

### Harry S. Truman Scholarship Letters of Recommendation Tips

The Truman Scholarship committee requires three letters of recommendation that individually address the areas of: 1) leadership abilities and potential, 2) commitment to a career in public service, and 3) academic preparation. It is crucial that students choose a letter writer for each who focuses specifically on a particular attribute. Only the academic letter needs to be from a faculty member or other instructor.

1. Before writing the letter of recommendation, confirm with the student which area of their qualifications you are asked to focus on. They should also provide you a matching coversheet.
2. For the **Leadership Letter** of recommendation, address aspects of the student's performance that speak to their leadership skills and abilities. You also are asked specifically to confirm a piece of the student's application regarding their leadership experience. If you have observed their leadership in a group setting, how does the student engage with others? Are they motivated to lead on a particular issue? Is the student equipped to work in a leadership position in the field of public service? What experiences or coursework have prepared the student for leadership positions and challenges? How do they show initiative? If you feel the need to incorporate a student's classroom performance, please deemphasize the content of the course and speak to the student's performance as it pertains to leadership abilities.
3. The letter that addresses the student's commitment to **Public Service** might be the most difficult to write. The student should take the initiative to meet with you to provide a clear sense of this dedication. Please address the passion that the student has for public service. Moreover, you will want to discuss the specific area of public service that the student mentions in their application materials. How sophisticated is the student's understanding of public service? Are they motivated to make a career addressing a specific social need or problem? Do they understand the institutional limitations of rapid change in their area of interest? Would you want them advocating for you or others?
4. If writing the **Academic Letter**, your student should share with you where they want to pursue graduate study and why. Please comment on the student's preparation for graduate study. What in the student's academic performance leads you to believe that they will be a good public servant? Has the student produced work that could contribute to addressing a social need or problem?
5. Please provide your letter directly to the National and International Scholarships Program, along with an accompanying Truman form that the student should have provided to you, by Thursday, **November 9 at 12:00 noon**. You may send the signed letter and form as an attachment to [topscholars@illinois.edu](mailto:topscholars@illinois.edu).
6. If your student is one of the select nominees from the University of Illinois, the Scholarships Program may also share any suggested revisions to your recommendation based on campus committee feedback. You will then be asked to resubmit your revised letter to the Scholarships Program by **February 6, 2017** for national review. Thank you for supporting this student!

