

May 31, 2017

Dear Recommender:

Thank you for writing a letter of recommendation for an NC State student or alum who is pursuing a nationally competitive award. We in the Fellowship Advising Office (FAO) are grateful that you are considering if you have the time and information needed to write a strong and compelling letter of recommendation for your applicant, especially since a lukewarm or generic letter can be quite damaging to an applicant's chances.

This document is meant to provide guidance on crafting an appropriate letter; as you may know, the letters for these prestigious awards are often much more specific and detailed than those written for internships or graduate school programs.

Each award program has a specific focus and mission. The applicant should share that information with you, along with their draft application materials and their reason for applying, several weeks before your letter will need to be submitted to our office or to the award program. They should also provide a link to the campus online submission form and their Unity ID.

Below are seven (7) tips for writing and submitting your letter of recommendation. When available, we will post links to award-specific advice on our FAO web pages. We are more than happy to help you troubleshoot any technical difficulties or answer any questions you may have about an award program, as well as provide any input regarding any aspect of your letter.

1. **Please make sure to address the award organization exclusively** in both the greeting and body of the letter. An appropriate greeting would be "Dear Rhodes Scholarship Selection Committee," or "Dear Schwarzman Scholars program." Do not address the letter to Dr. Tiffany Kershner, to Ms. Alsace Gallop, or to FAO.
2. **Be sure of the type of letter you are being asked to provide.** Some awards fund academic degrees, while others fund leadership development, language acquisition, or careers in leadership and service. Therefore, applicants need letters that speak specifically about their intellect, academic potential, leadership ability, commitment to service, research experience, or their character. Letters may need to focus on one of these topics, and sometimes letters can include a combination of these topics.
3. **Provide contextualized examples** of the applicant's performance and any particular incidents that illustrate the applicant's maturity, initiative, and potential.
4. **Brief letters that get to the point early in the text** and that are specific, full of detail, and enthusiastic can be both effective and refreshing for selection committees.
  - a. Be sure to honestly evaluate the applicant's:
    - i. Potential to succeed academically at the relevant institution and in the relevant degree program(s), or his/her potential to fully exploit the funded opportunity
    - ii. Motivations to pursue this particular award(s)
    - iii. Personal characteristics
  - b. Your evaluation should address:
    - i. Criteria on which you base these evaluations
    - ii. How the applicant meets your criteria

5. **Do not share your letter with the applicant.** Such sharing is typically grounds for disqualification by the award program, and FAO does not allow applicants to view any of their letters of recommendation or their letters of endorsement.
6. **Be sure to follow technical and logistical instructions** as you finalize your letter.
  - a. Both electronic and scans of hard copy letters and signatures are acceptable. Please save your signed letter as a PDF file (preferred file names include “Applicant’s Lastname, Applicant’s Firstname\_Award Program name\_LOR\_2017-18\_Your Lastname, Your Firstname”).
  - b. Letters can be (but do not have to be at this stage) on letterhead (electronic or hard copy) and should be both dated and signed.
  - c. When on letterhead, your letter of recommendation should be no more than three pages, have one-inch margins on all sides, be single-spaced or double-spaced and use a clear font such as Arial or Times New Roman, and in either 11 or 12 pt size.
  - d. If your applicant is endorsed, you may have to copy and paste your letters, and the word limit may be 1,000 words. There may also be a character limit, so please avoid formatting, as it may result in unintended symbols.
7. **Submit your letter at least one day before the relevant deadline to avoid overloaded systems.**
  - a. If the award requires an institutional selection process/nomination/endorsement, you must submit the letter to FAO before the endorsement application deadline (always on a weekday by 5PM ET).
    - i. Use the link provided by the applicant to the FAO online submission form to submit your completed letter of recommendation. This form will also be posted on the FAO website. You will receive email confirmation of receipt.
      1. If you need to instead email your letter, please write “Award Program name LOR for NAME OF APPLICANT” in the subject line and email it to [fellowship-advising@ncsu.edu](mailto:fellowship-advising@ncsu.edu).
    - ii. If the applicant is endorsed, you may need to submit the letter to the award program (usually via an online portal) before the final deadline (usually three or four weeks after the endorsement deadline).
  - b. If the award does not require endorsement, you will need to submit the letter directly to the award program (usually via an online portal) before the final deadline (common submission deadlines are at 12PM ET, 5PM ET, or 11:59PM ET on weekdays and weekends).

Thank you for your help! We know that good letters take time and effort to produce, and we deeply appreciate the strong support our applicants receive from recommenders like you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Tiffany L. Kershner, Director  
[tiffany\\_kershner@ncsu.edu](mailto:tiffany_kershner@ncsu.edu) and 919-515-2237

Ms. Alsace-Lorraine Gallop, Advisor and Recruiter  
[alsace\\_gallop@ncsu.edu](mailto:alsace_gallop@ncsu.edu) and 919-515-8391

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