

Requesting Letters of Recommendation (LOR) from Faculty

When requesting a recommendation, choose someone who knows you well. The more you engage in class, ask questions, and visit office hours, the more likely faculty will get to know you. Also consider that asking advisers might be appropriate for study abroad or experiential learning recommendations if they know your character, while faculty are best for graduate and professional school recommendations.

Frame your ask in such a way that you will be assured that the faculty member will be offering a strong recommendation. Instead of “Can you write a letter of reference for me?” try “Do you feel you know me well enough that you could write a recommendation letter?” It might be that the faculty member does not think that they are the best one to write you a letter, and that’s okay. Ask the next person on your list.

In general, you must obtain the recommender’s consent to write a LOR by email or in person at least 4 weeks before the recommendation is due. However, some faculty may require more than 4 weeks’ notice, so be sure to check with them well in advance of the due date.

Faculty may have differing requirements regarding what you provide to them. Below are common requirements as described by faculty members in the Food Systems, Nutrition, and Health major.

- Any application-required recommendation forms
- Name and address (including e-mail) of the person(s) or committee to whom the letter must be addressed
- Any specific requirements of the letter; e.g., information it must include, how it must be received, due date, etc.
- Current resumé and personal statement for the program(s) to which you are applying
- Academic and other context: when did you first meet, when did you take their class, when did you join the major, what project did you complete, when will you or did you graduate
- Faculty do not have access to your full academic record, so if you are asking them to comment on something beyond the course you took with them, you must provide your *transcripts*, including from past schools; unofficial transcripts are fine
- A *paragraph* or *bulleted list* outlining your **strengths** and **skills**; must include realistic, specific, and detailed examples based on what the faculty member observed in the classroom, knows about you, and would recall; note anything specific you’d like emphasized
- A *paragraph* or *bulleted list* outlining your **“areas for improvement”** or “growth opportunities” and how you are currently addressing these; include any specific examples, experiences, and information this specific faculty member would recall; note anything specific you’d like emphasized
- A description of any unique circumstances that may have influenced your academic success
- A *paragraph* or *bulleted list* of the hobbies, volunteer, and work activities you participated in during college
- A description of your goals and how the program you are applying to meets those goals
- Addressed and stamped envelope, if necessary

Provide electronic copies of these items attached in an e-mail to the faculty member within 48 hours of the initial request. Please check with individual faculty members for any other specific requirements.

Remember to send a thank you note to the faculty and follow up when you know the results of your application(s). They appreciate hearing how things turned out.