Formulating Effective Admission Offer Letters

Heather Horn, Labor and Employee Relations
Allison McKinney, Director of Academic Affairs
Elizabeth Spark, Assistant Dean for Admissions, Registration and Enrollment Services
In this session

• Offering admission and acceptance deadlines
• Offering admission and funding to students
• What to include or not include with offer letters
Admission Statement

• Students are “recommended to the Graduate College for admission”

• Admission is separate from employment or funding and should be specifically stated

• Letters must not imply that admission to the Graduate College is automatic or guaranteed
“We are recommending you for admission to the Graduate College. If approved, the Graduate College will issue your official notice of admission to the University.”
CGS Resolution Regarding Graduate Scholars

- Students should have an opportunity to consider more than one offer and should have until April 15 to do so.
- Institutions and students should be able to view acceptances in force after April 15 as binding.
- Does not preclude institutions from asking students to accept or reject offers in a timely manner.
- Students may still change their minds, but this now requires obtaining written release from the institution.
CGS Resolution Regarding Graduate Scholars

• Institutions can make offers after April 15, but are required to ask students to present a written release from any previous offer.

• A copy of the Resolution or link to the URL for the Resolution should accompany every scholarship, fellowship, traineeship, and assistantship offer.

www.cgsnet.org/april-15-resolution
Suggested Statement

“In order to guarantee you this offer, we need your signed acceptance by April 15, 20XX, but would appreciate hearing from you as soon as you make your decision. The University of Illinois is one of over 300 signatories to the Council of Graduate Schools Resolution that sets April 15th as a common deadline for students to accept offers of financial aid coupled with graduate admission for the fall term. If we have not received your acceptance by April 15th, this offer will be withdrawn.”
Offer Letter

- Research Assistant
- Teaching Assistant
- Administrative Graduate Assistant
- Pre-Professional Graduate Assistant
  - Please note: tax withholding impact for certain assistantships
Offer Letter

• Be intentional with appointment dates
• Include contingency language regarding requirements for teaching assistantships
• Satisfactory academic progress toward the degree
• Satisfactory employment results
• Availability of funding for the position
• Continued support of a faculty member advisor
Offer Letter

• Indicate partial fee waiver language to avoid a misinterpretation full fee coverage

• Use caution when including information about fees covered and not covered

• Avoid including specific fee and fee waiver amounts, but instead include links to fee information on the Registrar’s website

  • Please note: Assistantship and fellowship waivers do not cover all student fees!
Offer Letter

• Use caution when indicating student has been nominated for a fellowship

• Less is more; avoid specifics about the fellowship amount if not known

• If student will not be permitted to hold a campus level fellowship and an appointment otherwise included in the offer letter, consider including this restriction in the letter
Address in a Different Forum

- Payment Schedule
- Specifics on fees
- Holidays
- Time off and Sick Leave Policy
- Do not make definitive commitments for outer years/semesters
Summary & Recommended Inclusions

• Example Language: “You will continue to receive financial support contingent upon remaining in good academic standing with satisfactory progress toward the degree, satisfactory employment results, the availability of funding for the position and the continued support of a faculty member advisor.”

• Include monthly stipend and includes a tuition and partial fee waiver (detailed information may follow)

• Deadline for decision to be made - required

• Link to departmental/college website that will contain more information related to the department and the assistantships

• Benefit links (or better yet through the departmental/college website)
Summary & Recommended Inclusions

• Don’t forget to sell your program! Highlight successes of your faculty and students and national rankings.

• Highlight our Institution and Champaign County:
  • The Quick Guide http://www.grad.illinois.edu/quick-guide
  • Champaign County http://www.visitchampaigncounty.org/
  • Arts and Culture http://illinois.edu/arts/
Questions?