



July 11, 2019

Dear Potential Letter of Recommendation Writer:

You are being approached by an applicant to write a recommendation for a scholarship or fellowship for which the competition will be very strong. This applicant believes that you are uniquely qualified to comment in some detail on his or her academic achievements (or perhaps character). Because of the importance of these letters in national competition and because the nature of the letter is somewhat different from other letters we write, here are some things you may wish to consider in writing the letter:

- Address the letter “Dear [Insert Scholarship Name] Selection Committee:” Write the letter on letterhead, and include your written signature as well as your title in the signature line.
- Before agreeing to write the letter, you may find it useful to assess the extent to which you know this applicant’s academic or character strengths and academic accomplishments. If you do not know the applicant beyond the graded work for the course, you might write a helpful letter for employment or graduate school, but the letter will be of little use and could be harmful at the level of national competition, and it is perhaps better to decline the request. It is also obviously better to decline if you have reservations about the strengths of this applicant; negative remarks will almost certainly contribute to the detriment of the applicant’s application.
- If you agree to write the letter, please take some time to discuss with the applicant his or her academic curriculum at UNC (and perhaps abroad), plans for graduate work and other related activities. Ask the applicant to provide you with copies of papers and other submitted work written for your course that contain your remarks.
- You may also consider answering the following questions in writing the letter:
  - Did you have interaction with the applicant outside class hours?
  - Is it possible you could share an anecdote that might capture the applicant’s strengths or further bring the applicant to life for the reader?
  - What truly makes this applicant unique in your eyes?
  - Is this an applicant you can honestly say is among best applicants in however many years you’ve been teaching?
- Again, only in detail can a letter truly assist the applicant in winning these scholarships.

On the following pages you will find links and tips related to some of the most prestigious national scholarships. You might also review Joe Schall’s guide to writing recommendation letters, [linked here](#), which includes tips specifically for national scholarships in Chapter 6.

If you have any questions about deadlines, the format in which the letter is to be submitted, or more, please contact our office ([ods@unc.edu](mailto:ods@unc.edu); 919-843-7757).

Thank you for your assistance to this applicant. I am personally aware of the time that goes into the preparation of a strong letter and the gathering of information that it entails.

Sincerely,

Inger Brodey  
Director, Office of Distinguished Scholarships  
Professor of English and Comparative Literature

## Recommendation Guidelines & Highlights

The following serves as a brief overview of scholarships' guidelines and procedures. Please visit a scholarship's website for more thorough details.

### **Beinecke Scholarship** – [About Us](#)

*Length:* None listed.

*Highlights:* Assess the nominee's intellectual curiosity, character, and potential for advanced graduate study.

### **Boren Awards** – [Recommendations](#)

*Length:* No more than 2 pages

*Highlights:* How long and in what capacity have you known the applicant? Comment on the applicant's academic, linguistic, and personal preparation for the study abroad program, especially as they relate to Boren Scholarship objectives. If possible, comment on the applicant's understanding of the relationship between his or her study abroad program and U.S. national security as well as his or her career interests.

### **Carnegie Gaither Junior Fellows Program** – [Home Page](#)

*Length:* None listed.

*Highlights:* Recommendations can come from anyone the student feels can best speak to their abilities as a potential Gaither Junior Fellow. Fellows will conduct research, contribute to reports, and participate in meetings with high-level officials.

### **Churchill Scholarship** – [Home Page](#)

*Length:* None listed.

*Highlights:* How long have you known the applicant? In what capacity? Please comment in detail on the applicant's academic work in the sciences, engineering, or mathematics. How does the applicant rank when compared to other recent students in your department or laboratory and with other students who have won major postgraduate scholarships? How do you think he or she will perform in the independent research environment of a Cambridge Master's program?

### **Goldwater Scholarship** – [Application Tips for Recommenders](#)

*Length:* No more than three pages, one-inch margins on all sides, single spaced, 12 point Arial.

*Highlights:* Focus on student's research and likelihood of success in a research career. Examples that support statements are particularly valuable. Be as specific as possible.

### **Knight-Hennessy Scholars Program** – [Advice for Recommenders](#)

*Length:* No limit, but 250-750 words is usually sufficient. 12 point font, double-spaced.

*Highlights:* In your letter, specific details and examples are especially helpful. Recommenders who are also writing letters for the applicant's graduate degree program should write distinct letters for each. Focus on answering the specific questions that each application requires. Upon submitting the letter, you will be asked to complete a character and leadership assessment form.

### **Luce Scholars Program** – [Program Overview](#)

*Length:* None listed.

*Highlights:* Letters should be signed, and, whenever possible, represent a range of academic and professional references.

### **Marshall Scholarship** – [Information for Recommenders](#)

*Length:* No more than 1,000 words.

*Highlights:* Recommendations should comment on the candidate's general fitness for the course proposed and the suitability of the university chosen as well as considering how they meet the Commission's criteria of Academic Merit, Leadership and Ambassadorial Potential.

**Mitchell Scholarship** – [Supporting Mitchell Scholar Candidates](#)

*Length:* No more than 750 words.

*Highlights:* Successful applicants have documented evidence of significant achievement in Academic excellence, Leadership, and Commitment to community and public service.

**Rhodes Scholarship** – [Guidance for Referees](#)

*Length:* No more than 2 pages.

*Highlights:* Academic referees should include a detailed assessment of the candidate's academic qualifications, including the applicant's relative academic standing in the taught course.

**Schwarzman Scholars Program** – [About the Program](#)

*Length:* No more than 500 words.

*Highlights:* Reference letters should address the following questions: How long have you known the candidate and in what capacity? How does this candidate's intellectual and academic abilities compare to other students from your institution? Please describe this candidate's personal characteristics and experiences that will contribute to her/his potential to take on leadership roles in the future.

**Truman Scholarship** – [Home Page](#)

*Length:* No more than two pages.

*Highlights:* Recommenders are chosen to comment on one of the following: Leadership Potential and Abilities, Commitment to a Career in Public Service, or Intellect and Prospects for Continuing Academic Success. Be sure your applicant tells you which quality to focus on.

**Udall Scholarship** – [About the Scholarship](#)

*Length:* None listed.

*Highlights:* Briefly explain to the selection committee in what capacity and context you know the candidate. Provide concrete evidence of the candidate's leadership and service activities. Give examples of the candidate's personal characteristics. Convey the scope of responsibility the candidate has assumed; what impact has his or her actions had?