

## Dissected Residency Letter of Intent Sample

This is an actual UCSF alumnus redacted sample of letter of intent for a residency program. Please do not copy or in any way reproduce the contents of this letter as residency programs may have already seen it. The intent of this resource is to serve as a basic structural writing guide for students to learn how to write a concise residency letter of intent.

Please note: Before beginning any letter of intent or cover letter, it is essential to research an opportunity, otherwise you may not be able to make the most impactful relevant arguments in your letter. Ways to research a position include:

- Using LinkedIn, Glassdoor, the organization's website, etc., to learn more about the organization/residency program
- Inviting someone in your network who is affiliated with the opportunity to coffee so you can learn more about their experience working there
- Using UCSF Connect ([ucsfconnect.com](http://ucsfconnect.com)), an online networking platform exclusive to the UCSF community, to find someone who is, or has been affiliated with the opportunity, so you can learn more about their impressions and experience in regard to the organization.

A straightforward letter of intent includes about four to five paragraphs. Each paragraph in the sample letter is deconstructed below to illustrate how an applicant may write a letter of intent for a residency program. Note that the rubric approach below is very formulaic in order to provide an easy-to-follow generic writing structure. Those who have excellent writing skills may choose to organize and write their letter in a different fashion according to their skill level and experiences. Regardless, each letter should be written in a way that is unique to the individual and their experiences.

### **Rubric for elements that should be included in a first paragraph:**

- The writer addresses the residency program director and describes how they learned of the position.
- The writer speaks to what specific aspects of the program appeal to them most based on the future impact they want to have as a professional and/or conversations they'd had with current residents in the program.
- Alternately if the writer hasn't had an opportunity to meet with current residents, the writer introduces professional goals that align with what the program is looking for. Ideally the goals will be specific and concrete and informed by their previous experiences (*e.g., My previous experiences as a teacher working in low resource settings has made me more resourceful and a better advocate for those I serve. Thus, my goal is to become a clinical pharmacy patient advocate and educator.*).
- The writer concludes the first paragraph by writing out the specific skills that they're going to be talking about that they will bring to the program (*e.g., clinical, communication skills*).

The first paragraph is the most important part of any letter because it provides an organizational structure and tone for the rest of the letter. In the example below, note that the writer has included all of the first paragraph rubric elements in the first paragraph of their letter. The writer concludes the first paragraph with their most relevant skills that they will highlight in their subsequent paragraphs (*i.e., clinical skills, teaching, and leadership skills*):

*Dear Dr. Kirkwood:*

*I am writing to express my interest in Tahoma Hospital's PGY-1 acute care pharmacy residency program. I was first introduced to a county hospital system whenever my father recounted the stories of his training as a medical resident at Homewood Hospital. We would eagerly sit and listen to him talk about the great work done through a county system, such as how his hospital opened one of the first breast cancer clinics for black women who were underdiagnosed for malignancies. He raved about the training and compassionate care*

that was required when working with underserved populations. While my father's stories may have influenced my journey, it was my own experiences at Alpine Health that made me want to continue working with underserved populations. I am familiar with this program after working with your PGY-2 resident, Dr. Crystal Zephyr, PharmD as a preceptor at Alpine Health, attending the virtual open house, and having rotations at Taboma Hospital. Your program would allow me to progress towards my long-term career goal of becoming a clinical pharmacy leader and educator, while also pursuing my interests in general medicine, psychiatry, and teaching in the coming year. My past experiences through *clerkships*, *teaching*, and *leadership* have proven that I would be a valuable contribution to your program.

**Rubric for elements that should be included in a second, third, fourth or fifth paragraph:**

- ❑ The writer begins the paragraph by using a topic sentence that clearly restates what previously mentioned relevant skills/ experience they're going to be talking about (as listed in 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph).
- ❑ The writer provides 1-2 strong concrete supporting examples for each of the claims they make about their skills/experience (e.g., how did they use the skill and what did they gain from the experience?).
- ❑ If applicable, the writer can also mention a challenge they overcame, or impactful project to demonstrate their learning.
- ❑ Unless the writer is creating a separate goals/values paragraph (usually a fourth or fifth paragraph) about how their *values and goals* align with the program, the writer will weave in what they learned or enjoyed about using a skill and/or going through an experience into the same paragraph, like the examples in *purple* below. Where possible, the writer can also weave in how what they enjoyed ties into their goal as a future resident and/or professional.

The topic sentences for paragraphs two through four highlight a relevant skill(s) that the letter introduces in the first paragraph. For instance, the focus of the second paragraph is on the writer's relevant *clinical skills*. In addition, the third paragraph gives evidence of the writer's *clinical skills working with underserved populations*. Finally, the writer demonstrates their strong *teaching* and *leadership skills* in the fourth paragraph.

The writer also illustrates relevant and specific examples of the skills that they highlight in each paragraph, and effectively showcases how these skills will help them contribute to the residency program.

*I was drawn towards acute care practice experiences after *enhancing my clinical skills* through my Adult Surgery rotation. It was on this rotation that I was quickly trusted as the independent pharmacy contact on multidisciplinary rounds and fielded questions from five different surgical services. This became my platform to *voice my knowledge of medications and medication interventions* such as discontinuing a delirium inducing medication for a high-risk geriatric patient or appropriately restarting deep vein thrombosis (DVT) prophylaxis after surgery. I found it gratifying to be the drug expert on the team, *optimizing patient care through various modalities such as researching drug information questions or saving on drug cost at discharge*. My preceptors recognized that I am enthusiastic, a leader, and possess strong *clinical critical reasoning skills* which are important skills to bring to your program. This rotation solidified my desire to pursue an acute care PGY-1 residency to become a clinical pharmacist. Taboma Hospital, as a level 1 trauma center that facilitates the growth of medical learners, would provide an ideal environment to strengthen my clinical capacities and leadership skills.*

*Additionally, my ambulatory care rotation at Alpine Health instilled a drive to provide compassionate care to underserved populations. On this rotation, I gained a deeper understanding of social determinants of health as the clinic's population largely faces challenges with housing and food insecurity, substance use disorder, and mental illness. I learned to *adeptly navigate delicate conversations around mental health and social histories*. For example, I had an *in-depth interview with a patient discussing stimulant use disorder, challenges with insomnia, and access to primary care*. In our short time together, I noticed this patient was comfortable sharing his story and that it was not only my clinical reasoning but also my compassion that made me successful. I am motivated by the challenges of working with underserved populations and providing quality healthcare to the community.*

*My experiences in teaching demonstrate *leadership* which would allow me to be successful as a resident. At the end of my P1 year, I was selected as one of twenty peer teachers for UCSF's Pharmacy Teaching program. My goal in this program was to *expand upon teaching skills* gained as an undergraduate TA. In each lesson, I *aimed to personalize my talks with activities and mnemonics*. Overall, I enjoyed witnessing moments where I catalyzed a student's understanding. Additionally, the Pharmacy Teaching program required *leadership**

*skills. My co-teachers and I took the initiative to plan each detail of this new program to not be a reiteration of class material but an engaging space for students to synthesize and apply their knowledge. This was rewarding as we observed students' success from our program and gratitude as they improved their understanding. Through Taboma Hospital's teaching certificate, I aim to deepen my competence in teaching through leading continuing education talks, lectures, facilitating small group discussions, and precepting students.*

**Rubric for elements that should be included in the last paragraph:**

- The writer begins the paragraph by using a topic sentence that clearly summarizes their main points and align with the skills/experiences that they highlighted in the previous paragraphs.
- The writer can follow with a sentence that clearly shows they understand the organization/department by listing something that genuinely excites them about this opportunity and is written from a “what I can bring to your team/organization” perspective.
- The writer finishes with how their goals align with the opportunity and expresses enthusiasm for next steps.

The goal of the final paragraph is to neatly summarize your skills/experiences in a way to reflect how you can use them to contribute to the program. Additionally, the writer should also summarize a specific **reciprocal goal** (e.g., how the training you will receive in the program can help you contribute to the team or your greater professional community). Lastly, the writer should end by thanking the reader and conveying desired next steps:

*As a student, this institution's value of a thirst for knowledge, compassionate care, and teaching aligns with how I approach my pharmacy education. I would apply my skills acquired in clerkships, teaching and leadership to competently serve your patients, while further exploring my interests in medicine and psychiatry. Taboma Hospital is a strong environment for me to expand upon my pharmacy interests in order to become a clinical pharmacy leader. Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to further discussing with you my qualifications and fit for your program.*

Date

Sheridan Kirkwood, PharmD

Title

Contact Information

Dear Dr. Kirkwood:

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I was drawn towards acute care practice experiences after **enhancing my clinical skills** through my Adult Surgery rotation. It was on this rotation that I was quickly trusted as the independent pharmacy contact on multidisciplinary rounds and fielded questions from five different surgical services. This became my platform to **voice my knowledge of medications and medication interventions** such as discontinuing a delirium inducing medication for a high-risk geriatric patient or appropriately restarting deep vein thrombosis (DVT) prophylaxis after surgery. I found it gratifying to be the drug expert on the team, **optimizing patient care through various modalities such as researching drug information questions or saving on drug cost at discharge**. My preceptors recognized that I am enthusiastic, a leader, and possess strong **clinical critical reasoning skills** which are important skills to bring to your program. **This rotation solidified my desire to pursue an acute care PGY-1 residency to become a clinical pharmacist. Tahoma Hospital, as a level 1 trauma center that facilitates the growth of medical learners, would provide an ideal environment to strengthen my clinical capacities and leadership skills.**

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Sincerely,

Emerald Bay

UCSF School of Pharmacy, PharmD Candidate 20XX