

APPLYING TO FELLOWSHIPS AT COLUMBIA AND BEYOND

URF's Guide to securing strong letters of recommendation

Dear Fellowship Applicant:

Letters of recommendations are a crucial component in all fellowship applications that you apply for. They provide unique insights into your ability and character that are not apparent in other parts of your application. They also allow selection committees to gain new perspectives on your work and your prospective project.

In selecting references, ask those who know you the best! If you are applying for a postgraduate degree or for a research opportunity, this person should ideally be in your field, as they can serve as an 'expert witness' on your behalf. Faculty are the main source of letters of recommendation, but some fellowships are open to letters from others who have gotten to know you--supervisors, volunteer coordinators, coaches--and can speak to your unique qualities. The rapport you have with this person should be the priority when deciding who might write for you. Faculty members should be able to talk about your intellectual interests and academic achievements in a way that sets you apart from others. They should know you well enough to connect your application materials to the goal(s) of the program. Other letter writers might speak to your leadership qualities, work ethic, community engagement, professional aspirations, or other attributes.

In asking for a letter of recommendation, remember that the more information you can provide your reference with, the easier you're making their task of writing you the strongest letter possible. Use the attached guide as a reference for soliciting letters of recommendation for a fellowship opportunity, along with suggested materials that you should provide your reference in order to help them in writing a dynamic letter on your behalf.

And, of course, should you have any questions - whether about who to ask, how to ask, or how to best support your references along the way, please do not hesitate to be in touch with an advisor at URF!

Sincerely,

The URF Team

 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Undergraduate Research
& Fellowships

For inquiries, reach us at:

202 Hamilton Hall
e: ugrad-urf@columbia.edu
w: urf.columbia.edu

REFERENCE CHECKLIST

TIMELINE

PRIOR TO & FOLLOWING DEADLINE

- PRIOR TO ASKING FOR A LETTER, MEET WITH YOUR POTENTIAL REFERENCE FOR ADVISING, FEEDBACK, SUGGESTIONS, POTENTIAL CONTACTS, THOUGHTS ON THE PROGRAM/UNIVERSITY/RESEARCH TO WHICH YOU ARE APPLYING;
- 4-6 WEEKS PRIOR: SCHEDULE A MEETING TO FORMALLY REQUEST THE LETTER OR COMMUNICATE THE REQUEST BY E-MAIL;
- 1 WEEK PRIOR: SEND A KIND REMINDER OF UPCOMING DEADLINE;
- UPON SUBMISSION: SEND A 'THANK YOU' NOTE;
- FOLLOW UP LATER TO NOTIFY THEM OF THE OUTCOME.

MATERIALS

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS YOU SHOULD PROVIDE YOUR REFERENCE WITH

- AN UPDATED RESUME OR C.V.;
- RECENT CU TRANSCRIPT, PLUS ANY OTHER RELEVANT COLLEGIATE TRANSCRIPTS (E.G. STUDY ABROAD, TRANSFER);
- PREVIOUS PROJECTS/ESSAYS WRITTEN FOR THEIR COURSE (WITH COMMENTS ATTACHED IF POSSIBLE);
- DRAFT(S) OF APPLICATION MATERIALS (EVEN IF A FIRST, ROUGH DRAFT - YOU CAN ALWAYS POLITELY ASK FOR FEEDBACK!);
- FACULTY RESOURCE SHEET (A LETTER WE HAVE DEVELOPED FOR YOU, THAT EXPLAINS TO YOUR LETTER WRITER WHAT THE SELECTION COMMITTEE IS LOOKING FOR IN THE LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION. YOU CAN FIND THESE ON OUR WEBSITE, OR WITHIN THE COLUMBIA APPLICATION PORTAL))

INFORMATION

IMPORTANT FELLOWSHIP DETAILS

- YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION AND AVAILABILITY FOR THE COMING WEEKS, SHOULD THEY HAVE ANY FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS;
- WEBSITE LINK(S) TO THE OPPORTUNITY AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT LINKS (E.G. THE DEGREE PROGRAM YOU ARE APPLYING TO, THE INTERNSHIP YOU HOPE TO TAKE ON, YOUR ONLINE ART PORTFOLIO, ETC.);
- WRITTEN INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMITTING THE LETTER OF REFERENCE;
- WRITTEN OR E-MAILED INFORMATION ABOUT WHY YOU ARE APPLYING TO THIS OPPORTUNITY, WHY YOU'VE ASKED THIS PERSON SPECIFICALLY TO WRITE A LETTER, AND IDEAS FOR HOW THEY MIGHT SPEAK TO YOUR CANDIDACY (SEE THE BELOW QUESTIONS AND DEVELOP A COMMUNICATION THAT YOU CAN SEND TO YOUR LETTER WRITER BASED ON YOUR ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS).

Undergraduate Research & Fellowships

FELLOWSHIP REFERENCE WORKSHEET

NAME

FELLOWSHIP APPLYING
FOR

FELLOWSHIP WEBSITE

DEADLINE

WRITE A 200-WORD (MINIMUM) RESPONSE TO THE
FOLLOWING PROMPTS:

Why I am applying to this fellowship?

Why I am asking you, *specifically*, to support my candidacy?

How does this opportunity relate to my short- and longer-term academic and/or professional goals?

How do my core values, beliefs, ideals, goals align with those this fellowship seeks to promote?

2-3 activities that I participate in or experiences I've had, which will help me be successful in this role (and why each will lend to my success):

2-3 abilities, skills, character traits that I will bring to this fellowship (and why each will help me be successful in this role):

Additional information, which might be helpful to know about me, my pursuit of this opportunity, and/or this fellowship: