

Letter of Recommendation Request for a Biocore Instructor

Preface

As Biocore instructors, we get a tremendous number of requests for letters of recommendation—not surprising since our students are high achievers and aspire to go to graduate school, participate in internships, apply for scholarships and many other activities that require letters of recommendation. Given that we get to know some students quite well over two years in Biocore, we are happy to write letters to help students rise to the next level of their academic career. However, there are a number of situations when we will decline a request to write a letter, primarily, if we feel we do not know you well enough or cannot write a strong personal letter for a variety of reasons. So... before you ask for a letter, think carefully about whether the letter writer knows you well enough (e.g. have you worked with your potential letter writer on a one-on-one basis through a Biocore class or special project; as a research, career and/or academic advisor: have you been a Biocore Peer Mentor, Biocore Peer Adviser, Biocore Outreach Ambassadors, BOD, Biocore Prairie Crew, or done other special work in Biocore). In order to write letter to reward your past scholarship or support your future work, we need to be able to write about your character, your learning, and the quality of your work above and beyond what a reader can find in your transcript. Give us an opportunity to get to know you and observe these traits. If we are impressed, we are happy to share our observations with others!

Etiquette for requesting a Letter of Recommendation

- Ask for a letter at least **ONE MONTH BEFORE** it is due. **TWO MONTHS** is preferable and will make your recommender much more likely to complete your letter on time with a smile :). Do NOT request a letter with less than two weeks' notice.
- Get to know your potential letter writer. Go and speak with them about your academic work. The more interactions you have with your letter writer, the more opportunities they have to observe you and to get to know how you work.
- We often ask our Biocore graduate TAs to co-write or contribute to our letters of recommendation. If you feel that one of your Biocore TAs could provide unique insights about your work in the Biocore program, consider asking them to contribute to your letter.
- Consider your potential letter writer- the more information you can provide them the better. In most cases, your recommender will ask to make an appointment to talk with them about the letter and to describe your materials in more depth. See list of materials below.
- *Graduate School specific LOR requests:* Graduate schools do not have a common application and, therefore, require more customized information from letter writers (e.g. custom survey response). This takes a great deal of time and therefore, we respectfully ask that you carefully select no more than 10 schools for letter submission. Please do your "homework" and carefully review the graduate programs and potential mentors (PIs) before you request a letter. Here is a [great set of YouTube videos providing guidance on grad school selection](#) from another UW school (☺)

List of Materials to Provide your Letter Writer

1. Current transcript (unofficial OK)
2. List of extracurricular activities and roles during your college career that have helped prepare you for your next steps (resume is fine).
3. If you worked in a lab, please provide the PI's name as well as the name of the person (grad or postdoc) you worked with most closely. Briefly describe the nature of research you did in the lab, the specific project you worked on, and how this research experience has influenced your career aspirations.
4. Description of position or list of schools you are applying for. (Please indicate what type of position you are applying for e.g. PhD, MS, DVM, DDS, MD, MD/PhD, intern). If you are applying to graduate school or internship programs, please create a spreadsheet describing the name of each program, the institution and website, who the letter should be addressed to, the due date for the letter, and important details about the submission process.
5. Personal statement (if needed for your application).
6. Completed questionnaire- Answer all the following questions
 - What date is the letter due?
 - Have you asked other Biocore instructors to provide a letter? If so, consider asking 2-3 instructors to co-write one Biocore letter. Doing so often strengthens endorsement from Biocore and diversifies your application packet by allowing for another letter outside of the Biocore realm. We can discuss this if you're not sure which route to go.
 - What Biocore course(s) have you taken with recommender?
 - Who were your TAs for these classes?
 - Why do you want to go to _____(grad school, med school, internship.....place we will send this recommendation)? *(This doesn't have to be a formal essay, but any comments will help us know if this is somewhere we think you will be well suited. If you already have a draft of your personal statement, you can provide that here.)*
 - Point of Pride: What was your biggest accomplishment in this Biocore class (or Biocore more generally)?
 - Personal Growth: What was a struggle that you over came on a project or concept?
 - Team work: What did you bring to your group(s)?
 - What Biocore lab experiment sticks out first in your memory and why?
 - Did you participate in Biocore Outreach Ambassadors, Peer Mentoring, Peer Advising, uTA, prairie intern, independent research/ special project, or BOD? Please describe your involvement, what you did, and what you learned from these experiences?

Completing your Request for a Letter of Recommendation:

- ✓ Provide all documents in ONE email.
- ✓ Deliver materials to the recommender with ample time to write the letter
- ✓ If you email your material, please save your documents with the following format "last name, recommendation letter and due date" in the email subject heading Example: "smith_letter_due_120118.doc"
- ✓ Initiate a recommendation request account a.) with your grad school application, b.) with the professional program (e.g. AMCAS), or c.) with a letter submission service such as Interfolio <https://www.interfolio.com/>

- ✓ If your letters are to be sent by post (snail mail) provide the envelopes, stamps and addresses for the places you are sending the recommendations.

GOOD LUCK!

**And let us know what happens with your application.
We are excited to see you succeed!**