

We truly appreciate your input in the selection process for the prestigious NSF Graduate Research Fellowships. As you know, letters of reference play a crucial role in the review and selection of awardees. Complete information regarding the NSF GRFP can be found in the Program Announcement, on the Main GRFP page under Quick Links. Reference Letters must comply with the format requirements below.

### **Reference Letter Format Requirements:**

- Letters are limited to **2-pages**
- Letters should be written using standard 8.5" × 11" page size , 12-point, Times New Roman font and 1" margins on all sides
- Letters must be single spaced or greater - character spacing should use normal (100%) single-line space option
- Letters must be submitted on professional letterhead
- Letters must be signed

### **In your letter, please address the following issues explicitly:**

1. Please include the name of your department and institution, and tell us how long you have known the applicant, and in what capacity.
2. Using your knowledge of the applicant's past and current research experience and activities, please comment on his/her potential to (a) succeed in graduate school, (b) conduct original research, (c) communicate effectively, (d) work cooperatively with peers and supervisors, and (e) make unique contributions to his/her chosen discipline and to society in general.
3. If you have known or supervised other NSF Graduate Research Fellows, please compare this applicant to them. Otherwise, please compare this applicant to other successful graduate students or senior undergraduates that you have known in your institution or through your interactions with other institutions.
4. Please comment on the broader impacts of supporting this applicant, including

his/her leadership potential in the chosen field of graduate work and in general, as a member of the scientific/technical community.

Please note that the more specific (as opposed to generic) a letter you can provide, the better it is for the candidate. If you are the candidate's research supervisor, then please comment on the originality of his/her proposal, and what role you played in assisting the student with the proposal. The NSF GRFP review criteria are summarized below for your convenience.

## **Review Criteria for the Graduate Research Fellowships**

GRFP panelists (reviewers) are asked to address two issues that are the basis of NSF's merit review criteria.

**Intellectual Merit:** The intellectual merit criterion includes demonstrated intellectual ability and other accepted requisites for scholarly scientific study, such as the ability (1) to plan and conduct research; (2) to work as a member of a team as well as independently; and (3) to interpret and communicate research findings. Panelists are instructed to consider: the strength of the academic record, the proposed plan of research, the description of previous research experience, the appropriateness of the choice of references and the extent to which they indicate merit and the appropriateness of the choice of institution for fellowship tenure relative to the proposed plan of research.

**Broader Impacts:** The broader impacts criterion includes contributions that (1) effectively integrate research and education at all levels, infuse learning with the excitement of discovery, and assure that the findings and methods of research are communicated in a broad context and to a large audience; (2) encourage diversity, broaden opportunities, and enable the participation of all citizens-women and men, underrepresented minorities, and persons with disabilities-in science and research; (3) enhance scientific and technical understanding; and (4) benefit society. Applicants may provide characteristics of their background, including personal, professional, and educational experiences, to indicate their potential to fulfill the broader impacts criterion.