

## Requesting a Reference Letter

Once you have made a contact through an internship or gotten to know a professor through a course you enjoyed, you may wish to request a reference letter for a prospective job or graduate program application. But keep in mind that faculty and staff are inundated with these requests from students, and in order to help you, they will need to be able to tell prospective employers or graduate schools more about you than the fact that you have a nice smile or pleasant personality. In other words, you need to supply them with specific facts about you so they can write more than a general letter.

**Before you approach a reference provider, take a few moments to provide him or her with the following information:**

- **A copy of your most recent resume**, including specific information may not appear on a standard application form. For instance, membership in campus organizations, volunteer work, awards, leadership positions, etc.
- The **position description** for the job or information regarding the graduate program, for which you need this letter.
- Specific information regarding **why you are interested in this position**. How does this position fit into your career goals?
- Specific information regarding **your special interests**, background, motivation, and personal qualities which may distinguish you from other applicants.
- Three phrases that describe your strengths and weaknesses. (This is the crux of a solid application.)
- Your **written permission** to access your transcripts that are on file in the registrar's office