

Example cover
letter w/
corresponding
essay 5

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November 22, 2007

Robert W. Goldberg, Ph.D., ABPP
Director of Psychology Training GMH (B)
Brecksville Unit, Building 5
Louis Stokes Cleveland DVAMC
10000 Brecksville Road
Brecksville, Ohio 44141

Dear Dr. Goldberg,

Enclosed please find my application for the Predoctoral Internship Program at the Louis Stokes Cleveland DVA Medical Center Psychology Internship Program. As requested, I have included a copy of the APPIC application forms, copies of my undergraduate and graduate school transcripts, LSCDVAMC Questionnaire, OF-612 form and the SF306 declaration form. Also included are a work sample, curriculum vitae, and two letters of recommendation from psychologists who have supervised my clinical work. A third letter will be arriving separately from Dr. Karen Scheel, my past academic advisor. I believe the recommendations will illustrate my clinical as well as academic strengths.

I have been lucky to have the opportunity to work in several community mental health agencies as well as in the prison setting. My experiences in these settings have solidified my interest in working with individuals who are experiencing severe mental health issues. I am extremely interested in the opportunities available at your site to complete therapy and assessments with this population because working with these individuals is my main area of interest and I hope, the focus of my future clinical work.

I am very excited about the opportunities available at your site and I believe that my skills and interests match well with what your site has to offer. I also believe I would be able to contribute to the mission at the Cleveland DVA Medical Center. I look forward to talking to you and your colleagues, at your convenience, to discuss my application as well as your programs training opportunities.

Should you have any questions about my application materials, I can be reached at home at 330-424-1535, on my cell phone at 330-853-2571, or by email at jch33@uakron.edu. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jill Hendrickson

I believe the training philosophy of, and the clients served by, the Louis Stokes Cleveland DVA Medical Center predoctoral internship program is a match with my clinical interests and will help me meet my training goals for internship. My main goals for internship are to resume my work with individuals who are experiencing severe mental health concerns and further develop my clinical skills in the completion of assessments and counseling. I believe that the clinical opportunities, training, and supervision offered at your site will help me meet these goals. I am excited by the opportunities your site offers and the opportunity for growth as a scientist-practitioner.

Your internship site offers specific training and supervision opportunities that are consistent with my clinical interests and goals. The opportunity to complete rotations which would include completing individual counseling, assessment and group work with individuals who are experiencing significant mental health issues such as psychotic disorders, mood disorders, PTSD and personality disorders is extremely exciting to me. During my previous experience working in community mental health, I have had the privilege to work with many individuals who were dealing with these and other disorders. These experiences played a significant part in my decision to return to school to complete doctoral training. I believed that I needed more clinical and research training to ensure my clients received the treatment they deserved. Through this training I believe I am more able to help my clients reach their goals and recover from the problems they are experiencing.

I believe the clinical and educational experiences I have gained to this point in my training will allow me to contribute to the vital work you complete with the veterans you serve. I have been fortunate to gain diverse experiences such as: group and individual counseling, crisis counseling and suicide screenings, intake assessments, and psychological assessments in a variety of environments. I have learned how to incorporate the research literature into my work as well as gained experience and education in personality, projective, intelligence and achievement testing. I believe these experiences have helped me develop a foundation of skills that will benefit your clients. Although my experiences have allowed me to develop a foundation, I know I still have much to learn. I believe your site can help me in this endeavor and I am eager to further develop my skills.

Another significant area of fit is your site's mission to focus on the recovery of veterans. I have tried in my work to focus on my clients' strengths and help them meet all goals they set for themselves. I believe your site's mission, and my approach to counseling is a unique fit. I am excited about the opportunities your site has to offer in terms of assessment and counseling experiences and I believe my interests and skills are a fit with these opportunities. I look forward to the opportunities for growth your site holds for me in my development as a clinician and scientist-practitioner.

October 23, 2007

Dr. Karen Taylor
Director of Training
Counseling and Consultation Service
The Ohio State University
4th Floor – Younkin Success Center
1640 Neil Ave.
Columbus, Ohio 43201-2333

Example cover letter

w/ corresponding
essay 5

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Dear Dr. Taylor,

Enclosed please find my application for the Predoctoral Internship Program at the Counseling and Consultation Service. As requested, I have included a copy of the APPIC application form, current curriculum vitae, graduate school transcripts, and two letters of reference. A third letter will be arriving separately from Dr. Karen Scheel, my past academic advisor.

Your internship program, based on my own experience, is an excellent training site that matches my goals and interests. My goals for the future include conducting clinical work as well as the opportunity to teach and supervise developing counselors. Your internship program fits with my interests and needs. The diversity of the students at the University as well as the diverse staff appeal to my desire to continue my development as a multiculturally competent counselor and will afford me opportunities to work with a diverse group of individuals.

I am very excited about your internship and I believe that my skills and interests match well with what your site has to offer. I also believe I would be able to contribute to the mission at the Counseling and Consultation Service to provide services to the students at the university.

I look forward to talking to you and you colleagues, at you convenience, to discuss my application as well as your programs training opportunities.

Should you have any questions about my application materials, I can be reached at home at 330-424-1535, on my cell phone at 330-853-2571, or by email at jch33@uakron.edu. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jill Hendrickson

My long term career goals have always included finding a work environment that offers me the opportunity to conduct clinical work, teach, supervise developing clinicians and conduct assessments. Prior to starting my graduate studies I never would have believed that a college counseling center would fit my goals, and then I completed my first practicum experience in a college counseling center. I found the environment to be stimulating to work in as well as fun. I love the college campus environment and working with the students. I learned that this environment affords me the opportunity to conduct work in my areas of interest. These reasons are why I am seeking a pre-doctoral internship at The Counseling and Consultation Service.

The philosophy of training at The Counseling and Consultation Service is very appealing to me as a developing Counseling Psychologist. The "learning by doing" philosophy of your site fits well with my learning style. I am excited about the possibility to learn during my internship and expand the skill base I have acquired to date. The myriad of opportunities for skill development are truly exciting. I look forward to the opportunity to conduct crisis intervention, group counseling and expand my skills as a presenter through outreach presentations. Another aspect of the training at your site which appeals to me is the opportunity to engage in clinical supervision with practicum students. I am very interested in developing my skills in this area as I have found that client case conceptualization and working with others to aid in their work with clients is one of my passions and a skill that I would like to develop further. I have been fortunate to gain experience in these areas, however, the training and supervision offered at your site will undoubtedly further my development in these areas. Another aspect of your site that appeals to me is the diversity of the students. The diversity of the students at the University will allow me to continue my work developing my skills as a multiculturally competent counselor as will the supervision by your diverse staff.

I believe that my experiences to date have provided me with a foundation of skills in diagnosis, counseling, assessment, and group counseling. I also have been fortunate to gain experience in crisis intervention and the supervision of developing counselors. I believe my skills will allow me to be an active contributor to your internship program. However, although I have been fortunate to gain a wide range of experiences it is important to me to continue to develop my skills as a scientist-practitioner. I believe I will be able to accomplish my goals with an internship at The Counseling and Consultation Center. I am attracted to your site because I believe it fits my interests and career goals. I also believe that the skills I have acquired to this point in my training will allow me to contribute to your site and to the growth and development of the students you serve.

- 1. Please provide an autobiographical statement.** (There is no “correct” format for this question. Answer this question as if someone had asked you, “tell me something about yourself.” It is an opportunity for you to provide the internship site with some information about yourself. It is entirely up to you to decide what information you wish to provide along with the format in which to present it.)

William James once said, “The best use of life is to spend it for something that outlasts life.” This philosophy resonates strongly with me and I strive to create a legacy through my relationships. One of the most influential relationships in my life was with my mother. Although my mother never attended college, she raised three daughters predominantly on her own. She taught me the importance of balancing self-reliance with asking for help, the importance of having an education and the value of strength—being able to get up each day and continue to do the things you need to, even if no one says thank you.

The final lesson that my mother taught me was also one of the best of my life—that a person leaves a legacy through the relationships he or she creates. My mother died three years ago and at her funeral there were so many people that wanted to pay their respects that the church pews were full and some people had to stand in the back. I realized in that moment that although my mother had never achieved what is often culturally referred to as “success,” she left behind a strong legacy in the people that she touched. After losing my mother, I learned the true meaning of living each day to its fullest and what William James meant when he said “something that outlasts life.” I try to follow my mother’s example by forming strong relationships with friends, family, students, clients and colleagues.

Three years ago my sister, who is now 17 years old, came to live with me. Watching her grow from a child to a young adult has taught me patience (after all she is a teenager), but also the healing power of relationships. Taking time to focus on my sister’s development and her needs helped me heal from the isolation I felt after my mother passed away. Taking care of my sister has given me a purpose beyond myself and has constantly reminded me that the important things in life do not come on pieces of paper (like grades and degrees). Although I believe it is important to set goals and work to achieve them, I try not to get overwhelmed with daily stresses and I try to set priorities that reflect leaving a legacy through my relationships.

EXAMPLE

Example Question #1 - Autobiographical Statement

My interest in psychology began in junior high when a close family friend began studying psychology. Hearing of his experiences piqued my interest, so in High School I took a Psychology course and my interest was solidified. I remember being fascinated by the study of psychology, individual development, as well as psychological theories. For my final project I trained a lab rat to solve a maze using behavior modification techniques. I remember how excited I was to conduct an "experiment." My mom, however, was not excited about the rat being in our house. I feel fortunate to have found a field that fascinated me from the start and continues to do so.

In college I knew my major was going to be psychology and, despite some challenges, I have not wavered. Coming from a small town and school, a close family, and a background in which college education was not the norm, I found the transition to a large university to be difficult. However, I persevered. Although my grade point average was not extremely impressive, completing my undergraduate degree is one of my most proud accomplishments. It was after graduation that I set my next goal, to ultimately earn an advanced degree in psychology.

During the years between receiving my undergraduate degree and starting graduate school, I worked with mentally retarded adults. This was a time when I truly experienced psychology at work. I successfully utilized behavior modification techniques, I saw the negative impact of developmental delays and the positive impact of counseling; and I observed the importance of testing and assessment in ensuring that individuals got the help they needed.

I began my graduate studies while still working. Early in my graduate training it became clear that I had found my place. In contrast to my difficult transitioning to undergraduate life, I found myself thriving in the scholarly environment, excelling academically, and being very positively evaluated in my clinical work. When I neared the end of my Masters program, I considered applying immediately to Doctoral programs. I chose instead to work in the field to gain clinical experience. I worked in a community mental health agency for approximately two years and I was fortunate to work with many phenomenal clients. During this time I learned that as much as my masters program had taught me, to give my clients the care and expertise they deserved, I needed and wanted doctoral education and training.

The experiences I have had in my PhD program have been invaluable. I have worked in diverse settings, learned to approach clients and research as a scientist-practitioner, and I am excited to embark on my next learning experience, internship. Although the road to internship has not always been easy, it has been worth it. I look forward to using my experience and education to contribute to the mission of my internship site and, in turn, to benefit from the training and experience that will help me to become the best scientist-practitioner that I can be.

2. Please describe your theoretical orientation and how this influences your approach to case conceptualization and intervention. You may use de-identified case material to illustrate your points if you choose.

I think the best way of describing my theoretical orientation is Humanistic, with consideration to contextual factors. I truly believe that the relationship is the vehicle of change in most therapeutic encounters. I have witnessed from different clients with different presenting issues the power of engaging in a healthy relationship with someone who listens attentively and expresses concern. Although I have seen the power of a well-timed intervention, I do believe that without a trusting alliance little change can occur in most cases. However, the client and therapeutic relationship do not exist within a bubble; therefore I consider how other factors, such as clients' multiple identities (for example, gender, ethnicity, religion) and environmental pressures (for example, discrimination) impact their internal world.

In addition, I prefer to use the general term of "Humanistic" in order to encompass Rogerian, Gestalt, Existential and Emotion-focused theories. Often core presenting issues tend to relate to existential concerns, and display themselves as polarities or conflicts in the clients' minds. I find that focusing on these conflicts and experiencing the emotions that they bring up in a safe and genuine environment often adds insight to clients' lives. Although insight does not always lead to behavioral change, I think it does often lead to developmental growth, albeit sometimes occurring after therapy is over. That is why I often describe therapy as "planting a seed" and hoping that change and development will occur as clients become ready for it.

One case example that comes to mind is an African American client who presented with concerns about his sexual orientation. Although the client clearly articulated that he was gay and he wanted to be open about his sexuality in order to have a relationship, he was petrified to "come out." Although the client reported that he did not feel close to anyone, he expressed that his greatest fear for being genuine about his sexual orientation was that he would lose his acquaintances and be alone. For this client, his existential crisis was a fear of isolation, which the client imagined experiencing whether he revealed his sexual orientation (loss of friends) or didn't (lack of any significant relationship). In addition, there are very real environmental dangers to coming out, particularly within the African American culture. According to my conceptualization, the best interventions involved providing a nonjudgmental and safe environment in which he was able to express his emotions and fear of isolation for the first time, as well as discuss issues of safety and stigma management if he chose to reveal his orientation. For this client, before any behavioral change could occur, he needed to address his internal conflicts and experience a safe trusting relationship with me. It is because of the safety and genuineness of this relationship that internal (more self-acceptance) and external (choosing safe people to "come out" to) change occurred, which is how the relationship acts as the vehicle of change.

Example

3. Please describe your experience and training in work with diverse populations. Your discussion should display explicitly the manner in which multicultural / diversity issues influence your clinical practice and case conceptualization.

I have grown to understand that conceptualizing a client from a multicultural perspective includes understanding which aspects of their identity are most important and valuable to them. I think the term "multicultural" is sometimes only used to describe racial differences between people, but everyone is multicultural. Understanding how a client's identities impact how their social environment reacts to them and how comfortable they feel internally and within their environments is important to understand who they are. And in my opinion, counseling can not occur without understanding someone.

Working with diversity has been an evolving process for me. Initially while growing up I shared the belief that diversity did not matter and everyone should be treated the same; however right before entering college I had an eye opening experience. I was involved in a summer program in which I was the only Caucasian participant. I realized how isolating it can be to look around and not see anyone who looks like you. I also realized the privilege that I have as a Caucasian because before that I did not have to think about how my skin color interacts with the world. As my conceptualization of diversity became more multidimensional, I began talking with clients about what aspects of their identity is important to them and how those identities impact how they think about themselves and the world. For example, I had one client who identified her ethnicity as half Filipino and half Irish/Italian; however the most important identity for her was her religion. Even though this client was apart of a predominantly Caucasian campus, she felt a minority status as a Catholic, not as an Asian American. I believe this is why it is important to discuss various identities with clients and not assume that I know what is important to their identity.

In my experiences some of the best sessions I have had is when my client and I are able to discuss things like our working relationship and what potential stereotypes may exist between us. For example, one of the best alliance building moments was when a Puerto Rican client began talking about the stereotypes he hears of Puerto Ricans and I shared that my expectations were opposite what he has heard. This led to greater understanding between us and in subsequent sessions he was able to speak more explicitly about the sexual abuse he experienced when he was younger and his fears associated with his confusion about his sexual identity. In this example, discussing one piece of his identity (his ethnicity) led the client to trust me enough to discuss other pieces (his sexuality), which he was less comfortable with. For me this is a prime example of why it is important to think of clients as having multiple identities and assessing the importance of each identity to the client. Although I feel I have evolved in understanding diversity, being able to openly discuss multiculturalism with my clients is an area I wish to become more competent in, and is a training goal for me during my internship year.

Example

Example Question # 3 - experience and training w/ diverse populations

During my work experiences in community mental health, college counseling centers and the state prison facility, I have had the opportunity to work with many diverse clients. I have been fortunate to have worked with individuals with severe mental illness, prison inmates, and individuals who are culturally different from me. My clients have included international students, Latino's, African Americans, persons with physical disabilities and LGBT individuals. My graduate coursework, which has included two diversity courses as well as a focus on diversity in all courses, has provided me with a solid foundation of knowledge to use in my development to become culturally competent. To me, being multiculturally competent means being respectful of individual and cultural differences, being aware of my own values and beliefs, learning and respecting client's worldviews, and working to overcome internalized stereotypes. As I continue to incorporate this value system into my clinical work, I also work to incorporate these values in my everyday life.

My educational and clinical experiences have guided and aid my work with diverse individuals in numerous ways. One area of impact is my awareness of the importance of knowing information about diverse groups; however, I must approach each client as an individual. Through relationship building, I must ascertain what is important to my clients and what aspects of their identity are most salient to him or her. For example, I had a client who identified as Muslim who presented for anxiety issues. As our work progressed, he shared that he was struggling with his sexual identity. He spoke of the conflict between his feminine mannerisms and same sex attraction, and his cultural and religious beliefs. He indicated that his religious and cultural beliefs were more important to him than expressing his sexual preferences. Although I wanted to encourage the client to explore his same sex attraction because I do not share his cultural prohibitions and generally believe that being true to one's sexual orientation is of high value, he did not feel this way. As a result our work together was based on his identity as a Muslim and what it meant to him to be a man in his culture. I used my multicultural skills and knowledge to ensure that I understood what aspect of his identity was most salient and important, and we worked to ensure that he was comfortable with his choices. This is an example of how I approach culturally different clients. As much as I can, I bring knowledge of their culture, but I also learn from them what is important to them and do not assume I know best.

Although I have been fortunate to work with diverse individuals, I know that becoming multiculturally competent is a life long process. I look forward to continuing my education in this area. I feel I have a strong foundation of skills and knowledge and I plan to continue to develop my skills as a multiculturally competent counselor during internship and in my future work as a counseling psychologist.

4. Please describe your research experience and interests.

I have had a variety of research interests during my time in graduate school. Within the last two years, I became interested in college student mental health, particularly looking at the ethical and legal issues pertaining to faculty and college counselors around depression, suicide and homicide. This is a particularly relevant issue, given the recent events at Virginia Tech University and the number of lawsuits pertaining to colleges' treatment of student mental illness. Although there are guidelines for college counselors, there is less attention given to what faculty should do when they suspect these issues in students. Even the APA Ethics Code does not give a clear policy for faculty in these situations. After reviewing several cases, it seems as though faculty are on the front lines of these issues and it seems imperative that a climate of cooperation between faculty, administrators and counseling centers is important for improving the safety and quality of service to students. To this end, I have presented theoretical symposia on how federal laws such as FERPA and the ADA laws intersect with tort law about a university's and specific professionals within universities (such as administrators, professors, and counselors) duty to students, and how that relates to current events happening on college campuses. I am currently working on publishing a paper based on these presentations and I would like to continue to research and work in this area.

In addition, I am very interested in faculty development and my dissertation reflects my belief that relationships can be important to the growth of an individual. Just as a strong relationship can be the vehicle for change in therapy, I believe that a positive relationship can benefit learning in a university setting. With my strong background in counseling theory, I am applying the concept of the working alliance to undergraduate classrooms. The working alliance has already been shown to be an important factor in counseling, supervision and advising situations and I believe it is a natural extension of this theory. Research has already correlated atmospheric conditions such as rapport and authenticity to academic achievement. The use of the working alliance is a way to incorporate a well established theory into this research.

Prior to my dissertation, my thesis centered around creating male-specific measure of pro-feminist attitudes, which was based on the Feminist Identity Composite. Prior to completing my thesis I did not have much research experience and this was a great opportunity for me to learn more about gender and feminist identity, as well as measurement development. As I worked on my master's thesis I read literature focusing on male identity development and became interested in men and masculinities, particularly with counseling. As a member of division 51, I have had the opportunity to interact with various psychologists from different disciplines researching the concept of masculinity and how it affects the therapeutic process. As a scientist-practitioner this has informed my own work with men and counseling and it is an area that I wish to further develop.

Clearly my interests have varied over the years; however I believe each area is beneficial and important to college campuses.

Example