen inoculum. My Ph.D. advisor's philosophy is that each PhD student needs to develop project management skills, so I have managed the budget for my project and directed a team of undergraduate and MS-level students. My team has filed a provisional patent for a LAMP-based assay, a new, effective method for pathogen detection. This experience with intellectual property development and technology transfer under the guidance of my advisor has given me experience beyond that of most new Ph.D. graduates. I look forward to applying my skills in pathogen detection, technology development and integrated pest management to serve grower, government, and industry stakeholders in Narnia. I will create innovative research programming and develop new technologies that focus on plant health in pineapple. I will advocate for the pineapple industry particularly for control of the new core rot disease that was recently described in Narnia, and I can directly apply my skills to develop methods for detection and management. Although the policies of the University of Somewhere do not allow graduate students to apply for research funding, I have assisted my advisor in several proposals for funding by industry, USDA, and NSF and understand the attention to detail that must accompany successful proposals. I will seek out available opportunities for training e.g., serving on grant review panels and attending grant writing workshops.

Because I grew up on a small farm that relied heavily on information generated by extension professionals, I am committed to serving the pineapple growers in the Empire of Narnia if offered this position. As I explained in my Research and Extension Statements, I will base at least a portion of my research creating new initiatives in areas that the growers identify, thus developing critical information needs for the industry. To convey my research and that of other professionals, I will create new extension materials for growers, county agents, government, and industry partners. I will use all aspects of social and electronic media, as well as traditional publications to ensure that all stakeholders benefit

UNIVERSITY
OF SOMEWHERE
Department of Plant Pathology
2114 Botrytis Lane
Rhizoctonia, MO 0001

from my research programming. I have experience in communicating difficult concepts to growers. After a field day presentation, there has been support from the cucumber growers for my LAMP procedure. I also have experience planning and executing controlled environment and field studies; in my MS program I developed an integrated pest management program that effectively suppressed fungicide-resistant pathogen strains. This research has resulted in two peer-reviewed publications and was presented at multiple conferences, including several that were centered on growers.

My teaching will serve both the students of OMG and the pineapple industry. I have experience in the classroom teaching the undergraduate plant pathology both as a TA and as a guest lecturer. As a TA, I managed the course electronic delivery site (Canvas) and delivered content to students located at the main campus as well as those located at research stations. Being located at a research station will provide unique opportunities for my teaching options. Because I will have ready access to the pineapple growers and to research trials, I can use real world examples when teaching about disease and pineapple production. I will use my experience to develop courses that can be taught both in-person and via video link so I can share this expertise not only with students at ABC but all students at OMG. I will also use the resources provided by OMG Office of Technology to develop online courses for traditional students, and when appropriate, I will develop courses that will serve growers, agents, and industry professionals.

I look forward to building my own academic programming. I believe that successfully mentoring graduate students is key to building a successful research and extension program. During my Ph.D. I sought out opportunities for training in mentoring. The success of my lab team is a source of great pride and accomplishment for me, and I will use those experiences as I build my own programs. I have developed working relationships with professionals at other universities and in industry during my service activities at The American Phytopathological Society. The Training in the Research Ethics and Scholarship program, has provided an excellent road map for the establishment of effective collaborations and the responsibilities in collaborative research.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to apply for this position. Being at OMG University will provide me opportunity for cross-disciplinary collaboration with established researchers in pineapple production and health. I look forward to working with the students of OMG and being part of the team that makes the pineapple industry in the empire of Narnia the standard for plant health protection.

Sincerely,

Laccaria Montana, Ph.D. candidate
555-358-5101
lMontana@somewhere.edu

Set #1: Academic Cover Letter #2

UNIVERSITY
OF SOMEWHERE
Department of Plant Pathology
2114 Botrytis Lane
Rhizoctonia, MO 0001

January 21, 2024

Search Committee
OMG University
2 Pineapple Street
Narnia, USA 00002

Dear Sirs:

Thank you for the opportunity to apply for the Assistant/Associate Professor of Plant Pathology position advertised in Phytopathology News. Attached you will find all the required documents as requested in the advertisement.

Both my MS and PhD degrees are in plant pathology, with a focus on disease management. My PhD dissertation research centered on the identification and management of sources of pathogen inoculum. Based on my research, we have filed for a provisional patent for the development of LAMP technique for pathogen diagnosis. I look forward to applying my skills in pathogen detection, technology development and integrated pest management to serve grower, government, and industry stakeholders in Narnia.

I will base at least a portion of my research creating new initiatives that in areas that the growers identify, thus developing critical information needs for the industry. I have an excellent record of communications with growers and am an avid social media science poster.

Teaching will only be a small part of my program at OMG so I will devote time the allotted time to developing then teaching a new course on the Fundamentals of Plant Pathology. I look forward to building my own academic programming and mentoring graduate students. I have experience mentoring a small lab team of undergraduates and MS-level students.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to apply for this position. At OMG University, I will have opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaboration in with established researchers in pineapple production and health. I look forward to being part of the team that makes the pineapple industry in the empire of Narnia the standard for plant health protection.

Sincerely,

Laccaria Montana, Ph.D. candidate
555-358-5101
lMontana@somewhere.edu

Set #2: Industry Job Description

BetterVeg
Plant Pathologist, Research Scientist

The primary focus of the role is to lead or support development of disease bioassays or disease technologies to conduct phenotypic testing. The incumbent will collaborate closely with other Pathology Team members and various partners across Research & Development, Product Supply, and Commercial to ensure we deliver on disease testing Key Performance Indicators and disease trait projects.

• Manage complex operations in diverse facilities (growth rooms, laboratories, greenhouses) and provide direction to personnel (research specialists and contractors) to deliver on disease testing commitments and disease trait projects
• Deliver high-quality testing results in a timely manner
• Lead or support the development of new disease assays or improvement of existing disease assays and operational processes
• Champion digital tools and IT workflows for data entry, data storage and data return
• Provide training and coaching to research specialists or temporary personnel
• Champion phytosanitation procedures and guidelines to drive adoption at the site
• Maintain safe work environment by following safety guidelines

Critical success factors & key challenges
• Strong organizational skills to complete diverse trait projects.
• Successful interaction with peers and technical management.

Knowledge, experience & capabilities
Critical knowledge
• XYZ degree in plant pathology (preferred), agriculture, or related field with training and experience in applied research preferred.
• Techniques for establishing disease on target crops and methods to evaluate disease progress.
• Technical and market knowledge of pineapples (preferred), vegetable crops, cereals, and/or rice management products.
• Acquiring and maintaining laboratory cultures of biological organisms, primarily pathogens.

Critical experience
• Experience conducting greenhouse, laboratory, and field trials to evaluate disease technologies and related experimental techniques.
• Experience working with pineapples preferred.
• Critical technical, professional and personal capabilities
• Excellent analytical and people skills. Skilled in interacting and communicating with team members. Excellent oral and written communication
• Self-motivated, highly organized, flexible and adaptive.

Additional information
• Travel Requirements depending on time of year range from 5-15%. Work with collaborators in Narnia, participate in national and regional meetings, participate on specific teams

Set #2: Industry Cover Letter #1

Laccaria Montana
2114 Botrytis Lane
Rhizoctonia, Missouri 00001
555-358-5101
Lmontana@xyz.com

November 16, 2023

Dr. Colle Totrichum
BetterVeg
2 Pineapple Street
Narnia, USA 00002

Dear Dr. Colle Totrichum,

I am writing this letter to apply for the position of Pathology Research Scientist (Job #: 000) with BetterVeg. For the past seven years, I have been performing research in vegetable pathology and have gained the skills necessary to succeed in this fast-paced and dynamic industry role. My passion for delivering sustainable disease management solutions through innovative research is a great match for both this position and the overall mission of BetterVeg.

Both my MS and PhD degrees are in the field of plant pathology, with a focus on vegetable disease management. For my MS research, I worked closely with my academic advisors and local grower groups to identify novel fungicide-resistant strains of a tomato leaf spot pathogen and develop a molecular method to rapidly identify the resistant strains. Subsequently, I designed and implemented controlled environment and field studies to develop an integrated pest management program that would effectively suppress the fungicide-resistant pathogen strains.

My PhD dissertation research focused on addressing issues faced by local farmers in identifying and managing initial sources of inoculum for cucumber diseases. I was quickly able to familiarize myself with cucumber growing practices and pathogens and can use those same skills to learn about pineapple. I led a multi-disciplinary team that enabled us to develop new, effective methods for pathogen detection and to provide growers with valuable information on pathogen inoculum sources. In addition to filing for a provisional patent for a LAMP-based assay that we developed, I gained invaluable experience in leadership and people management.

The experiences described above, as well as the various additional accomplishments outlined in my attached resume make me an excellent candidate for the position of Pathology Research Scientist with BetterVeg. I appreciate your taking the time to review my application materials and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Laccaria Montana, PhD

Set #2: Industry Cover Letter #2

Laccaria Montana
2114 Botrytis Lane
Rhizoctonia, Missouri 00001
555-358-5101
Gambler4life@xyz.com

November 16, 2023

BetterVeg
2 Pineapple Street
Narnia, USA 00002

To Whomever This May Concern:

I am writing this letter to apply for the position of Pathology Research Scientist. I have significant experience in vegetable pathology and have gained the skills necessary to succeed in this fast-paced and dynamic industry role. I think that my research and extracurricular experiences make me a great fit for this position.

Both my MS and PhD degrees are in the field of plant pathology, with a focus on vegetable disease management. For my MS research, I conducted research that was both basic and applied in nature. Initially, I used molecular techniques to discover novel fungicide-resistant strains of a tomato leaf spot pathogen and develop a PCR-based method to rapidly identify the resistant strains. I also performed controlled environment and field studies to develop an integrated pest management program that would effectively suppress the fungicide-resistant pathogen strains. This research has resulted in two peer-reviewed publications and was presented at multiple conferences.

My PhD dissertation research focused on identifying and managing initial sources of inoculum for cucumber diseases. As a result of this research, I developed a new, effective method for pathogen detection. In particular, our lab team has filed a provisional patent for a LAMP-based assay that was developed as part of my dissertation research. I worked well with the team and even managed the project on my own.

I believe my qualifications make me an excellent candidate for the position of Pathology Research Scientist with BetterVeg. I appreciate your taking the time to review my application materials and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Laccaria Montana, PhD

Set #2: Industry Cover Letter #3

Laccaria Montana
2114 Botrytis Lane
Rhizoctonia, Missouri 00001
555-358-5101
Gambler4life@xyz.com

November 16, 2023

Dear Sir:

I am writing to apply for this position. I have significant experience in vegetable pathology. I think that my research and extracurricular experiences make me a great fit for this position.

Both my MS and PhD degrees are in the field of plant pathology, with a focus on vegetable disease management. For my MS research, I conducted research that was both basic and applied in nature. I used molecular techniques to discover fungicide-resistant strains of a tomato leaf spot pathogen. I then developed a PCR-based method to rapidly identify the resistant strains. I also conducted controlled environment and field studies. This research has resulted in publications.

My PhD dissertation research focused on identifying and managing inoculum for cucumber diseases. I was first to work in this ara. The lab has filed a patent for the assay that was developed as part of my dissertation research. I enjoyed being a part of the team and people liked me leading them on this project.

I believe my qualifications make me a good candidate for the position of Pathology Research Scientist with Agricultural Crop Protection LLC. If hired by BetterVeg, I hope to make $120,000 per year with paid holidays. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Laccaria Montana, PhD

Laccaria Montana
2114 Botrytis Ln
Rhizoctonia, Missouri 00001
555-358-5101
lMontana@gmail.com

SUMMARY

An early career vegetable pathologist with the desire to obtain a professional position relevant to my interests in translational research on vegetable disease epidemiology and management. I am a motivated and innovative individual, eager to apply my skills in an industry position.

EDUCATION

Ph.D., University of Somewhere **February 2014**
Plant Pathology
M.S., University of Nowhere **August 2010**
Botany and Plant Pathology
B.S., University of Nowhere **May 2008**
Biology
Summa cum laude

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Graduate Research Assistant **August 2010-February 2014**
University of Somewhere
New insights on epidemiology and primary inoculum sources for fungal pathogens of cucumber.

- Conducted research on cucumber pathogen epidemiology and detection
- Designed and analyzed basic and applied research projects
- Developed a LAMP assay that is currently being developed into a commercial product for grower and regulatory professional use
- Presented and communicated research results in peer-reviewed journals, extension publications, and at industry events
- Obtained skills in experimental design, data management, and statistical analysis
- Held various leadership positions within department student government and scientific societies

Graduate Research Assistant **May 2008-August 2010**
University of Nowhere
Identification of QoI-resistant tomato leaf spot pathogen isolates and assessment of alternate disease management processes.

- Used molecular and laboratory techniques to identify fungicide resistant pathogen isolates
- Conducted field trials to assess alternate disease management strategies
- Presented research to academic and grower audiences
- Published results in peer-reviewed journals

Disease Diagnosis Laboratory Intern **Summer 2011, 2012**
Vegetable Disease Diagnosis
University of Somewhere
- Identified pathogens affecting diseased vegetable samples
- Prepared reports and communicated directly with growers

LEADERSHIP

- **Member, APS Early Career Member Committee** (August 2013-Present)
- **Participant, APS Leadership Institute Training** (August 2013, August 2014)
- **Member, APS Graduate Student Committee** (August 2011-May 2014)
- **Student Rep, Univ. of Somewhere Dept. of Plant Pathology Annual Retreat** (July 2013)
- **Fellow, Research Ethics and Scholarship Program** (September 2012-May 2013)
    - Led within fellowship group and departmental events on research ethics
    - Ethics research efforts focused on mentoring, genetically modified crops, and industry/academia collaborations
- **Chair, University of Nowhere Plant Pathology Graduate Colloquium** (August 2012-May 2013)
    - Elected by vote of colloquium members
- **Member, University of Nowhere Plant Pathology Graduate Colloquium** (May 2011-May 2013)
    - Elected by vote of department graduate students
    - Chair of Student and Post Docs Seminar Committee
    - Student representative to departmental seminar and qualifying exam committees

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

Montana L., Smith, J., Doe, L., and Tinia, S. 201X. Development of a LAMP assay for rapid detection of fungal pathogens of cucumber from soil, seed, and plant debris. *In preparation.*
Montana L., Smith, J., Doe, L., and Tinia, S. 2014. Detection of fungal pathogens of cucumber in overwintering debris and commercial seed. Plant Dis. 32: 100-106.
Montana, L., Jones, B., and Totrichum, C. 2013. Identification of novel QoI-resistant strains of the tomato leaf spot pathogen. Plant Dis. 31: 79-85.
Montana, L., Jones, B., and Totrichum, C. 2012. Novel spray programs provide effective management of QoI-resistant tomato leaf spot pathogen populations. Plant Dis. 30: 345-354.

EXTENSION AND OUTREACH EXPERIENCE

Montana, L. and S. Tinia. 2013. A LAMP assay for expedited cucumber pathogen detection. Nowhere Vegetable Field Day Reports. College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, University of Nowhere. (Presentation and report)
Montana, L. and S. Tinia. 2012. Overwintering of fungal pathogens of cucumber. Green Shoots: Newsletter of the Nowhere Vegetable Growers Association. (Presentation and report)

Montana, L. and C. Totrichum. 2011. Actigard for early season suppression of tomato leaf spot disease. Nowhere Vegetable Field Day Reports. College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, University of Nowhere. (Presentation and report)
Montana, L. 2011. Meet the University of Nowhere Vegetable Program New Graduate Student: Reluctant Newcomer, Turned Enthusiast. Nowhere Vegetable News. Vol. XXV. No. 1. Nowhere Vegetable Association. (Article)

ABSTRACTS

Montana, L., S. Tinia. New insights on the epidemiology of fungal pathogens of cucumber. ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Annual Meetings. Long Beach, California. November 2014. (Poster)
Montana, L., S. Tinia. A LAMP assay for raid detection of fungal pathogens of cucumber. APS-CPS Joint Meeting, Minneapolis, MN. August 2014. Phytopathology (Suppl. 3) S3.1 (Poster)
Montana, L. and S. Tinia. Culture-based and molecular detection of fungal pathogens in commercial cucumber seed. ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Annual Meetings. Tampa, Florida. November 2013. (Oral)
Montana, L. and C. Totrichum. Integrated disease management of tomato leaf spot. Austin, Texas. August 2013. Phytopathology 103(Suppl. 2):S2.121. (Poster)

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Vegetable Association Award for Best Oral Presentation (November 2013)
- APS Leadership Institute Council Fellow (August 2013)
- APS Foundation Mono Linia Student Travel Award Recipient (August 2013)
- Integrating Research Ethics and Scholarship Fellow (September 2012-May 2013)
- Somewhere Vegetable Research Fellowship Awardee (December 2011)
- APS Foundation Vegetable Pathology Student Travel Award Recipient (August 2011)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Teaching Assistant, Introduction to Plant Pathology (Fall Semester 2012, 2013)
University of Nowhere-Madison, Department of Plant Pathology

- Led a once weekly three-hour laboratory section; assisted in a second
- Participated in preparation and set-up of lab materials
- Aided in development of lab and lecture materials

Guest Lecturer, Introduction to Plant Pathology (November 2013)
University of Nowhere, Department of Plant Pathology

- Designed and delivered three 50-minute lectures on pathogenesis
- Assisted in development of exam questions related to lecture subject material
- Incorporated active learning exercises into lecture to reinforce challenging concepts

University of Somewhere Peer Tutor Program (2008-2010)

- Prepared and led tutor sessions for small groups of students
- Subjects tutored include: Anatomy and Physiology, Introduction to Biology, Introduction to Cellular and Molecular Biology, and Microeconomics

MENTORING EXPERIENCE

Formal Training

- 'Improving Cultural Competency in Your Research Mentoring' Workshop (July 2013)
- 'Entering Mentoring-Research Mentor Training' Course (one-credit hour) in research mentoring; completion provides qualification to teach research mentor training (June 2013-July 2013)

Students Mentored

- One junior graduate student at University of Somewhere
- Three undergraduate research assistants at University of Somewhere
- One summer undergraduate research experience intern at University of Somewhere
- Two undergraduate research assistants at University of Nowhere

PROFESSIONAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

- American Phytopathological Society (2010-Present)
- American Vegetable Growers Society (2011-Present)
- American Association for Advancement of the Sciences (2008-Present)

SERVICE

- Volunteer, APS Foundation Booth at APS Annual Meeting in Austin, Texas (August 2013)
- Volunteer, APS Office of Public Relations and Outreach at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research in La Crosse, Somewhere (April 2013)
- Session Moderator, APS Annual Meeting in Providence, Rhode Island (August 2012)
- Panelist, "Discovering Careers in Life Sciences" panel sponsored by the Somewhere Institutes for Discovery to provide undergraduate students with information about graduate school and life sciences research (March 2012)
- Reviewer, APS Foundation Student Travel Award applications (March 2012)
- Volunteer, University of Nowhere Plant Disease Diagnostic Clinic at the Nowhere Garden Expo (February 2012)
- Workshop facilitator, guide, and panel member, University of Nowhere Expanding Your Horizons annual conference to increase the interest of middle school girls in STEM fields (March 2006, 2008, and 2009)

Activity #2: Addressing a gap in your cover letter (optional)

Imagine that you are applying for the position Assistant Professor of Plant Pathology at OMG University to focus on pineapple diseases in Narnia. The position is 50% research, 40% extension, and 10% teaching. See page 8 for full position description. Despite your current expertise (or lack thereof), consider your skill set and experiences for this position. What might you write in your cover letter? Some key words and phrases are highlighted to help guide your thought processes, but feel free to identify others.

How might you address "gaps" in the following areas:

• Experience working with pineapples and/or other tropical crops
(years of plant pathology experience, diversity of experiences, adaptability, general pathology training)

• Familiarity with applied/field research
(diverse methods, troubleshooting, project purpose, basic research informs applied)

• Collaborations and team-based programs
(volunteerism, shared lab experiences, assisting other programs)

• Extension and outreach
(public speaking, volunteerism, social projects/programs, student activities, other jobs)

• Leadership and project management
(mentoring, social organizations, events/workshops, volunteerism, time management)

• Mentoring and student advising
(lab mentoring, undergraduates, social projects/programs, student activities)

• Teaching
(innovative/novel ideas, guest lecturing, online platform development)

• Grants and budgeting
(ordering, tracking expenses, student grants, organizations/student funding)

*Cover letter is not entirely about addressing gaps, and not every gap should be addressed in the cover letter.

Additional Resources

Websites

- https://www.science.org/content/article/writing-winning-cover-letter
- https://www.biospace.com/article/how-to-write-the-best-cover-letter-for-a-research-scientist-job-/
- https://capd.mit.edu/resources/how-to-write-an-effective-cover-letter/

Books

- The Scientist's Guide to Writing: How to Write More Easily and Effectively throughout Your Scientific Career by Stephen Heard
- Scientific Writing and Communication 5th Edition by Angie Hoffman
- https://guides.library.illinois.edu/c.php?g=347404&p=2343380

Other resource

- Your university career center and other associated resources
- Your mentors, committee members, colleagues
- Private career coach for special circumstances
- Science of People

Example ChatGPT Letter

Used CV from Activity 1 as the input.

[Your Name]
[Your Address]
[City, State, Zip Code]
[Your Email Address]
[Your Phone Number] [Date]

[Employer's Name]
[Company Name]
[Company Address]
[City, State, Zip Code]
Dear Hiring Manager,

I am writing to express my strong interest in the [Position Title] position within your esteemed company, as advertised. With a Ph.D. in Plant Pathology and a robust background in translational research on vegetable disease epidemiology and management, I am excited about the prospect of contributing my skills and expertise to your team.

My academic journey at the University of Somewhere equipped me with a comprehensive understanding of plant pathology, and my research experiences have been dedicated to unraveling novel insights into the epidemiology and management of fungal pathogens affecting vegetables. My doctoral work focused on cucumber pathogen epidemiology, where I successfully developed a LAMP assay that is currently in the process of becoming a commercial product for grower and regulatory professional use. This accomplishment highlights my ability to translate research findings into practical applications, a skill I am eager to bring to an industry setting.

I possess a strong foundation in experimental design, data management, and statistical analysis, as evidenced by my research publications in peer-reviewed journals. I am proud of my contribution to the field, including the detection of fungal pathogens in overwintering debris and commercial seed, and the identification of novel QoI-resistant strains of the tomato leaf spot pathogen. My commitment to advancing knowledge in my field is further demonstrated by my involvement in various leadership roles within department student government and scientific societies.

Beyond my research endeavors, I have actively participated in extension and outreach activities, ensuring that my findings reach and benefit the wider community. I have presented my work at industry events, contributed to newsletters, and engaged directly with growers through a Disease Diagnosis Laboratory Internship. These experiences have honed my ability to communicate complex scientific concepts to diverse audiences.

My commitment to leadership and service is evident through my involvement in professional societies and committees, including the APS Early Career Member Committee and APS Leadership Institute Training. These experiences have enhanced my organizational and collaborative skills, making me well-suited for a dynamic industry setting.

Enclosed is my curriculum vitae for your perusal, providing a detailed overview of my academic and professional achievements. I am confident that my blend of academic excellence, research acumen, and leadership skills make me an ideal candidate for the [Position Title] position at [Company Name].

I am eager to contribute to your company's success and would welcome the opportunity to further discuss how my skills align with your needs. Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to the possibility of an interview.

Sincerely,
Laccaria Montana