Letters of Recommendation: Policies and Notes

Below are some of the policies that I keep to make sure that great letters of recommendation go out on time and get to the right place.

- **General important things you need to know …**

  Good letters of recommendation are built on a couple of things. The first is showing your talent and work ethic. The second is having enough of a relationship with the letter writer that they can paint a good picture of you. When you ask for letters, think to yourself “who knows me as a worker, student, and person and could help me get this job or admission the most?” If you cannot think of anyone, you need to cultivate those relationships. A good letter can open the door to jobs and graduate schools as well as scholarships and honors/awards.

- **Who should be asking me for a letter?**

  If you have worked with me in my Culture, Relationships, and Health Laboratory as a Research Assistant or Graduate Student for at least 2 quarters or been a student in at least 2 classes with me, I am generally happy to write a letter for you. I find that it takes about 2 quarters to get to know a student well enough to write a good letter about their strengths (obviously, the longer I have known you the better).

  Most letters I write are for students who worked with me in my Culture, Relationships, and Health laboratory. I do write letters for exceptional students who I have had in classes but you should know that these letters are not as detailed (since I do not know students from my classes as well as I tend to know students who have worked in my lab).

  I do not write letters for students who 1) have worked less than 2 quarters in my lab, 2) have not distinguished themselves in their 2 classes with me, or 3) more rarely, have been poor research assistants/graduate students in my lab. In these cases, I either do not know you well enough to write a good letter or I may have nothing positive to say about your lab or class performance. In either case, a letter from me does not do you any good. Good letters open doors but weak or negative letters can only harm your application.

- **If I am going to write you a letter, what information and materials do you need to provide me?**

  To write a letter of recommendation, I need the following materials from you:

  1) Academic CV/resume that includes:
     a. A short summary of work or classes you did with me, including small descriptions of research projects you worked on, your duties on those
projects, and/or the classes that you took with me and important assignments that you completed as part of those classes;

b. Any other research experience, including small descriptions of the research and your duties;

c. Any relevant work/volunteer experience;

d. A list of relevant classes and the grades you got in those classes;

e. Relevant entrance exam scores (e.g., GRE’s, MCAT’s etc.) broken down by section.

2) UCI transcripts

3) Statement of Purpose and/or other essays that you are submitting to the program/school;

4) A list of the programs, schools, or jobs that you are applying for and the deadlines by which the letter must be received (see sample on last page). If you are applying to psychology Ph.D. programs, also include a list of the professors you might want to work with along with a short description of the program and any other relevant information.

You also need to provide me with all of the necessary forms and letter mailing materials:

1) If the letter needs to be uploaded online, send me:
   a. the email message with the URL for uploading.

2) If I am sending the letter directly to the schools, please make sure to get me:
   a. The specific instructions from the schools/programs you are applying for;
   b. Stamped, addressed envelopes for each program;
   c. Any forms that need to be completed with the letter.

3) If you are using a letter service, please make sure to get me:
   d. Letter service instructions;
   e. Any relevant forms;
   f. Addresses/contact numbers for service;
   g. Addressed envelopes if you want me to mail your letter to the service.

NOTE: Online and paper forms that request name, address, and affiliation information of the recommender must be completed by you BEFORE the forms are passed on to me. My information is:

Name: Belinda Campos, Ph.D.
Title: Professor
Address: Department of Chicano/Latino Studies
       3151 Social Science Plaza A
       University of California, Irvine
       Irvine, CA 92697-5100
       phone: 949-824-1792
       fax: 949-824-1019
       email: bcampos@uci.edu
Frequently Asked Questions

• When do I need to get my letter of rec materials to you?

You need to let me know that you need a letter from me at least 5 weeks before your first deadline. Once we are agreed that I will write a letter for you, I need all letter of recommendation material approximately 2 weeks before your first deadline.

Note: If you are using a letter service, you may want leave even more time than that for it to be sent to the service, put on file, and then officially sent out. Remember, the more time you give me the more likely it is than I can get your letter out in time.

• Anything else?

I do NOT give letters directly to students, so please do not ask. I mail or upload letters to schools directly. If you are concerned that a program wants you to mail all the materials in one packet, call the school ahead of time – all programs accept letters sent directly from faculty. This method helps preserve confidentiality and assures admissions committees that the letter contains an honest assessment of your strengths and potential for the program.

• And one more thing …

For the same reasons of protecting confidentiality and assuring honest assessments, when forms ask you whether you want to waive your right to review letters of recommendation you need to indicate YES. This is standard procedure. Please note that I do not write letters if you do not waive access.
# Sample Master Checklist of Graduate Programs, Letter Requirements, & Deadlines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>DEADLINE</th>
<th># OF COPIES OF LETTERS</th>
<th>SPECIFIC CONTENT</th>
<th>METHOD OF SUBMISSION</th>
<th>PAPER COVER SHEET</th>
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<tr>
<td>UCSB</td>
<td>Nov. 24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northwestern</td>
<td>Dec. 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Student Name, Program, SSN</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Tufts University</td>
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