



Statement of Interest or Cover Letter for Potential Advisers

Applying to research-based graduate programs requires that you contact specific individuals who may act as an adviser. From your initial contact with the individual, you must establish your professionalism and credibility. A cover letter or statement of interest attached to an email serves to introduce you and give the recipient a solid understanding of your preparation and abilities. The statement should be a succinct summary of your purpose, motivation, relevant experiences, and research interests. Strive to be concise; a page to a page and half is appropriate, but no more than two pages. Include paragraphs that address each of the following topics:

Your Purpose

In your first paragraph you want to establish who you are and why you are writing. Introduce yourself, and then grab the reader with the “why”.

- Give your name, and pertinent academic details (e.g. “I am a student at California State University Monterey Bay majoring in X”).
- Explicitly state what you want (e.g. “I am writing to ask if you will accept graduate students in the coming year”).
- Briefly foreshadow your motivation, credibility, and ideas for research. You will follow with the details, so keep this to a short 2-3 sentence summary that bridges to the rest of your statement.

Your Motivation

Next, establish why you are seeking graduate opportunities with this individual or degree program. The information in this section should be tailored to your reasons for contacting this individual, it is *NOT* an opportunity to ramble about your life story or how you are still figuring out what you want to do.

- What motivates you to want to work with this researcher?
- What do you want to get out of this experience?
- What are your general goals and how will this help you to attain them?

Your Credibility

Talk about what you bring to the table, and explain how you are prepared to conduct research. This can also include professional connections and support that you have that validates your credibility.

- What previous experiences have prepared you to successfully complete the program or research you propose to conduct?
- What skills or new perspectives do you possess that will benefit the researcher or program?
- Name faculty or researchers with whom you have working experience that know the recipient personally (although be careful – only include names if you are OK with the recipient giving the people you name a call to inquire about you).
- Mention any additional support (e.g. fellowships) that you have been awarded or that you will be applying to.

Your Interests and Ideas

After you have established your motivation and credibility, talk about the specifics of what you want to do and what you expect.

- Describe your research interests as specifically as possible. Focus on your interests as they relate to the individual or program to which you are writing.
- If you have specific research ideas, propose your research question(s) and how you hope to accomplish them.
- Convince the reader that your interests or proposed project fit well with their overall research.
- Be specific and provide evidence of due diligence. Through your writing it must be obvious that you are intimately familiar with your discipline and the reader's work.
- Lay out what role you envision the recipient playing in your graduate experience, and explain how your research would add value to their work.

Closing

Your final paragraph should be a summation of everything you have proposed and a call to action.

- Provide a final message that connects your motivation, credibility, and interests. This needs to be succinct and strongly messaged.
- Include a call to action. Request an interview or opportunity to speak with them over the phone. Make it clear that you expect a response.
- Provide contact information so that they may respond to your request.