

UI Undergraduate Fellowships

Guide to *Supporting* Recommenders

Asking for a recommendation can make even the most confident person anxious. What if you ask and the professor says “No”? What if your supervisor says “Yes”, but does not offer the committee a positive take on you or your potential? Inviting a teacher or mentor to share what they think of you and your potential can feel risky, but when you approach the conversation with care and preparation, the exchange can strengthen your relationship with your writer (and help you tap into their expert knowledge).

Information you can share to make it easier for them to say “Yes” AND to write a great letter:

- a brief description of the mission or purpose of the scholarship, fellowship, or position you are pursuing
- a list of or link to the selection criteria,
- a current resume or curriculum vitae (CV)
- a list of your other writers when this is relevant and possible, *including*:
 - *a brief explanation of your relationship to them*
 - *how long you've known the other writers*
 - *what characteristics/traits/experiences you will ask them to address in their letters*
- concise descriptions of **relevant** academic, scholarly or professional research or projects.
- a list of potential sites (laboratory, for your research/internship/fellowship, including brief explanations of your interest or connection to each opportunity.
- a draft of the application essay is ideal, but if that is not possible, it is wise to share an outline or summary of your ideas.
- Clear instructions to follow when your recommender is:
 - Addressing the letter
 - Formatting or printing the letter (Letterhead? Electronic signature?)
 - Submitting (mailing or emailing) the letter or reference

This information should include the recommender or reference’s deadline for submission or contact, a website address and contact information for yourself, as well as for the administrator responsible for managing the application process if that is relevant to the opportunity. (A hint: Your Fellowship Advisor often has this information available to share with recommenders).

Remember to go over the most important details with your recommender! This will ensure that they take the time to read the materials you have prepared for them AND the process can help you both reconnect with the relationship and experiences that are at the root of your relationship.

Deadline reminders are appreciated and necessary for most writers and references. Everyone is busy and unexpected changes in circumstance or responsibility can be managed with thoughtful communication and purposeful support.