How to Request a Strong Letter of Recommendation from Dr. Goldrick-Rab

1. The first step in this process is to ask me the following question: "Can you write me a strong letter of recommendation for a job or a graduate school application?" I can write anyone a letter of recommendation, but I cannot write everyone a strong letter of recommendation. I must be sufficiently familiar with you and your work—and your work must be of sufficient quality—so I can provide specific positive examples of the knowledge, skills, and characteristics that your potential employer or graduate school admissions committee is interested in knowing about you (i.e., they will not be impressed if I tell them what a good person you are, but fail to support my assertions with strong evidence). If my answer to this question is yes, then proceed to the next step. If my answer is no, it is not because I do not like you as a person. It is because I sincerely believe that I cannot write you a letter that will help you to obtain a job or gain admission to graduate school.

2. Read the "Information that Can Help Me Write You a Strong Letter of Recommendation" form on the following page and complete that form.

3. Created an electronic zipped folder for me that includes the following:
   a. A current and professional-looking copy of your resume/CV
   b. Your completed "Information that Can Help Me Write You a Strong Letter of Recommendation" form
   c. All of the recommendation forms you have received from your potential employers or programs—make sure you have filled in all the parts of these forms you are supposed to complete (e.g., the program for which you are applying, your signature, the date, and the waiver form)
   d. A timeline for me that includes, for each required letter:
      i. The deadline by which the graduate school or employer must receive my letter
      ii. Where the letter is to be sent (i.e., the employer or graduate school) and the address to use (email is preferred)
      iii. if there is a form that I must complete in addition to my letter (see “2” above)
      iv. The specific program (e.g., masters in school psychology) or job (e.g., assistant professor of public policy) for which you are applying

4. Give me this folder at least one month before the earliest deadline of your letters so I have sufficient time to write an excellent letter of recommendation for you. Effective letters of recommendation take time to write, so please do not put me in the position of having to rush this important process.
Information that Can Help Me Write You a Strong Letter of Recommendation

1. Your name:

2. Date our relationship began (month/year):

3. Classes you took from me and grades you received:

4. Theses, papers, and dissertation you wrote under my supervision. Include the name of the paper, the date it was complete, and a brief summary of its key methodology and findings. If you believe it produced important new insights, clearly state those.

5. Here is a list of some important characteristics that employers and graduate programs look for. Which of these exemplifies you? Choose several (not all) and provide me with concrete examples I might provide to demonstrate this. Please be sure you describe actual behaviors that you have engaged in, not just descriptions of your personality characteristics.

   • Motivated, persistent, and hard-working
   • High intellectual/scholarly ability
   • Creative and/or innovative thinker and problem-solver
   • Intellectual independent
   • Skilled in the design and conduct of research
   • Emotionally stable and mature
   • Strong writing skills
   • Strong verbal communication skills
   • Strong teaching skills
   • Strong collaboration and interpersonal skills
   • Strong leadership skills
   • Effective time management skills
   • Other—please describe

6. Are there specific criteria that are especially important to a job or school to which you are applying? Please indicate this for each of those jobs or schools here. Emphasize those particular criteria that you think I may be best equipped to address given our relationship.