

Advice to Students Seeking Letters of Recommendation from SOU Chemistry Faculty

Letters of recommendation can have a huge impact on an application. As such, it is important that a student choose the proper faculty member to write letters of support and provide that faculty member with ALL the information needed to write as strong of a letter as possible. Furthermore, letters of recommendation have to be an honest assessment of a student's potential to succeed. The reputation of SOU's Chemistry Department is also at stake. Keep in mind, when a faculty member writes a letter, it is a time-consuming endeavor and it is done with care. Students should request these letters with equal seriousness and care.

Choosing the Right Faculty Member

Choosing the right faculty member for a letter requires thought. Here are things to consider before deciding on an appropriate recommender. What type of application are you submitting? A scholarship recommendation is very different from a letter to an employer which is equally distinct from letters directed at graduate or professional programs. For scholarship recommendations, especially SOU or community-related ones, it is acceptable to have faculty from 100, 200, or 300-level courses write you letters of support. In Chemistry, this might often include laboratory instructors that you have had for general or organic chemistry. USEM and general education faculty are also appropriate choices. However, for employers, graduate programs, professional schools (medicine, dentistry, law, etc.), and/or fellowships, a different set of considerations is necessary. Choose faculty who taught you in an upper-division course (very preferably a lab course if you are seeking employment in science or pursuing graduate study) where you have been successful (read as 'B' or higher grades, if possible). Seriously consider your research advisor for graduate programs. In all cases, this person should also be someone who can comment favorably on your character traits: maturity, dependability, work ethic, attitude, ability to work with others, and oral and written communication skills.

Keep in mind that the strength and breadth of a recommendation letter is influenced by the level of effort you put into your courses and lab work. Equally as important is how well your faculty member has gotten to know you, your skills, abilities, and interests. Therefore, it is in your best interest to attend office hours and ask questions before/during/after class. Doing so will help your recommender write a letter that goes beyond your test scores and transcript and will serve to distinguish you from other applicants.

Timeframe

Contact your professors as early as possible (at least two weeks prior to the submission deadline); last minute requests will lead to last-minute effort by the recommender (if done at all).

Very Important Note

It takes approximately two hours to write, address, print, sign, and send out a set of recommendation letters for a student. Therefore, submission of a complete and well-organized set of documents will allow faculty to focus on writing your letter rather than spending time locating the information to do so. In other words, fulfilling the *requirements* noted in the following pages (many of which will be required components of your application materials) will allow your recommender to prepare an informative, comprehensive, and thorough recommendation letter.

SOU Chemistry Department *Requirements to Obtain Recommendation Letters*

You **MUST** waive your right to view the recommendation letters

Requests for letters must be made *in person*

All required documents must be submitted *at least two weeks* prior to submission deadlines

You must **submit** your ***completed application*** *at least one week prior to the submission deadline*

Your recommender will begin writing letters once you have submitted your *completed* application AND informed him/her *via email* that you have completed and submitted your application

Submit ALL paperwork and documentation to your recommender in **ONE** Email message using Google Drive

Exception: Forms signed by students should be submitted to the recommender in person

For letters to be sent by postal mail, obtain blank SOU envelopes from your recommender, address the envelopes (but do not add a stamp, SOU will cover the cost of postage), and return them to your recommender *at least one week prior to the submission deadline*

For ALL forms (paper *and* electronic):

Fill out ALL requested information, including YOUR information, signature, and date AND your recommender's contact information, e.g.:

Hala G. Schepmann, Ph.D.
Professor of Bioorganic Chemistry
Southern Oregon University
Department of Chemistry
1250 Siskiyou Boulevard
Ashland, Oregon 97520-5072
Email: schepmah@sou.edu
Office: 541-552-8172
Fax: 541-552-6415

One week prior to your FIRST application deadline, send your recommender a **friendly Email reminder** checking to see if he/she has submitted your recommendation letters – unless he/she has already notified you that they were submitted.

Submit ALL of the following in ONE Email to your recommender

1. Your unofficial SOU transcript

2. A resume

Include information regarding your honors/awards/accomplishments, work/research experiences, activities, and sports involvement
Be sure to note the amount of *time you spent* on each these *while you were enrolled in your recommender's classes/research group*

3. All personal statements/essays and research interests/proposals

Be sure to check for typographical, spelling, and grammatical errors, as this will impact the assessment of your communication skills and professionalism

*It is appropriate to ask your recommender for feedback on your statements/essays

4. A chronological list of all courses taken with your recommender, include course name or number, term and year, and grade earned

5. A chronological list of presentations given in courses taken with your recommender

Be sure to include the course name or number, term and year, and presentation title

Also, be sure to submit your PowerPoint presentations

6. For all programs/scholarships, etc... for which you are requesting a recommendation letter,

submit a spreadsheet with ALL of the following information:

Degree/Fellowship/ Scholarship Seeking	Program Type	School	Area/Discipline of Interest	Application Completed and Submitted	Recommendation Letter Deadline	Form of Submission	Contact Name (include their Title) and Address
Ph.D., M.D., Graduate Fellowship	Medicine, Nursing, Chemistry, NSF Graduate Fellowship	U. of Oregon, National Science Foundation	Pediatrics, Organic Synthesis, Computational Chemistry	YES	3/15/115	AMCAS, Interfolio, Will receive an Email, Will need to send via postal mail	e.g. Keith Hodgson, Ph.D. Chair Stanford University Dept of Chemistry 2575 Sand Hill Road Menlo Park, CA 94025