

## Dr. Gallagher's Policy on Letters of Recommendation for Graduate School

As of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025, I will only be writing graduate school recommendation letters for students whom I have seen accomplish work over and above the expectations of a typical course. This can include service to the department or university or research and presentation opportunities that have clearly shown that a student can do more than classroom work.

The reason for this is because, if I only know your performance in a typical classroom setting, a recommendation letter will lack the content that is important to gain admission to rigorous graduate programs. The best recommendation letters will come from someone who knows you are a good student but has also watched you work and collaborate in an unstructured setting. Examples include someone who has seen you:

- Taking leadership roles in departmental or university clubs
- Working a university job that carries leadership or problem-solving skills
- Assisting peers through mentorship or tutoring
- Developing and presenting a research project
- Assisting in a peer's or professor's research project
- Coordinating study groups for peers in a course or playing a vital role that *sets you apart* in a class

If you believe that this describes me, you should send me a transcript and a clear statement of purpose that explains why you believe you are prepared for graduate school, what you intend to study, and why you are choosing the school you have chosen. Finally, schedule a meeting with me so we can discuss your plans in detail.

There are many online resources that describe the graduate school application process and the merits of choosing appropriate letter writers. Here are just a few:

- [Wordvice](#), a professional editing company that provides good advice to the requester and writer. Note how this site shows what the *letter writer* should include. Can the person you are asking really write such a letter?
- [Northeastern University](#). Look at item number 2, in particular.
- [A simple guide from](#) Emily Elia, now Ph.D., from when she was a graduate student at Rice University

You might find my position disappointing, but I strongly believe that this approach is for the best for both me and you. Even if I decline to write a letter for you, I am happy to offer advice and do what I can to help you make an informed decision about graduate school.

Sincerely,

