

Sea Grant Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship

Tips for Selecting/working with a letter writer

Knauss Applicants need to submit two letters of recommendation with their application materials.

The first letter must be: A faculty member associated with the student's current enrollment who has knowledge of the student's academic and research (where applicable) performance.

The second letter should be from: An individual who has worked with the student.

The letters should:

1. Discuss the following attributes of the student: self-motivation, response to setbacks, skills and involvement in teamwork, collaborative leadership skills, willingness to learn a new skill or topic, academic performance and potential, and anything else the review panel should know about the strengths that the student will bring to the fellowship."
2. Meet the following expectations:
 - a. Demonstrate a knowledge of the student and their abilities
 - b. Speak to the leadership potential, confidence, maturity and self-direction of the student
 - c. Provide evidence of the student's willingness and flexibility to tackle issues beyond their area of expertise and an openness and capacity to expand experiences
 - d. Provide evidence of the student's ability to convey scientific knowledge in broader, non-scientific contexts.

The recommendation letters are scored along with the rest of your application. A well-written letter could be the difference between an applicant receiving a fellowship position.

Who should I pick for my letters?

1. **Academic** – although there are less options here, try to select an academic advisor who is well versed with your work, and who has known you long enough to speak to the expectations listed above.
2. **Other** – Try to find someone outside of your current academic program so that they can offer a diverse perspective on your experiences and skills.
 - a. **Examples:** Employer from a past job, internship or volunteer position; mentor, stakeholder from research, etc.

General Tips:

1. Talk with your letter writer about the above-mentioned expectations. Make sure they have enough information to write you a strong letter.
2. Give your letter writers a copy of the Fellowship Announcement, specifically the call for recommendation letters that outlines what is expected.
3. Give your letter writers adequate time to write a meaningful letter (4-6 weeks).
4. Remind your letter writer about the upcoming due date.
5. Explain to your letter writers that the letters are to be scored as part of your application. If they are not able to commit the appropriate amount of time to the matter, seek out someone else.
6. Ask to see the letter of recommendation prior to it being submitted so that you can ensure it speaks to the above-mentioned expectations.
7. Do not ask relatives, friends, or members of Congress to write your letters.