

Tips for Requesting Letters of Recommendation from PS/IR Faculty

One of the pleasures of being a USD professor is recommending students for internships, career positions, graduate schools, professional schools, and various awards. A strong faculty recommendation, however, requires timely and careful student preparation.

Here are some guidelines for the letter of recommendation process.

1. Request your letter of recommendation well in advance and provide your recommender with all the necessary materials at least two weeks before the due date.
2. Select faculty recommenders first and foremost on the basis of strong classroom performance. Your academic advisor typically cannot write a strong letter without a classroom connection.
3. Organize your materials carefully; begin by asking your recommender if he or she prefers supporting documentation in hard copy form rather than email attachment. A hard copy preference would of course mean sending materials by mail if you are no longer in town.
4. Ask whether your recommender prefers to submit letters on line or by mail (and be sure to know whether both options are offered.)
5. Provide all materials to your recommender in a single package or set of attachments, not in a piece by piece fashion. These materials typically include a cover note summarizing the information needed and the relevant due dates, your (unofficial) academic record or transcript, a writing sample, a resume, a photo in cases where you have not been in touch for some time, and stamped and addressed envelopes for traditional mail submissions. Highlight the course(s) you took with the recommender on the academic record.
6. Students who are requesting numerous letters (several graduate and/or professional schools and each with a different program name) should be particularly diligent about the organization of their files, (e.g. noting different due dates.)
7. Waive your right to view a recommendation unless you have consulted with your recommender and he or she has agreed to write a non-confidential letter; most faculty believe non-confidential letters have diminished value and some professors will not write them.
8. Send a message to your recommender one week before the due date so they have a reminder and your contact information (including your phone number.)
9. Let your recommender know the outcome of your application, even in the hopefully unlikely event of disappointment.