Letters of recommendation guidelines
Prof. Engel
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Requesting recommendation letters

Under most circumstances, I will agree to write recommendation letters if I have had the opportunity to interact with you and have a good sense of the quality of your classroom, laboratory, or research work. Importantly, the positions you are applying for should relate to the work we have done together, and I expect you to have demonstrated interest, integrity, and effort in this subject. You don't need to be the most outspoken student in the classroom or have the highest exam scores for me to write you a strong recommendation letter. In most cases I will only write letters for students who have completed an entire semester or winter study period in my courses or laboratory.

If you would like me to write a letter on your behalf and you are on campus, set up an appointment to meet in my office so we can discuss the positions in which you are interested. This meeting should be scheduled at least one month before the earliest date a letter is due. Discussing why you are interested in the positions you are applying for, how your experiences got you interested in the program/position, and how the program/position will help you reach your personal goals will help me craft your letter.

Materials to support my letter writing

After I have agreed to write recommendation letters for you, you should provide documents that will help me write your recommendation and organize letter submission. These documents should be sent electronically or uploaded and shared, and contain the following:

- A list of the positions that require a letter or reference including institution/program/job title, short position description, letter submission instructions, any relevant links, and submission due date. The letter list must be well organized and can be in any convenient format, including Word document, Excel spreadsheet, .pdf, and Google doc.
- Your Williams transcript.
- Drafts of personal statements and relevant experience descriptions that are often requested in your sections of the application.

I am very willing to submit multiple letters to similar or different programs or positions, but if you are requesting more than ten different letters I expect you to justify the large number of candidate positions. Finally, if new opportunities come to your attention it is fine if you contact me and update your letter request list.

Your responsibilities after applications are submitted

To help me better advise future applicants I would like for you to update me on the results of the applications for which I provided a reference. Any additional knowledge and tips about finding opportunities and building strong applications is also very useful.

Furthermore, I would be happy to advise you if you have to make decisions between programs/positions, or if you'd like to improve your application and experience to reapply to the same or similar programs/positions.