

Dear Search Committee members:

I am pleased to submit my application for the Assistant Professor of Cognitive Psychology position in the Department of Psychology at LiberalArts College. An institution that values the undergraduate education, LiberalArts is the perfect place for me. The position is an ideal fit for my interests in integrating teaching and research, and I believe my experiences and skills will complement the valuable assets of your department and college.

At LiberalArts, I would be interested in teaching the core courses of Psychology, including Introductory Psychology, Research Methods, and Statistics. In addition to these courses, I am immediately prepared to teach courses I have previously taught: Introduction to Cognitive Psychology and Biopsychology. My "instructor" ratings generated by University of BigSchool students in these courses ranged from 4.72/5 as a discussion leader to 4.88/5 as the sole instructor. Also in graduate school I co-taught the laboratory for a course on functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) methods. Depending on student demand, I am eager to teach the principles of fMRI design and analysis, which has become ubiquitous in psychological and medical research. I'm also interested in teaching courses related to Cognition and Human Factors as outlined in my teaching statement.

All of my teaching is characterized by my extraordinary enthusiasm for the topic, as well as a relentless desire for my students to learn critical principles such as the scientific method. I also bring every topic back to the everyday, making the material relatable. Most importantly, I attempt to provide a personal touch even in a course of 100 students; my goal is that no student ever be left out. I enjoy challenging my students in the classroom and laboratory, and I find it rewarding to spark their interest to help them achieve their potential. I look forward to a career of making connections with students, fostering their skills and interests, and preparing them for success beyond college.

Another important feature of my teaching is that I constantly strive to improve it. While at BigSchool, I participated in approximately 100 hours of training through courses, workshops, and one-on-one midterm evaluations. I also enjoy sharing my ideas with other teachers. In my last year I became a teaching consultant, providing mentorship to fellow students and even a few professors. When I taught my first course as the sole instructor, I applied for and won a grant to introduce technology to the classroom at no cost to students, because I believed it would benefit the large course size (midterm and final student feedback confirmed this hypothesis). I'm always on the lookout for strategies, methods, and materials to improve my teaching and the learning of students.

Another goal of mine is to engage undergraduates in high-level research. I've found that the most rewarding aspect of conducting research has been in sharing the investigative process with others. Some of my student mentees are co-authors, and three traveled with me to conferences to help present research. I find that when I give students substantial responsibility and treat them as colleagues, they make meaningful contributions. Working with students also fuels my own research interests, in part because our conversations force me to articulate why my research is exciting and important.

Commented [MOU2]: Address to the person requesting the materials in the job ad. Sometimes this is the search committee chair or department chair. When in doubt, you can address it to the search committee.

Commented [MOU3]: This is the name I'll use for the purposes of this example

Commented [MOU4]: State the precise title of the job ad, and the department. Some departments have multiple concurrent searches. State the school name.

Commented [MOU5]: It can be helpful to include EARLY in the letter which courses you are eager and prepared to teach.

Commented [MOU6]: State which courses you are willing to teach in their department. They should include the courses requested in the job ad! You should use THEIR course names, not the course names you taught the class under previously.

Commented [MOU7]: Where you taught previously (e.g. grad school institution)

Commented [MOU8]: Propose courses not in their catalog that you would like to teach.

Commented [MOU9]: You may spend some time summarizing your teaching philosophy in the cover letter

Commented [MOU10]: This kind of thing is in the c.v., but you can take some space here and/or in your teaching and research statements to provide more information or context to your c.v. accomplishments (also pointing out which ones are meaningful to you and why.)

Commented [MOU11]: Helpful to not just say "I like working with undergraduate students," but also provide some evidence of their accomplishments while working with you.

My research interests lie in studying the limits of human memory and attention, especially in the visual domain. In my dissertation work, I studied the costs of keeping track of two goals at one time (e.g., searching for both lemons and garlic at the grocery store). It has been previously shown that attention is automatically captured by stimuli that are related to a current goal (e.g., a yellow pepper looks like a lemon and captures attention). I demonstrated for the first time that such irrelevant information also causes us to bias attention toward the related goal (look for lemons), away from other current goals (look for garlic) (references of my work). My work transforms models of visual attention and contributes to the literatures on working memory and task-switching. Currently, I am looking into the ways in which we can overcome these limitations through training, experience, or by directing attention toward important information (more references). As a next step, I hope to give this work an applied focus, for example by studying how pilots manage multiple goals at a time. In other lines of work, I have investigated the limitations of memory (references of my work) as well as how attention, memory, and experience interact (references of my work). I have clear plans to extend my behavioral and even fMRI research to involve undergraduates in ways that are most beneficial to their learning.

Commented [MOU12]: Even if it's secondary to the teaching part, it is important to include your research summary (you'll say more in the research statement.)

Commented [MOU13]: Reference papers that are on your c.v. – stuff you have done

Commented [MOU14]: Move into what you're doing now

Finally, I am excited to contribute to the department, college, and community through service. I always take pride in where I work/study/teach and I frequently volunteer to serve on departmental and school-wide committees and panels. I also have a record of initiating support services, such as my website for students seeking advice applying to graduate school, and the grant-writing group I started for graduate students. At BigSchool I also sought to improve the campus climate for underrepresented populations, by volunteering to serve as a facilitator of workshops on social identities (e.g., race, gender, class, sexuality, etc.) and their implications in the college setting. I would like to contribute to or start a similar program at LiberalArts, a school that is dedicated to creating an inclusive and diverse environment.

Commented [MOU15]: This part is really important! And then include these clear plans in your research statement. This is especially important if you are a researcher who has training/experience in techniques such as fMRI that are NOT available at the places you're applying. You can't just claim you will be able to keep doing fMRI research without a specific plan and funding. What kind of behavioral research plans do you have? Or EEG? (Even EEG might scare some search committees depending on their startup fund sizes.) Without making it clear that you can conduct research at their school and involve their students, your application will be trashed, no matter how outstanding all of your accomplishments are.

Commented [MOU16]: If you say this, it should also be clear on your c.v.

In sum, I believe my interests and experiences are an ideal fit for LiberalArts College. Enclosed in this application are my C.V., a statement of my research interests, a teaching statement, a teaching portfolio including student evaluations and example materials, and three representative publications. I have also arranged for letters to be sent from Drs. X, Y, and Z. I hope to hear from you. I am best reached e-mail (myemail@bigschool.edu), but I am also available on my cell phone: xxx-xxx-xxxx.

A "service" paragraph might be optional, but it's good to have some places in the cover letter that demonstrate a commitment to DEI in some capacity, even though these things will also be represented in your other statements.

Sincerely,

Name and Address here