



FTE

THE FUND FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Tips for Letters of Reference

As part of the application processes for the [Undergraduate](#), [Congregational](#), [Volunteers Exploring Vocation \(VEV\)](#) and [Ministry Fellowships](#). FTE requires an Academic Letter of Reference and a Ministry Letter of Reference. In the case of the VEV Fellowship, the ministry reference comes from the supervisor of the applicant's VEV program. For Undergraduate Fellowship nominees, the person who nominated you—college professor, administrator, campus minister, or current pastor—may provide one of the letters of reference, as appropriate. Below are some suggestions that may be helpful for securing effective letters of reference.

- Ask for a letter of reference from someone who knows you well—but not a family member.
- For the Academic reference, ask a professor who teaches in the discipline in which you have done your best work. Letters from administrators who are not also teachers, or letters from high school teachers, are not acceptable.
- For the Ministry reference, ask the pastor of the congregation or campus ministry you *currently* attend. (VEV Fellowship applicants, see above.)
- Be sure you explain the purpose of the fellowship and offer to provide additional information, either about the fellowship or about yourself, to the potential reference.
- You should ask the potential reference if she or he is able to write a strong endorsement. Do not hesitate to ask whether the person has confidence that she or he will be able to supply the information needed.
- The best letters are no longer than two pages, do not simply restate items on your resume, avoid unhelpful generalizations, and instead provide specific, concrete anecdotes to illustrate their points.
- Allow ample lead time and follow up before the letter is due.
- You should write a thank-you note to the persons who provide the references.
- Remember to tell the persons who wrote your letters of reference the outcome of your application process; they will want to know.