Speaker 1: First of all, I am really glad that I kind of like get a chance to be here today. It was very helpful to go through all this process. And I really like the time that we spend with Julie about how to write a CV and a cover letter and prepare the material for the application. And it was really cool. So I never thought that way. So that was definitely great experience, and I'm glad to be here today.

Liesel : Welcome to the Magic Mountie podcast. This is a podcast that's dedicated to faculty and other college employees as they try and navigate the challenging fabric of serving students. Especially at Mount San Antonio College. But everyone's welcome.

Mark: Welcome back, everybody. This is Mark. And we're going to talk today about cover letters for adjuncts who apply for jobs. Our presenter for today is Professor Julie Laverty, a professor of communications here at Mount SAC. She's a dynamic presenter. She's been in the position of an adjunct for many years. 14 years. And she has taken her job tutoring adjuncts very seriously. And is going to give a very dynamic presentation. Julie has graciously allowed us to upload her materials onto our podcast website. Check those out.

Julie Laverty: Hi, I'm so glad this is happening today! I am so glad you're here. I am a champion for adjuncts, just to let you know. After 14 years of adjunct, nine classes a semester, three or four different colleges. I know what it's like. When I got the full-time position at Mount SAC, I'm like, I'm going to be a champion for adjuncts. And my first semester full-time I put in a proposal to create adjunct faculty development. And it took another few years because they're like, hey. Slow down. Slow your role. Get tenure first. But here we are. And I want to give you really straight facts about how you can get in the door. Because you're a wonderful, beautiful soul of a human, right? Like, you are a great person. You're a great professor. You do your job well. They'd be lucky to have you. But how are they gonna know that if you can't get in front of them? You need to sit in front of them. And so that's one of the biggest hurdles. My background is in organizational, intercultural communication. But that organizational is what helps provide the information. I've also spent a little time working in HR. The part of HR I worked in, I went through applications for them. So I've seen a lot of good and bad and what gets through.

Julie Laverty: Cover letters. Okay, now cover letters as we know them, if you don't know how they're written, I guess for faculty jobs. Or nowadays, throw all of the information you have about cover letters out the door. Leave it. It's not this general, like, hi. I'd like a job. Read my resume. It's not that. That is not a cover letter. Don't even google cover letters. 'Cause it'll lead you down that silly path, okay? Your cover letter is more than just the facts. Your resume is like a police report. It's what you did, when you did it. Exactly. It's just your job title. But if you're like me, and I bet you are, you've done things that you weren't paid for in life that aren't job related that would make you a great candidate. That's where it goes. It goes in your cover letter. You might not be able to put that anywhere in your resume. It wasn't a paid position. But you saw a problem in a community. And you went to community council, and you said, "I want to solve this problem." And you were innovative, and you created a program. And you were the leader of that program, and now that program still exists. It had nothing to do with your job. It just had to do with where you lived. But isn't that exactly what a campus needs? Somebody like that.

Julie Laverty: Now here's the downside of today's conversation. You're going to have to customize your cover letter specifically for every single job. And that might take you three to five hours. I'm not lying. Okay? The job application process, if you really want to get in front of them, is extensive. But it's free. It's free. You don't have to pay to apply. But if you don't want to sit in front of them, use the same cover letter for every job you apply for. And you're probably not going to make the cut 'cause you're not addressing their specific needs. Okay? One application that I...process that I went through, I spent about 10 hours on that application. Because there were supplemental questions, things like that. But I literally said to myself, every single time I got frustrated with that time, I went, it's a two million dollar offer. That I'd be turning down.

Julie Laverty: And how I came up with that offer if you made a mean average of $80,000 a year. Mean average, okay? And you worked for 20 years. That's two million dollars. Plus benefits, plus that retirement. Plus everything else. So that five hours is well worth it. Okay? So just keep that in the back of your mind when you're like, that's a lot of work. Yeah. But it's worth it. So let me talk about cover letters. It's more than just the facts. So remember, your resume is, they're the facts. The cover letter's job is to talk directly about minimum and preferred qualifications. I'm gonna teach you a few extra tricks on top of that that help start branding yourself. And help them see you as part of the fabric of their college. They're good subliminal tricks I have for you.

Julie Laverty: So let's do that. You're going to prove you're qualified. Prove it. Not just say you're qualified. Have you ever had somebody say to you, "I'm funny." And you're like, "Awesome." But then be funny, right? Don't just say you're funny. Like, I've never laughed from anything you've said. You have to be funny to prove that. So all minimum qualifications. That's obvious. All desired qualifications, but there's more. And that's what I'm gonna add to that. Any other selection criteria, and a little more. I'm gonna show you these tricks. This entire PowerPoint's gonna be available to you to download.

Julie Laverty: So this is the job posting's requirements. Responsibilities. They usually start, every job posting starts with, what will you do in this job. What are your responsibilities. And if you look at those responsibilities, they're different. There's new ones that they talk about that's not on their preferred or minimum. But why wouldn't we talk about that? Why wouldn't we say, I've already done these things? I can do these things. I'm able to do the exact job you're talking about. A lot of people ignore the general job description that you're going for. But address it, and prove that not only can you do it, you're already doing those things.

Julie Laverty: Then this particular application or job announcement was really funny. So this is under desirable qualifications. This trips me up. This is I think the only time I've seen this so explicit. Selection criteria. Which by the way, those are different than any of the stuff above it. So they're like, minimum quals. Desirable quals. But here's how we're selecting you. So if you're not really being thorough, you might skip this. Right? And it's towards the end of the job announcement. And this is ultimately how they're making that decision. I'm gonna show you from a committee's perspective what this kind of might end up looking like when we go to look through, like let's say you've passed HR screening. Now you're in our hands. Okay? We have 173 of you. What that might look like, how we score you. We come up with a spreadsheet. And our spreadsheet is basically everything that was listed that we are selecting from. Okay? If it wasn't on the job announcement, it won't be on here. Like, this is our kind of HR commitment.

Julie Laverty: I took every single thing in the job posting that we just looked at. The example. And I just made them into columns. Like, master's degree or equivalent. Of course everyone's going to have that. They made it through screening. Right? That's the minimum. Three plus years teaching at a community college is what they wanted. Three or more classes taught in their subject. Diverse population of teaching outcomes. Outcomes. That's an interesting ones. Outcomes, meaning student outcomes. SLOs. Okay? Right? Do you all work with SLOs? Do you mention that anywhere in your resume, or is it just something you do and it's expected, just like you upload final grades? Literally you just say, "I assess student learning outcomes." And you know why you have to say you do it? Because if you don't say you do it, you're gonna get a zero in that area. Because you didn't mention it.

Julie Laverty: And you can work with me, and I can know you. And I can know we've had a discussion about your student assessments. But I can't use that conversation. And I can assume that of course you use SLO information to improve your teaching. But if you don't mention it, I can't score it. And I can't tell you how many groups of zeroes I get because people don't just mention it.Literally do not skip anything. Even if in your mind you're like, that's on my resume. Or that's in every job. That's like saying park and walk to your class, right? It's assumed. But don't. If they say we want to know you can park and get to your class, say, I can park and get to my class. Because you want a point in that category. You see what I'm saying?

Julie Laverty: No matter how silly you think it is, address it. We talked about uploading anything that you may be want them to see. What if your college wrote a story about you? About what a great professor you were. And it was in the college newspaper. Upload it. Upload whatever you want, if they allow you to. I've been through some application processes where they didn't allow you to upload any supplemental, which was interesting. And some that was like, as many documents as you want. And I'm like, are you ready? And you know what, no matter what they say, take that packet. Take that packet to the screening. To the interview, if you get the interview. If they don't take it, that's okay. If they take it, great. Go ahead and take it, 'cause now they have something to flip through. Spiral bind it. Go to Office Depot. Spiral bind it. They can flip through it. Now you're more tangible. Okay? They may not take it. I've only had like two places not take it.

Julie Laverty: I applied for five jobs in one year. I got all five interviews. And somebody told me, you have such a good cover letter. And that's how I got through the door. Once I talked to them, they hated me, but ... I'm just kidding. No, but I only applied for five jobs in one year. And I got all five interviews. So I thought, at least I'm getting in front of them. So let me give you some pro tips. First of all, I'm going to show you what all of these tips in action. Make it reader friendly. And by that, I mean first of all, follow the order. When I read your letter, this is in the order of the job announcement. What if when I read your letter, it follows it, and I can just like, oh. They talk about this next. They talk about this next. That is not a requirement, but sure, that makes it easier to find and grab your information and give you that point.

Julie Laverty: Use bullet points to guide the reader's eye to what you want them to grab onto. Plus, bullet points creates more white space. If you look at job announcements, they're listed in bullet points. You know where to go for the information. And I'm sorry. And float the best to the top. So you have examples, which I'm going to show you. Put your best examples up to the top. Assume that they're going to read those first few examples and go, oh. They're good. And maybe not read the rest, right? You know how we are. Sometimes. 'Cause maybe those first few examples of how you can do this are enough for them. Float the best to the top. Now, if you want to address any extra stuff that is not in the job announcement. That's fine. You can even mention that in your cover letter. But after all of the job announcement stuff. Then put something else that you want to mention. Okay? So float the important up to the top.

Julie Laverty: Express eagerness throughout. You want this job. You will work hard for them. You are serious. Don't tell them you're the perfect fit, but let them realize that. I definitely want to hire somebody that can hit the ground running, know what they're doing. And they won't require a whole 10 years of training. I feel like that's a good fit. Give them real examples. Don't just say like, yes, I'm funny! Right? Give them a joke. But don't in your cover letter. But if you say that you are excellent with teaching diverse populations. Okay, great. Anyone could say that. Explain it. Give me an example. Tell me what that means. What does that look like for you. What populations are you talking about? What are your experiences? So it's the story. Do you get that? Resume wouldn't cover that. Your cover letter's that story. Where are you at with that?

Julie Laverty: I remember I applied to one school, and it was really far, and I just wanted kind of an interview under my belt. But I really liked, like it'd be the worst drive ever in the morning. But I really liked this school, and what they stood for as I got to know them. And I went on to their department website, and literally their department had the mission of using the experiential learning cycle in the classroom. Which is exactly my teaching- I was like, oh my gosh! This is who I am. Would you mention that in the cover letter? Your department's mission statement includes the exact approach to teaching that I have taken for the last 15 years. I mean, that's a great fit. I don't have to tell them I'm the perfect fit. I can tell them, that's exactly how I teach. Okay? And so mention that. They want to know how you're going to be like in the classroom. Talk about how you run a classroom. What your classroom would look like if I popped in and said hi. Right?

Julie Laverty: Connect yourself to their campus. So what does that mean? I've got a couple of good tricks for that. Talk about maybe programs that they have that you have been involved in already. Or programs that you've run or been involved in that you would love the opportunity to start on another campus. You don't have to say, 'cause you don't have it. 'Cause maybe they do and you just don't know about it. But let them know what you're going to do for them. Make it about them. When you're hiring, you're hiring because you need somebody that's going to help you do your job and not be a detriment, but an asset. So connect yourself. Weave in their language. It's my favorite trick. So on your resume, you may describe something as, let's say SLOs for instance. But they only use the word outcomes. Learning outcomes or whatever. Or something different. Or assessment. Change your language to match their language. Talk their language with them.

Julie Laverty: So you're going to look at the job announcement, number one, for their language. If they call something slightly different than what is on your cover letter or your resume, change how you call it to match exactly theirs. Okay? Already be a part of their team. You're gonna look at their mission statement. Not only are you gonna use the mission statement to weave their language into your entire document, but you're going to use that language in the interview too. You're gonna represent that school. Now, will they know that they're using language from the mission statement? Probably not. But even though all of us may not be able to recite our entire mission statement, there's certain words in that mission statement that just feel like Mount SAC. Excellence in teaching. You know, things like that.

Julie Laverty: And so you're going to weave in their language from their job announcement, mission statement, and stalk their department. Stalk their department website. Absolutely! Maybe it's a good one that gives you loads of info. My favorite cover letter that I've ever read when I'm on a committee was four pages. And I know a lot of you are thinking, that's long. But that's exactly how long it took him to prove that he was so well qualified for this interview. And I mean, it hit everything. Well, why wouldn't we interview this person? They can do everything that we've mentioned. And so it didn't feel rambly. I was excited. And it followed this format as well. Bullet points, with like some sections. Okay? And I talked to this person later, 'cause you know, small communities usually know people in your field. And he said, he gets an interview everywhere he applies. Yeah! And so it's a good cover letter. Don't be scared if it's a little longer than that one page that you've been taught. Okay?

Julie Laverty: First of all, step one. When you get that job announcement, there's jobs open right now. Download it and save it. It will go away the minute the job closes. And you need that announcement. Here's what you're going to do with the job announcement. When you ask for letters of reference, please send them the job announcement. They know exactly what you're applying for, and if they genuinely like you and really want to write you a good letter, they're going to mention the exact job title and maybe number. That's impressive. This is a custom letter of reference for this job. As a screener, that's impressive. Also they can address the things in here that they know about you. They can make those matches too.

Julie Laverty: Here's another reason. It's a reference for yourself. This particular job application told me exactly what's going to happen in the interview. If I apply, the job posting goes away. But I get a call saying I get an interview, and I'm like, oh, I want to go back to that job posting. And I didn't download it. I've lost their rubric. And it's right there. Okay? First of all, if you're not being evaluated, ask to be. Scan those documents. Upload them as your extra documents, if they're good. Right? Actual evaluations that are current, ask to be evaluated. Ask a full-time person, will you come and evaluate my class? Ask. Otherwise, how am I ever gonna know when I look at you, you're, you know.

Julie Laverty: Also, ask anyone for a letter of reference. Maybe it's somebody you work with. Maybe it's students. I have three letters of reference from students. And they show what I was like in the classroom. They proved it. So get reference letters from everybody and anybody. If you really want this two million dollar decision, right? Get them from everybody. And ask to be evaluated. Ask your full-time staff to get in your classroom and get to know you. Show up at department meetings, make yourself known. Okay. So again you're going to be uploading all of these documents. And it does take time. But please feel free to you know, reach out if you are in the middle of needing somebody to look at your cover letter. You know, I'm sure that everyone here today would certainly love to give you ... We love giving our opinions on things, right? Thank you and good luck with your journey. I applaud you. Yeah.

Speaker 5: Well, it taught me all the different things that I've done wrong. So it's good to know how to not make those mistakes again, which probably shows why I haven't been called for too many interviews.

Speaker 6: I never applied for an academic job, so the rule of thumb for a cover letter is one page maximum. So this was a revelation to me that you can write much longer.

Speaker 7: I've enjoyed the morning so far. It's been very informative. And I've gotten a lot of information. She mostly touched on the cover letter. And do all the embellishment in your cover letter. And that was incredibly helpful.

Speaker 8: I feel more confident just because all the information she did give, and what's going to come next.

Mark: So what are your bullet points?

Speaker 10: I have to make them now. I don't have bullet points. I'm like, that's great. Because now I can expand on what I said and feel good about doing it. Not like a bragging sort of way, but now they'll know like what and how I've done things. And that's important when you're interviewing.

Liesel : Hey, thanks so much for joining us for the Magic Mountie podcast. We love your likes, we love your shares. And we love your comments, so please engage with our community. Download from wherever you love to get your podcasts. iTunes, Google. Rate my Professor. We're there. And we want you to be back with us next week. Remember, any opinions that are expressed in this podcast do not necessarily represent Mount San Antonio College or any of its agents. We'll see you next time.