

## Requesting Letters of Recommendation

Most importantly, ask early! Give your recommenders three to five weeks' notice in order to write letters for you. If this is the first letter they are writing for you, give them extra time to prepare.

- Think carefully about whom to ask for letters of recommendation. Seek out the people who know you well. The writers' depth of knowledge about you is more important than their title or position.
- Make appointments to discuss your application plans in person (or by phone, if necessary) with your prospective recommenders. Tell them what you are applying for - and why; ask them if they feel they could write a strong letter for you at this time.
- Write a couple of paragraphs for your recommenders describing the program you are applying for. This should include information about the nature of the award (e.g., graduate study, research, English teaching, summer internship, etc.) and the broader goals of the program (e.g., supporting the environment, providing international experiences, promoting scientific careers, etc.). If the award has a specific focus, such as leadership or supporting future scientists, you should mention this as well. Also mention if you will be working with a specific advisor or supervisor of an academic program.
- Provide drafts of your personal and project essays that address: a) why you are applying for the particular opportunity; b) what you hope to accomplish during the program; c) what relevant experience you have; d) how participating in the program would assist you in achieving your educational, service or professional goals; and e) mention if there are any special circumstances you would like them to be aware of.
- Give your recommenders an updated resume listing your most recent activities and accomplishments. Make sure your resume includes any co-curricular activities, service work, sports activities or honors.
- Provide them with accurate information about deadlines and submission procedures. *Be clear about the deadline.* If there are forms they should fill out, provide them with those forms – and make sure to fill out any parts you are responsible for. Let them know if the recommendations are to be submitted on-line, delivered to you to submit, or delivered to the Fellowships office. If the letters are to be mailed via hard copy, provide them with addressed stamped envelopes.
- A week before the deadline, check back to see if they have all the information that they need!
- Last but not least, don't neglect follow-up! Your recommenders will invest considerable time and thought in preparing your letters, so write them thank you notes and be sure to let them know the outcome of your application. Paper thank you notes or cards are always appreciated!