

<http://www.snopes.com/college/admin/rejection.asp>

Rejection Slip

Legend: Applicant turned down for a university spot as a student or instructor sends a letter declining the rejection.

Example: *[Collected via e-mail, August 2007]*

Herbert A. Millington
Chair - Search Committee
412A Clarkson Hall, Whitson University
College Hill, MA 34109

Dear Professor Millington,

Thank you for your letter of March 16. After careful consideration, I regret to inform you that I am unable to accept your refusal to offer me an assistant professor position in your department.

This year I have been particularly fortunate in receiving an unusually large number of rejection letters. With such a varied and promising field of candidates, it is impossible for me to accept all refusals.

Despite Whitson's outstanding qualifications and previous experience in rejecting applicants, I find that your rejection does not meet my needs at this time. Therefore, I will assume the position of assistant professor in your department this August. I look forward to seeing you then.

Best of luck in rejecting future applicants.

Sincerely,
Chris L. Jensen

Origins: A recent pair of television commercials for Cingular's "Go Phone" service (viewable [here](#) and [here](#)) employ an interesting gimmick. Although the scenario depicted in both commercials is very familiar to viewers – a parent and a child engaging in an argument over something the child wants but the parent is declining to provide – the dialogue between the characters subverts that familiarity by stating just the opposite: The parent is in fact trying to provide something desired by the child, but the latter is declining to accept it. We're so used to the speech cadences and body language of the original scenarios, however, that it's easy to miss what the characters are actually saying in these commercials by assuming that it fits the expected pattern.

The same sort of technique is employed in the example of correspondence reproduced above. Superficially, it looks like a standard rejection letter; upon

closer examination, however, one discerns that it is a response from a spurned applicant who is using the same language and format as the original notice to "decline" his rejection (i.e., "I am unable to accept your refusal").

We don't know who conceived the original idea, although this particular form of the "anti-rejection letter" has been circulating on the Internet since at least [1996](#). It has appeared in many slightly different variations using different names (for applicant and rejector) and featuring turn-downs for several different types of application (admission to university, assistant professorship position, manuscript submission, general employment).

Has anyone ever sent such a letter after receiving a rejection (and experienced a positive outcome as a result)? We don't know that, either. This piece is likely just a bit of humor of the typical "showing up the authority figure" genre commonly found in college legends (particularly legends about [examinations](#)), but perhaps someone, somewhere has scored a David vs. Goliath type of upset by using a similar letter to impress a prospective employer with his chutzpah and thereby gain a (successful) re-consideration.

Sightings: This "anti-rejection letter" is mentioned in Neil Postman's essay, "Defending Against the Indefensible," which was included in his 1988 book, *Conscientious Objections: Stirring Up Trouble About Language, Technology and Education*.

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