

RESOURCES FOR WRITING UNBIASED LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Faculty members are frequently asked to write letters of recommendation for students who have taken one or more of their classes, who worked with them as mentees, or with whom they interacted in clubs or other campus activities. Writing those letters supports a potential opportunity for our students, but also can be a challenge. Below are some resources to assist you as you consider student requests to write letters for scholarships, awards, internships, jobs, graduate education, etc.

Note that you will be most effective if you are honest with students about what you will (or will not) be able to say – and be honest in your letters. Invite students to share as much information as possible related to their applications: resume/CV, unofficial transcripts, description(s) of what they are applying for and relevant criteria, their draft application materials, and submission information. Also, be sure to talk with your students early in the semester about the importance of getting to know their professors (coming to office hours, performing well, speaking up in class), and staying in touch over time if they might want a letter long after your class ends.

More valuable tips and suggestions are found in the resources below – including information on how to avoid gender and racial biases in your letters.

Best Practices for Writing Letters of Recommendation: JJ Faculty Development Day, Spring 2020

Elizabeth Broccoli, JD – Pre-Law Institute & CPO and Edgardo Sanabria-Valentín, PhD – PRISM

Presentation slides: <https://fdd2017.commons.gc.cuny.edu/wp-content/blogs.dir/3284/files/2020/01/RecLetter-Slides2020.pdf>

Recording (presentation begins at 7:55; paste link in browser): <https://youtu.be/NOdpL2DPLLk>

General Tips: Georgetown University Center for Research and Fellowships

These include Do's and Don'ts in letter writing, how to say no to a request, avoiding bias in letters (<https://crf.georgetown.edu/avoiding-bias-in-recommendation-letters/>), as well as additional resources on how to write strong recommendation letters (<https://crf.georgetown.edu/additional-resources-for-writing-recommendation-letters/>).

Avoiding Racial Bias:

Asmeret Asefaw Berhe and Sora Kim - University of California, Merced:

<https://aaberhe.files.wordpress.com/2019/03/avoiding-racial-bias-in-reference-writing.pdf>

The Muse: <https://www.themuse.com/advice/avoid-racial-bias-reference-letters>

Avoiding Gender Bias:

ADVANCE RIT:

<https://www.rit.edu/nsfadvance/sites/rit.edu/nsfadvance/files/docs/Examples%20of%20Bias%20in%20Letters%20of%20Recommendation%2015OCT2018.pdf>

Sharonne Hayes, published by **LinkedIn**: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/5-tips-writing-great-letters-reference-avoiding-bias-sharonne-hayes>

University of Arizona:

https://csw.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/avoiding_gender_bias_in_letter_of_reference_writing.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3PhCJTQ3CLnaz4Gc5fbhyG0sJfSWt693yH2YUTpoaDkaVXhhDTYbtdnIQ