

## Sample Letters to Faculty

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Write these letters to be sure you have identified a good program for your interests, to build bonds with faculty members who will be evaluating your application later, and to learn more about being comfortable as a scholar in your field. *Do not be afraid to write to leaders in your field.* Email is ok instead of snail mail, but snail mail has higher response rate.

### Typical content

- Ask for a clarification of the program.
- Comment on something the professor has written, and ask a question about it.
- Propose an area for further study, and ask if the program would be an appropriate sponsor for such research.
- Write, "I read \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, and you. Who else is doing important work in this area?"

### Suggestions

- *Always* check faculty member's home page and read some articles or abstracts before contacting that faculty member.
- **Ask a question that has an answer!**
- Don't expect every faculty member to respond, and if they don't respond, don't let that fact alone keep you from applying there.

NOTE: These examples are the result of a ten-minute, speed-writing exercise, and you would want to edit them further before releasing them.

Also see pp. 26-27 of *Graduate Admissions Essays* for more instruction.

**Donald Asher**, presenter, Indiana University Summer Senior Camp for McNair Scholars, 2003. Samples provided by brave students. Please remember that these are first drafts. It is a good idea to get faculty edit and review before mailing letters such as these.

Your Name Here  
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(415) 543-7130, ext. 203

June 6, 2003

Toni R. Davis, Ph.D.  
Chair, English Department, Assistant Dean of the School of Liberal Arts & Sciences, and the  
Ruth Ann Wilson Distinguished Scholar of Poetry Composition  
Wilson Hall, Room 408  
University of Arizona  
Tucson, AZ 87214  
[toni.davis@uaz.edu](mailto:toni.davis@uaz.edu)  
(719) 321-3859, ext. 4081

Dear Dr. Davis:

I am a Ronald E. McNair Scholar presently studying at Texas A&M University in Kingsville. I am interested in pursuing graduate study in the Neurosciences Department at U.T.-Austin. My research interest is investigating whether there are hormonal correlates to acquisition using the conditioned stimulus model. I am very interested in both the research you are conducting and the research being conducted by your colleague, Dr. Delville. I am inquiring about the possibility of combining both research models to continue my research experience. Is this something that your lab is considering? If this were my primary interest, would your lab be willing to host these types of studies as part of my graduate program? Would you or someone you recommend be willing to be the P.I. or supervisor for research like this?

I would greatly appreciate any information on this matter, and thank you in advance for your time and consideration. If it is more convenient for you to contact me by email, please do so. My email address is [kxapr@tamok.edu](mailto:kxapr@tamok.edu).

Sincerely,

Your Name Here

Enclosed: Letter of introduction from my mentor, Dr. P. Alhambra, providing overview of my research projects to date.

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Dear Dr. Davis:

I am a Ronald E. McNair Undergraduate Achievement Program Research Scholar at Indiana State University. I am very interested in studying in your department at the graduate level. I have read your book, *Race Matters*, and enjoyed your theoretical and reality-based approach. I too study African Americans, under the auspices of Dr. S. Alvarez at Indiana University, and want to continue studying this population at the graduate level.

I am writing with two queries: (1) Does your department have any other professors interested in the sociological understanding of African Americans, and how they have been affected by prejudice, racism, and oppression? May I know their names? (2) Are there any professors in your department who would be willing to mentor and teach individuals outside the classroom, perhaps via email, prior to actual matriculation into your program? I have a great interest in mentorship across organizational boundaries, and in the concept of academic community that transcends *quid pro quo* interactions. Is this something that you or others in your department would have an interest in?

If you could please reply, or divert this letter to someone who could answer my questions, it would be greatly appreciated. If it would be more convenient for you to respond by email, then please do so. My email address is located in my contact information.

Thank you for your time,

Your Name Here  
(enclosures)

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Dear Dr. Davis:

I recently came across your article on the effects of smoking as a predictor of future drug use. As you may recall, I conducted research with a team under your supervision in 1998, 1999, and 2000, when I was an undergraduate. Additionally, since I left your guidance, I have worked extensively on evaluation and the planning and evaluation of improvements in the field of informatics, and the use of informatics for improving performance and utilization of health services.

I wonder if you could help me with two things: (1) I would be interested in a bit of clarification of the standard error of the mean as a predictor of cocaine drug use, as used in your article. Would you be willing to speak with me by telephone to clear up a specific question? (2) Do you see an extensive use of healthcare informatics and information systems in research that involves modeling future drug use? I would be particularly interested in your opinion regarding the use of informatics in this and other aspects of drug use prevention.

Please feel welcome to call me anytime on my cellphone (213) 555-1894, or if it is your preference to respond via email please contact me at [jose@aol.com](mailto:jose@aol.com).

Thank you for your guidance,

Your Name Here

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Dear Dr. Davis:

I am a McNair Scholar conducting an undergraduate research project this summer. As part of this project, I have been conducting a literature survey, and came across your name from multiple sources. I am interested in the types of research that you have been participating in. Upon reading some of your work, I noticed that you are involved in many areas of equine nutrition. For example, I know that you have done extensive work with foals and endurance horses in all aspects of nutrition. I am assessing graduate programs, and I must say that I am very attracted to your work. However, the very breadth of your interests leaves me uncertain of where your lab will be concentrating in the future.

Would you mind answering the following questions for me, even if briefly: At the current time, what directions is your research headed in? What topics of research are you currently pursuing? What topics of research do you have in the development stage? Again, I know what you have been doing in the past, and I hope you won't think me too pushy for wanting to be sure that your future direction aligns with my intellectual interests.

Your responses will help me to determine whether there is a good fit between your research plans and my interests.

Thank you so much for your help!

Sincerely,

Your Name Here

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Dear Dr. Davis:

I recently came across your article, "The Roots of Ethnic Conflict," while doing research for a paper on the ethnic conflict in Rwanda. I particularly focused on your point that ethnic conflict was created out of the European colonization of Africa. Have you already considered a comparative analysis of the ethnic conflict in the Congo to the recent ethnic conflicts in Liberia, and the effects of the 1993 genocide, which took the lives of 800,000 Congolese civilians? Do you know of good papers in these areas that I should consider? I checked your office hours on your Web site and will try to reach you this Friday between 1:00 and 3:00 p.m. or, if you wish, you could respond prior to that via email (my email address is in the heading to this letter).

Thank you in advance for your consideration. I look forward to communicating with you and learning more about your thoughts on the commonalities and differences among these conflicts

Thank you so much for helping me advance my project. I promise not to take up too much of your time.

Sincerely,

Your Name Here

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28 June 2003

Michael DiPersio, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor and Graduate Studies Director  
Center for Cell Biology & Cancer Research (MC-165)  
Albany Medical College  
47 New Scotland Avenue  
Albany, NY 12208  
[dipem@mail.amc.edu](mailto:dipem@mail.amc.edu)  
518-262-5916

Dear Dr. DiPersio:

I am an undergraduate student at the University of Arizona. I am currently investigating graduate program options, and I have come across your name and Albany Medical Center many times in my literature research.

As a student in the Minority Access to Research Careers (MARC) program, I have gained research experience under the mentorship of Dr. M.H. Brilliant on the roles of a number of genes affecting pigmentation. I believe that my research experience, combined with a cumulative 4.0 G.P.A., might make the Center for Cell Biology and Cancer Research program a compatible match for my qualifications and interests.

I have a strong interest in the etiology of insulin resistance in type 2 diabetes, and would very much like to conduct research in this area during my graduate studies. I see from your website that students in the CCBCR program are mentored by faculty whose interests lie in signal transduction, among other topics. My questions for you are: 1) Is an academic interest in insulin signaling failures compatible with the curriculum of the CCBCR program? And 2) Are there CCBCR faculty who might be interested in mentoring a student with these interests? If so, might I have their names and contact information?

Please feel free to respond to the above address, or to contact me via email at [msh@email.arizona.edu](mailto:msh@email.arizona.edu) if that is more convenient.

Thank you very much for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Your Name Here

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28 June 2003

Dr. Michael Ramsey  
Professor  
Geology and Planetary Sciences  
University of Pittsburg  
Pittsburg, Pennsylvania  
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Dear Dr. Ramsey:

I am a Ronald E. McNair Undergraduate Achievement Program Research Scholar at the University of Arizona with a 4.0 GPA. I am a geology major with a passion for planetary science, and Mars in particular. My current research, under the direction of Dr. E. Turtle, focuses on the problem of ground ice in the Martian regolith, specifically as it applies to debris aprons.

In my search for potential graduate schools, at which I intend to pursue a Ph.D. in planetary geology, I noticed that the University of Pittsburg has both a planetary geology component to their program, and a new GIS laboratory. The possibility of applying GIS technology to Martian datasets intrigues me. Does an opportunity to conduct this type of research exist at your institution? Could you recommend a professor whose interests might be a good fit to mine?

Thank you in advance for any assistance you might give me in this matter. Please feel free to contact me at the above address or directly by e-mail if you prefer.

Thanks again,

Your Name Here

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28 June 2003

Professor Geoffrey Miller  
University of New Mexico  
1 University of New Mexico  
MSC03 2220  
Albuquerque, NM 87131-1161  
(505) 277-1967  
[gfmiller@unm.edu](mailto:gfmiller@unm.edu)

Dear Dr. Miller:

I am a senior at the University of Arizona and I am very interested studying in your research program. I have read your book, *The Mating Mind*, many of your recent publications on the subject of fitness indicators, and heard you speak at a colloquium at the University of Arizona in the spring of 2003 and find the idea of sexual selection driving evolution on the basis of fitness indicators very intriguing and useful theoretical approach when studying other areas of interest in the field. As a Ronald E. McNair Research scholar I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Professor Aurelio Jose Figueredo on the relationships between sensational interests and antisocial behavior with promising initial results. Although fitness indicators are not part of this study I believe that further investigation may find that sensational interests are fitness indicators for short-term mating strategies.

While looking at your published works I found that although I am very interested in your theoretical approach my interests seem to differ from yours. I did not find very much research dealing with the darker side of human behavior like psychopathy, antisocial behavior, or criminality, areas in which what I am very interested. Would your research program allow me to pursue those types of interests?

I would like to thank you in advance for an answer to this question. If it is more convenient you can respond via email at [wollon@email.arizona.edu](mailto:wollon@email.arizona.edu).

Thank you,

Your Name Here

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28 June 2003

Prof. Vincent C. Bond  
Morehouse School of Medicine  
720 Westview Dr., MEB 1222  
Atlanta, GA 30310-1495  
Phone: 404-752-1862  
Email: [bond@msm.edu](mailto:bond@msm.edu)

Dear Dr. Bond:

I am currently a junior undergraduate studying at the University of Arizona in Tucson. I am majoring in biochemistry. I am interested in attending the Morehouse School of Medicine in your department. I have read the type of research that you perform in your laboratories. At this point in my life I am assisting Dr. Tim Bowden conducting research on skin cancer the research that I am involved in is apoptosis I am mainly looking for new drugs that will cause programmed cell death, which I find very interesting.

I am writing with two queries: (1) "T lymphocyte depletion is a result of cell killing (apoptosis) predominantly in uninfected or "bystander" cells, with a distinct lack of cell killing in the productively infected cells themselves. A number of factors, including HIV-1 Nef have been implicated in protecting infected cells." I was wondering if you could give me some information on the mechanism. (2) Are there other members of the faculty who might be of great interest to me?

I would really appreciate any information that you send me you can contact me via email or to the address above

[needs close]