2020 Duke Fulbright Recommendations

The Fulbright program facilitates cultural exchange through direct interaction on an individual basis in the classroom, field, home, and in routine tasks, allowing the grantee to gain an appreciation of others’ viewpoints and beliefs, the way they do things, and the way they think. Through engagement in the community, the individual will interact with their hosts on a one-to-one basis in an atmosphere of openness, academic integrity, and intellectual freedom, thereby promoting mutual understanding.

NCS-OUSF Advice on Fulbright recommendations

Duke students are intrigued by the Fulbright program and have been quite successful in pursuing it. There are several different ways to go on a Fulbright, and it is important that the student clarify with you what program they intend to do as well as which country they are choosing. Students are allowed to have advice from you on their personal statement and statement of grant purpose and we encourage you to ask for drafts of both of these before you begin writing.

Please note: All students have waived their rights to see your letters. It is against OUSF policy to accept letters originally authored by students. We need the letter to be from you.

Writing an English Teaching Assistantships recommendation:

This is a form NOT a letter.

The form will ask you to speak to your knowledge of the student’s ability to perform well in a classroom and engage outside the classroom with the community. If you have not seen a student as a teacher—think about how they might have performed in a group project or collaborating with others. Fulbright’s purpose is cultural engagement. Will the student engage with the community? The blocks are small—but detailed examples are welcomed and can make the difference for a national selection committee. Typical questions are:

1. Based on your observation of and experience with the applicant, comment on their ability to overcome challenges. (120 words)
2. In your view, how has this applicant demonstrated qualities associated with teaching or mentoring? (120 words)
3. Based on your observation, how might the applicant interact with students, faculty, and community members, among others, in an unfamiliar or unstructured situation or in a different cultural environment? (120 words)
4. What kind of impression, in your view, would the applicant make of the United States abroad? (120 words)
5. Please comment on any other factors which you believe may have a bearing on the applicant's potential to have a successful experience abroad as a Fulbright ETA (comments regarding academic and/or personal experience, maturity, adaptability, and flexibility are welcome). (120 words)
Study or Research:
The best letters of recommendation take into account what a foundation is looking for and demonstrate how the student meets those criteria. The primary goal of the Fulbright is cultural engagement, not the subject of the study or research. So, in many ways the letter needs to address the student’s personal qualities as much as it addresses their readiness to enroll in a foreign university or to complete a research project. Fulbright wants to know if the student can complete the project. It is common for there to be stresses and changes doing a research project in another culture. Is the student resilient? Is the project feasible? How has the student prepared for this experience, either through coursework or other research?

The best letters use anecdotes to illustrate the points you are trying to make. If you claim Johnny is brilliant—how did he perform in class relative to other students, what was brilliant about the paper he wrote, the argument he made or the experiment he proposed? If you claim that Suzy will cure cancer in her lifetime, what tendencies show that she has the perseverance to get the job done?

These are hard letters to write, but the Office of Nationally Competitive Scholarships is here to assist you. If you would like feedback on draft letters, don’t hesitate to request it.

We do urge you to consider carefully before you agree to write the letter. You are not required to write for every student that asks—only those for whom you believe you can make a good case.

If you have questions or concerns about a student, please contact Babs Wise babs@duke.edu or Bevin Tighe bevin.t@duke.edu.

Further Resources:
Study/Research Tips: https://us.fulbrightonline.org/instructions-for-study-research-recommendation-writers
ETA Tips: https://us.fulbrightonline.org/instructions-for-eta-recommendation-writers

Process for Fulbright Recommendations

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students and alumni request a letter</td>
<td>Students should supply you with a resume, a conversation about what they are applying for and why, and papers they have written for you. YOU make the decision on whether or not you have the time to help the student’s application or not.</td>
<td>Spring/Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decide whether or not you are able to write the letter</td>
<td>Please consult with NCS if you want feedback on your letter prior to submitting it.</td>
<td>ASAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write the recommendation and submit to the Fulbright</td>
<td>This letter should be in its final form for the national committee.</td>
<td>August 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Student Program’s SLATE application site</td>
<td>Campus Committee Evaluations</td>
<td>A Committee of Faculty and Staff will meet with your student about their application and prepare an evaluation form that is forwarded with the complete application to Fulbright.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Semi-Finalists Named</td>
<td>Students being forwarded to the in-country selection process are notified of their status</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Finalists Named</td>
<td>Each country is on a different schedule</td>
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