

## UW-Madison Campus Nomination Process for Rhodes, Marshall and Mitchell Scholarships

### Information for Recommenders

You have been asked to provide a letter of recommendation for a student applying for nomination to the [Rhodes Scholarship](#), [Marshall Scholarship](#), and/or [Mitchell Scholarship](#) from UW-Madison. These scholarships fund post-baccalaureate study at the University of Oxford (Rhodes), any university in the UK (Marshall) or any university in Ireland or Northern Ireland (Mitchell). To compete nationally, students must be nominated by their undergraduate institution. At UW-Madison, applications for these three scholarships are reviewed by the same campus nominating committee because the scholar profiles are so similar (GPA of 3.8 or higher, likely to be accepted in a top graduate program in the U.S., extensive service and leadership experiences, likelihood to make a difference in future career).

For the campus competition, you do not need to write a separate letter for each scholarship (unless you want to!). One “combined” letter will be fine, and can be addressed to the UW-Madison Nominating Committee. If the student is nominated to compete for one or more of the scholarships, you will be asked to readdress your letter to the appropriate scholarship foundation(s), and submit via the online application(s). *Please note the Marshall Scholarship has a 1,000 word limit for letters of recommendation.* To help you write your letter, the student should provide you with the following:

- A list of the scholarships for which they are seeking nomination
- Proposed degree programs and universities
- A copy of their transcript, resume and/or personal statement (if you would find these helpful)
- Date of the campus deadline (typically late June/early July)

Below you'll find suggestions from the campus committee for what to include in the letter of recommendation. Other tips and sample letters can be found [here](#).

For the campus competition, you can submit your letter electronically to [awards@provost.wisc.edu](mailto:awards@provost.wisc.edu) or in hard copy to the Undergraduate Academic Awards Office, 6 Ingraham Hall, 1155 Observatory Drive, Madison, WI, 53706. If you have any questions, please call the UAA Office at 608-265- 2428.

## **Characteristics of Effective Recommendation Letters for Rhodes and Marshall Candidates**

*The most effective letters –*

1. Are *not* standard or boilerplate letters. To help a student in this competition, a letter must be a very special one, written especially for that student and for this competition. Straightforward letters about the student doing all of the work, writing good papers, and getting good grades are not very helpful. In fact, boilerplate letters probably hurt a student more than they help in this rarefied competition. The most effective letters usually run to over a page and take an hour or more to write.
2. Are vivid. Vividness and specificity mean everything here.
3. State how long and in what capacity the professor has known the student.
4. State where the student ranks in relation to other students the professor has taught. If possible, the letter should compare the student with other students who have gone on to top graduate/professional programs or received Rhodes, Marshall or Mitchell scholarships.
5. Include vivid personal memories of the student and suggestive anecdotes, something that indicates the professor knows the student very well and thinks very highly of him or her.
6. Describe in some detail and evaluate the student's scholarly work, especially a major piece of research. The letter should help the committee understand the significance of this research, the contribution it has made.
7. Describe the student's personality, work habits and interpersonal skills. Has s/he built productive relationships with people, engaging with them in his/her field or beyond? Does s/he appreciate the needs, motives and concerns of others? Is the student self-confident and able to seize opportunities?
8. Comment on how well prepared the student is to study at Oxford (or another British university).
9. Explain how study at Oxford (or another British university) will make a difference in the student's intellectual growth.
10. Comment on the prospects for the student to play an influential part in the betterment of society.