

THE HONOR  SOCIETY OF  
**PHI KAPPA PHI**

**PROCEDURES FOR SELECTING PHI KAPPA PHI FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENTS**

1. Application packages submitted to the Society Office are screened by the staff to be sure that they meet all requirements. Those that do not are eliminated; (for example, an application which arrives after the deadline, an application from a nominee who is not to be initiated into Phi Kappa Phi in the spring, an application from someone who has already earned more than 10 graduate hours by the application deadline).
2. **Every application package is read by all five members of the Fellowship Committee.** The applications are read and scored independently. The review session takes place April 15 – June 15.
3. Each application is scored on six categories: undergraduate academics; service and leadership activities; graduate prospects; personal statement; letters of recommendation.
4. The Fellowship Committee consists of five members and a staff representative. The representatives are tenured faculty members who represent a variety of academic disciplines. Every member of the committee is willing to advise chapters on ways to strengthen their applications.

**PHI KAPPA PHI FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM SELECTION CRITERIA**

1. Undergraduate Academics:
  - Performance as reflected on transcript(s)
  - Participation in undergraduate institution's Honors Program
  - Undergraduate research
2. Activities:
  - Leadership on and off campus
  - Service on and off campus
  - Awards and recognition
3. Graduate Prospects:
  - Standardized test scores, with percentiles
  - Rationale for selection of graduate schools
  - Congruence between undergraduate preparation and plans for graduate work
4. Work Sample
5. Personal Statement:
  - Commitment to graduate education, anticipated contributions, and career goals
6. Letters of Recommendation

## **THOUGHTS ABOUT LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION**

### **Advice to Students**

#### ***Courtesy***

1. Always ask your professors if they are willing to write for you.
2. Make sure that you give your referees ample time to write your letters.

#### ***Some general tips regarding selecting referees***

1. Always select professors who know your work well. No matter how much you like your current professor, if the semester is only three weeks old and this is the first course you have taken with him/her, that professor will not know enough to write you a helpful letter.
2. Make sure that you select professors whose work with you is relevant to the program, fellowship, or grant to which you are applying.
3. In applying for fellowships, for graduate school, or professional school, make sure that you include your research director and/or your honors thesis director. If you have worked with several – say, on a summer undergraduate research program at UCLA and on a chemistry project at your home institution, ask both of your research directors to write on your behalf.
4. It is good to have one letter from someone outside your major. However, if you have one letter from UCLA, one from your research director/co-author of research at your home institution, and a third from the director of a hospital lab where you worked part-time and also did enough work to be listed among the authors of a paper on the results, don't worry if all of them are biologists.
5. Select one professor or research director who knows something about you as a person – your activities on campus, your volunteer work in the community, etc.

#### ***What you need to do to help those writing on your behalf***

1. Always define your request in writing: e.g., “I am applying for a national Phi Kappa Phi Graduate Fellowship.” You might attach a copy of the fellowship brochure if your professor is unfamiliar with this program. Include the deadline by which the letter must be received, the address to which it is to be sent, and, of course, the form on which it is to be written. Be sure to include your name, the course(s) you have taken with this professor, and the dates of those courses (semester and year).
2. Make sure that you ask the professor for his/her precise title: e.g., Assistant Professor of German, Professor of English. Most application forms ask for the name and position of each of your referees. You are usually the one who enters this information on the application form.
3. Leave a copy of your resume with your request. This should include a list of your activities on and off campus.
4. Be sure you are available to answer any questions your referee may have.

## **TIPS REGARDING LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION**

### **Advice for Authors**

1. First, writers of recommendations for the Phi Kappa Phi fellowships should remember that **this is a national competition**. The applicant is competing with some of the best students in the nation, each of whom is “the best student in my class.”
2. Letters of recommendation **need to be specific**, and they should **not merely recount** what is on the student’s resume. See your job as completing the picture of this student.
3. Letters should **stay within the recommended length**; evaluators are uncomfortable with letters which exceed the length, because such letters appear to give students an unfair advantage. Similarly, extremely short letters do not give enough information about the applicant.
4. Letters should **address the specific purpose of the student’s application**. Letters recommending the fellowship applicant for membership in Phi Kappa Phi or for support in graduate school or for admission to, say, a graduate program in engineering are inappropriate. Often faculty members reshape a previously written letter, and that is appropriate. It is the unrevised letter which is often problematic. The applicant is well-advised to leave a written statement of purpose with each referee. Chapters may want to write a memo to referees making suggestions about letters.
5. Letters should be **written to the audience: a committee of educated people, but people who are not necessarily specialists in the applicant’s field**. This means that the some of information often needed in letters for graduate school applicants (e.g., this student has studied the history of literary theory from a deconstructionist perspective) may need to be revised or omitted altogether. It is appropriate to define the level of work a student has done, but that discussion probably should not be as technical as it might be to an audience of people in one’s field.
6. **In this competition, both academic excellence and service-leadership activities are important**. Letters should address both kinds of activity. It is also important for the referee to supply other sorts of information which the application may not solicit directly; for example, a non-traditional student may not be active on campus, but may work 35 hours a week, manage a household of spouse and three children, and participate in governance and fund-raising activities at the children’s schools.
7. The letter writer should make his or her specialty clear. Normally, that is taken care of by letterhead, but more often than one might expect, referees use plain paper and offer no hint of what they teach. There is a place on the application form which asks for name and position for each referee; if completed specifically (e.g., Professor of Physics), this will suffice. However, students often do not know a professor’s precise title, so you might give the student applicant that information.

## **ADVICE TO STUDENTS APPLYING FOR THE PHI KAPPA PHI FELLOWSHIP**

1. Remember to consider **the application package as a whole. Make every section count.** Do not repeat your resume in other sections of the application. For example, do not describe research activities (page 2 of the application) again in one's personal statement.
2. Write to an audience; the applications are evaluated by faculty from multiple disciplines. Envision that audience, and think about how to engage your readers' interest in your research and other activities.
3. Write with a voice. Your personal statement should read well.
4. Take a moment to reference this article, "Helping Students to Tell Their Stories," published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and written by James M. Lang. <http://www.chronicle.com/article/Helping-Students-to-Tell-Their/134502/>
5. When completing sections of the application which require you to list honors and awards, make sure to give a brief description of these – especially those which are local. Nothing elaborate is needed; a phrase such as "given to the senior biology major with the highest average" is sufficient. Avoid acronyms unless you explain them or unless they are obvious from context.
6. Similarly, offer a brief explanation of the nature of service or leadership activities if the name does not make it obvious. Avoid acronyms unless you explain them or they are obvious from context. [See College Med Volunteers example below.]
7. When noting service work on and off campus, distinguish between one-time events and on-going commitments. The application form asks for the dates of participation and for an estimate of the time devoted to volunteer activities; be sure to give that information (in number of hours per week when possible).
8. Please remember that the personal statement is your opportunity to provide a narrative, use your voice... an effective personal statement should be just that, personal. Avoid writing narrative in sections which do not call for narrative; for example, don't write a narrative in the space for Undergraduate and Community Activity and Leadership. It looks as if you are trying to pad your application when you do this.
9. Distinguish between paid and volunteer work, but list both. Again, estimate the time devoted to work.

*Employment*

Classified Advertising Manager, the Daily Utah Chronicle 02/99 – present, 40 hours/week

*Volunteer*

Editor, Century, publication of LDS Institute of Religion 09/01-present, 16 hours/month

10. Be sure to spell-check and to proofread your entire application.

Here are a few examples to give you some guidance.

### **Honors and Awards**

- McCrary English Award 2003 (given to the graduating senior Eng. Major with the highest average)
- Court Advocacy Volunteer of the Year 2000
- Goldwater Scholarship 2001 [prestigious national award; no explanation needed]
- Leshar Scholarship 2002 (given to an English major selected by the faculty)

### **Undergraduate and Community Activity and Leadership**

- Tutor for freshman math courses (10 hours per week, fall 2000-present)
- Lab assistant for Organic Chemistry (4 hours per week, spring 2002-present)
- Co-Chair, Middle Eastern Studies student Advisory Committee 15 hours/semester
- Collegiate Med Volunteers: Co-founder and Co-Director, Avg. 4 hours per week (May 2000-present). CMV is the major college volunteer program run through the local hospital. My duties include oversight of the 150 volunteers in the program, management of the CMV staff, and administration of issues involving doctors, nurses, and the volunteer department.
- Participant, Art Students' Union fund-raising events. 4 hours per semester (1998-2001)
- Campus Recycling Initiative: Student founder and director of recycling and trash pick-up at home football games. (2 hours per week, 06/00 to present)
- Tai Kwan Do, 6<sup>th</sup> Gup (green belt). (5 hours per week, 2000–present)
- Spirits in Action (the university's games for the disabled): Chair of athlete recruitment. Organize registration of over 300 athletes, the participation of 25 special education schools, and arrangement of events on the day of the games. 4 hrs per week. (09/99-05/01)
- Helping Hands Volunteer: Helped implement a holiday party for underprivileged children in the community. 2 hours per week. (09/98-12/98)
- SERVE Team (Honors Program Community Service Team): Vice President 98-99, President 99-00. Renovated a home for retarded citizens, spent a weekend as camp counselor for children with life-altering illnesses, and helped underprivileged youth experience "college for a day."
- Trick or Treating for Children's Books – approximately 5 hours, Halloween, 2002