

## Writing Recommendations for the Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship

**Scholarship Basics:** One- or two-year awards to students who demonstrate strong evidence of contributing to the technological advances of the United States. Juniors or sophomores who are U.S. citizens or Permanent Residents. Applicants should be committed to a PhD in a STEM field and **must show potential as academic researchers in order to be competitive**. Carnegie Mellon can nominate four students to go forward to the national competition.

### Timeline:

- Campus deadline: **November 23, 2020 at 12:00pm est (noon)** – Your signed recommendation letter must be emailed to [fso-general@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:fso-general@andrew.cmu.edu) by this date.
- Internal campus review and nomination decisions: First two weeks of December
- Mid-December: If your candidate is nominated, we may share any revisions suggested by the campus committee for your letter at this time.
- Final nominee deadline: **January 28, 2021** – In case you choose to make updates to your letter, we will need the final version to be emailed to us by this date.

The National Goldwater selection process utilizes these four criteria:

1. Academic Achievement (GPA, difficulty of coursework)
2. Demonstration of progress towards goals
3. Research Statement (your candidate should share their draft with you)
4. Letters of Recommendation

**Guidelines:** Your letter of recommendation can help a student make up for weaknesses in the other three criteria. It should focus on your student's potential to be an *academic researcher* in a STEM field, *rather than* the student's capacity to achieve success in the private sector. Formatting: 2 pages maximum, 1-inch margins, 12 point font, single-spaced, on letterhead.

The President of the Goldwater Scholarship Program offers the following advice about what they seek in a strong letter of recommendation:

1. Discuss the student's potential to be a strong academic researcher.
2. If you are supervising a student's research project, please discuss it at length in terms of its potential contribution to the field, or as a sign of the student's research sophistication.
3. Please keep references to your biography and/or the rigor of your own classes at a minimum. The review committee is really interested in the student's potential as an academic researcher. Only if the student is taking a graduate-level seminar should you mention their performance.
4. If you are not aware of the student's lab experience, discuss the quality of the student's ideas in class or the potential for a project that student is interested in pursuing. Goldwater likes to see research agendas in progress or completed, but if the student has not yet had the opportunity they can still be competitive.
5. Would the student make an excellent addition to your own graduate program? Can you see the potential for the student to be a leading colleague in your field?