

## Making Faculty Connections—The Dos of Asking for Letters of Recommendation

Junior Jumpstart 2016

Asking for letters of recommendation can be a frightening prospect for any one. The best way to make the letter asking and letter writing process easier for all involved is to be prepared and considerate. The process of cultivating a strong letter of recommendation consists of three parts:

1. Choosing your letter writers.
2. Making contact and asking for a letter.
3. Providing your letter writer with EVERYTHING they need to write a strong letter.

### Choosing your letter writers

- Someone who knows your work and capabilities.
- Pay attention to the application criteria. Who do they want to evaluate your abilities?

### Making contact and asking for a letter

- Ask at least 4-6 WEEKS in advance.
- Always ask in person whenever possible.
- Sample ask: *“I would like to ask you to consider writing me a letter of recommendation for my \_\_\_\_\_ application. In order to help you with this decision, I have some written reflections about my experiences with you in the classroom (or other) and how they relate to my decision to be a \_\_\_\_\_. Can you read it now, and then can we talk about it to clarify any questions you might have?”*

### Preparing your letter writer

- Give them all the necessary application materials with clear instructions—personal statements, essays, transcripts, current resume, activity lists, etc.
- **\*\*Look at the letter of recommendation form prompts.\*\* Write one or two paragraphs for your letter writer about how you feel you best exemplify the qualities/qualifications about which the letter writer is to address. Mention specifically how work you have completed for them relates to the application qualifications. Include this writing in the application materials you give to the letter writer. Don’t forget to draw their attention to it!**
- Fill out all forms and provide addressed and stamped envelopes.
- Provide clear directions on deadlines, especially if you are asking for multiple letters for different applications.
- Give copies of relevant work you have done in your letter writer’s class, including papers with comments if you have them.

Follow-up with the appropriate campus office (Overseas Programs, PreHealth, Fellowships, etc.) or with the organization directly to check on the status of your letters. You can send a polite reminder a few days before the letter deadline if needed.