

## Writing a letter in support of an NSF GRFP applicant: For faculty

**DEADLINE: 5pm Pacific Time, November 5, 2015**

Faculty will first receive an email from the NSF with instructions to REGISTER for an NSF ID to submit a letter through the FastLane GRFP Application Module:

<https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/grfp/ReferenceLetter.do?method=letter>

If you have any questions, call the NSF GRFP program at 1-866-673-4737 (Monday-Friday, 8:30 am - 5:30 pm EST) or email: [info@nsfgrfp.org](mailto:info@nsfgrfp.org). An exact e-mail address match to what the applicant enters into the FastLane GRFP Application Module is crucial.

### **The content of your letter:**

- The NSF GRFP is looking to support a promising individual, not just a research project.
- Specifics help more than generalities. Statements such as he/she are within the top X of your students, with details why, can be particularly strong. Short, perfunctory letters are not helpful; please take advantage of the two pages.
- Please provide details explaining the nature of your relationship to the applicant, the applicant's potential to contribute to a globally-engaged U.S. science and engineering workforce, the student's academic potential, prior research experiences, proposed research, and any other information to enable review panels to evaluate Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts.
- If you are the candidate's research supervisor, please comment on the originality of their research statement, and what role, if any, you played in assisting the student with the application.
- It is also helpful to provide specific information on your mentoring and institutional mentoring such as Graduate Division's training, workshops and writing assistance through the Graduate Resource Center (GRC) (<http://www.grad.uci.edu/services/grc/>), "responsible conduct of research" trainings, and TA training – but focus it specifically on the needs of the individual.
- **Fully half of the scoring is for Broader Impacts.** The NSF asks reference writers to address broader impacts in the letter of reference. The student must demonstrate two categories of broader impacts: stuff they did in the past and stuff they are proposing to do now. Examples include tutoring, diversity and outreach experience, clubs, leadership roles in clubs, and the student must discuss what they did in that position rather than just mentioning/listing it. Former panelists state that the primary reason applicants fail to rise to the top is lack of attention to Broader Impacts.

### **Guidelines:**

- Letters are limited to 2 pages
- Use standard 8.5" × 11" page size, 12-point, Times New Roman font or Computer Modern (LaTeX) font, and 1" margins on all sides
- Single spaced or greater – character spacing should be normal (100%) single-line space option
- Institutional or professional letterhead with your name and title, department, and institution.
- Letters should be signed

Additional letter-writing tips and information are available on the NSF website:

[http://www.nsfgrfp.org/reference\\_writers](http://www.nsfgrfp.org/reference_writers)

Please contact Lori Greene ([legreene@uci.edu](mailto:legreene@uci.edu)), Assistant Director of Research Development for the Physical Sciences, if you run into any problems, need assistance with content or would like to see a sample letter.