

Letters of Recommendation

Strong letters of recommendation are critical and essential for strong fellowship, scholarship, and graduate school applications. Letters of recommendation stem from a relationship established with a research mentor or a professor during a semester or over a longer period of time, and it is important to start building these relationships early in your college career. It can often times seem difficult to "get to know" faculty or other mentors due to busy schedules and competing priorities, however, it can be done if students make the effort. Developing a relationship that can lead to a useful letter of recommendation is up to the student.

When asking for a letter of recommendation, be sure you are asking someone who can speak to your specific skills and abilities. It is also crucial that the letter writer is familiar with the scholarship/fellowship opportunity that you are applying for and that you have provided letter writers with any information suggested by the Scholarship Foundation. Be sure that their insight is pertinent to the opportunity for which you are applying (for example, if applying for the Goldwater Scholarship, you would want to seek out letter writers who have seen or worked with you on research projects).

You should ask the writer for a letter of recommendation three to four weeks before the deadline, if possible. Two weeks before the deadline should be considered the minimum advance notice. Here is some advice on whom to ask and how to:

CONTACT

Location: [Unity Hall](#)

Phone: [508-831-5381](tel:508-831-5381)

Fax: 508-831-5846

academic-advising@wpi.edu



Think Through the Application Process First



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