

# Understanding Boilerplate in Job Ads

## What is “boilerplate”?

Boilerplate is language that shows up in job ads that is specific to legal or institutional requirements, but may or may not be specific to the job you are applying for. These blocks of language will show up in all ads for a given institution and can include a variety of disclaimers or information about the school’s local region, their hiring policies, or the mission statement of the school.

While information in the boilerplate can help you understand the values of the school, you have to look critically at it to determine if the information is necessary to focus on in your job materials (cover letter, teaching statements, etc.). One way to identify what language is boilerplate and what has been chosen by the search committee is to look up other ads from the school and compare.

**Below, we include some examples of boilerplate you may see in job ads and what you can still infer/use from that information.**

### Dilger’s WIU job

Ad Language	Notes
Western Illinois University is an Affirmative Action Equal Opportunity employer and has a strong institutional commitment to diversity. In that spirit we are particularly interested in receiving applications from a broad spectrum of people, including women, minorities, and persons with disabilities. <sup>1</sup>	1. This reads more like a requirement because of their hiring policy: not a whole lot to use from this statement other than it would be illegal for them to discriminate against candidates.

### Purdue lecturer job (Dilger was search chair)

Ad Language	Notes
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<p>Purdue University, the College of Liberal Arts, and the Department of English are committed to free and open inquiry in all matters.<sup>1</sup> Candidates are encouraged to address in their cover letter how they are prepared to contribute to a climate that values free inquiry and academic freedom.<sup>2</sup></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. This is a conservative university making a political statement. While it name drops the English department, it was not their choice to include this in the ad.</li> <li>2. This part is tricky. The department was required to include this in their ad--which means they may or may not find a statement on "free inquiry and academic freedom" all that useful in cover letters. This would be a good example of a question worth emailing the search chair.</li> </ol>
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### Marisa's WSU job

Ad Language	Notes
<p>The Weber State University English department houses undergraduate programs in literature, creative writing, professional and technical writing, linguistics, and English education, as well as a Master of Arts program.<sup>1</sup> Founded in 1889, Weber State University is located 35 miles north of downtown Salt Lake City in Ogden, Utah, which is considered the northern edge of the Salt Lake City metro area. It is an open-enrollment university with 26,000 students. Weber State and the Ogden area receive over 220 days of sunshine annually and boast a thriving arts scene, proximity to two major ski areas, and a stunning campus at the foot of the Wasatch Mountains.<sup>2</sup></p> <p>The Department of English Literature and Language is committed to centering diverse identities and experiences among its faculty and curriculum, and students of all</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. This is actually kind of helpful—it's stuff you would have looked for on their website, but now you don't have to look.</li> <li>2. This is just to entice candidates. And it worked!</li> <li>3. Because this section starts with the department, we're inclined to believe it came from them and therefore is probably more important to the search committee (than, say, the Purdue example above). In your cover letter, it is probably worth addressing how you support students "from diverse and underserved backgrounds."</li> <li>4. This reiterates the last comment (this also appeared in the job description, but if it didn't, we would still know it's important.)</li> </ol>

<p>backgrounds, particularly those from historically underrepresented and structurally marginalized groups. We seek candidates with experience supporting the learning needs of students from diverse and underserved backgrounds.<sup>3</sup> Commitment to global awareness, inclusion, and equity efforts in pedagogical practices and scholarship, as well as collegial and student mentorship are desirable. Excellent communication, collaboration, and organization skills are necessary.</p> <p>Weber State has embarked on efforts to become an Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution. Interest in supporting those efforts is highly desirable.<sup>4</sup></p>	
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### Grand Rapids Community College (job year 23-24)

Ad Language	Notes
<p>GRCC is seeking faculty who possess an interest in working with diverse student populations from a wide range of age, ethnicity, national origin and ability; engage in and develop innovative teaching strategies; effectively assess student learning outcomes; demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning and professional development and provide service to our students, the college, and our community at large.<sup>1</sup></p> <p>Faculty members are responsible to GRCC and to each other for the successful completion of departmental work, as well as associated with the School of Liberal Arts and GRCC as a whole.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. These may be worth mentioning in your cover letter, but especially, I think, the first point about diverse student populations—move from interest to how your experience would serve you.</li> <li>2. This doesn't give a lot that's useful for your application and is mostly trying to set expectations for applicants.</li> </ol>

<p>In addition to the major position responsibilities, faculty are expected to demonstrate outstanding communication skills, collaborate effectively, use personal initiative to overcome obstacles, and work efficiently to meet deadlines. In an environment where innovation is valued, each faculty member will take responsibility to perform their work in a manner consistent with both the letter and the spirit of GRCC values.<sup>2</sup></p>	
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### Cape Cod Community College

Ad Language	Notes
<p>Cape Cod Community College is a place of personal discovery, enrichment, and professional development for those just beginning the quest and for those at many points along the path of higher education throughout life.<sup>1</sup> It is a caring, comprehensive institution that belongs to the people it serves and responds to their individual and community needs. Students attending Cape Cod Community College are striving for personal excellence, and are finding it, day after day. Graduates of the College can be found in all levels of private business, the professions, and public service, and they excel at what they do.</p> <p>For students seeking to lay a foundation for further study, there is no better place to begin than at Cape Cod Community College. In today's highly competitive market place, the well prepared transfer student is the most</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. See next comment.</li> <li>2. This tells us that a lot of the students will be non-traditional: that is, older than the 18 year old college student people picture, and instead looking to add credentials or shift careers later. This may be something you can speak to in your cover letter or just keep in mind for an interview.</li> <li>3. These are a lot of buzzwords—we don't think the committee will be looking for them all that hard.</li> </ol>

aggressively recruited person in higher education. For many Cape Cod Community College graduates, that Associate Degree opens the door to institutions that were just not an option after high school.<sup>2</sup> And, when you consider the savings in the overall cost of a four-year degree at either a public or a private university, starting at Cape Cod Community College becomes an incredible bargain that blends quality with unmatched value. The students' education is the first priority at Cape Cod Community College. As a learning-centered community, we value the contributions of a diverse population, welcome open inquiry, and promote mutual respect. The College offers a strong educational foundation of critical and creative thinking, communication competency, and a global, multicultural perspective that prepares students for life and work in the 21st century. Our liberal arts, sciences, and career programs provide educational pathways that serve the varied social, economic, and demographic characteristics of our community with a distinctive focus on sustainability. We honor our past, celebrate our present and imagine our future.<sup>3</sup>