Who should recommend you?

The best recommendations come from people who have worked closely with you and who understand the goals of the award for which you are applying.

Pick someone who can address the award’s special criteria or the donor’s particular interests. For example, the PI or other faculty for whom you’ve worked for in a particular lab. Don’t ask a family member for a recommendation. Their praise won’t have the credibility to impress the Scholarship Committee. The most common sources for a scholarship letter of recommendation are teachers, employers, volunteer work supervisors, and mentors.

It’s also important that the letter writer can write well, and in particular, write well about you. If they are evasive when you ask them to write you a letter, or seem uncomfortable or unenthused, they may not be the best choice to write a letter of recommendation.

Asking for a recommendation

The people writing your recommendations are doing you a favor, so make it easy for them by being as organized as possible. Here’s how:

- Provide ample time for the letter to be written. Give at least three weeks advance notice.
- Make a formal request. Schedule an appointment to discuss the recommendation fully.
- Supply your recommender with as much information as possible, including:
  - Accurate/Correct contact information (your full name as it appears on the application, address, email and phone number).
  - Information about your achievements such as your transcripts, your resume, and reminders of your past work with the recommender (e.g. a description of coursework, a copy of an essay or class project, etc.).

If you’re concerned that your recommender has forgotten your letter, gracefully remind them by asking if they need more information.

Once your letter is sent, be sure to send a thank-you note to your recommender.
Letter Requirements  
(this information should be provided to your letter-writer)

- In accordance with federal laws and university policy, authors of letters of recommendation are asked to refrain from comments regarding candidate's race, color, gender, religion, age, physical or mental disability, marital status, sexual orientation, national origin, citizenship, medical condition, or political affiliations, beliefs or activities.

- Letters should indicate the candidate’s full name. Preferably in the 1st paragraph.

- Letters should indicate how long and in what capacity the letter-writer has known the applicant.

- Letters should contain specific examples of why the applicant is best fit for the award.

- Letters should be printed on professional letterhead.

- Letters require the writer’s signature. An electronic signature is acceptable.

- Letters should conclude with legible identifying personal information: full name, title, institution, mailing address, telephone number and email address.

- Reference letter(s) should be emailed directly to scholapp@umn.edu by the letter-writer. Electronically delivered letters must be sent directly from the letter-writer’s email address. Alternatively, reference letters may be submitted to the CBS Dean's Office, 123 Snyder Hall, in a sealed, flap-signed, envelope.