

## **Tips on Obtaining Letters of Recommendation from Faculty Members**

### **Who should you ask?**

- Ask a professor who knows you well enough to comment on your potential to be successful in graduate school. A professor who had you in one large lecture class might not remember you and, therefore, is not a good choice.
- Plan ahead for getting a letter from someone by giving them a chance to get to know you. For example, in classes take opportunities to interact with them (ask questions, communicate your interest), complete any extra assignments in the course to demonstrate your interest/abilities, take research or special topics credit with them, etc. They are more likely to say yes to writing for you and to be able to give you a strong letter if you do that.
- Asking professors from departments outside of Psychology is acceptable too.

### **How should you ask?**

- Be very courteous. Faculty are addressed as Dr. or Professor.
- Ask if the professor would be willing to write a letter or fill out a recommendation form for you and if they have the time to do it within the time frame in which you need the letter.
- Remember to ask if he/she will write you a GOOD letter of recommendation- that way you know there won't be any surprises or disappointments if the professor doesn't know you well enough to write a good letter.

### **When should you ask?**

- Ask the professor what time frame they need to write your letter. Allow the professor at least 3-4 weeks to write them. Keep in mind they are likely writing letters for other students too and also maintaining their already busy schedules.

### **What materials do professors need in order to write your letter of recommendation?**

- Provide each faculty with an organized packet of materials containing:
  - Stamped, addressed envelopes to all the schools you are applying to
  - If the letter should be returned to you (to be sent with your application materials) make sure the name of the school and your name are on the envelope
  - A copy of your curriculum vita
  - A copy of your personal statement
- Any forms that schools may have to supplement the letter of recommendation. Fill out as much information on the forms that you can so that the professor can concentrate on writing the letter (i.e., name of letter writer, his or her job title, contact information, etc.).
- If you are asked to indicate whether or not you waive access to the letter of recommendation, be sure to answer that you **do** waive the right. Answering otherwise gives the appearance of not trusting your letter writer or the information the letter may contain, and it decreases the effectiveness of the letter.
- GPA, GRE scores and the types of programs you are applying to are also helpful (example: Clinical Ph.D. programs, School Psychology masters programs).
- A copy of your transcript so that the professor can see the courses you've taken and how you've performed
- A paragraph explaining your educational/career goals is also informative