Law School Applications 101:
Getting Good Letters of Recommendation

Rodia Vance, Associate Director
University Pre-Law Advisor
rodia.vance@emory.edu
Session Objectives

- Letter Content
- Letter Writers
- Letter Procurement
- Letter Collection
Content of the Letters

- Closeness of the relationship
- Skill development and execution through specific examples of your work
- Character/ personal qualities
- Strong endorsement of your candidacy
Content of the Letters

- Academic ability
- Analytical and logical reasoning ability
- Critical and creative thinking ability
- Writing and communication skills
- Research skills
- Teamwork or leadership skills
- Professionalism and maturity
Choosing Recommenders

- What have you done?
  - Coursework
  - Professional experience
  - Research experience
  - Community service/volunteerism
  - Extracurricular activities

- Who do you know?
  - Professors – VERY IMPORTANT!!
  - Employers
  - Other supervisors and advisors
Choosing Recommenders

- What’s working in my file?
  - Good experience
  - Strong involvement/leadership
  - Strong academic performance
- What’s missing from my file?
  - Lower than expected LSAT score
  - Grade anomalies
  - Lack of experience/involvement
Choosing Recommenders

- Important tips!
  - Most schools only require 2 letters.
  - Can secure at least 3 letters as insurance.
  - Do not choose prominence over closeness!
  - The rank and department of the faculty member is not important.
  - Try to choose faculty from your upper-level courses, as they can comment on more-demanding work.
Asking for the Letter

- Ask in person, when possible.
  - Easier for them to remember you
  - Opportunity for dialogue about the letter
  - Assess whether they have adequate time to write the letter

- Be prepared to discuss your qualifications and why you have chosen them.
  - Your interest in law
  - What they can add to your file (i.e. talking points)
Asking for the Letter

- Be prepared with information to assist the recommender.
  - Cover letter
  - Resume
  - Unofficial transcript
  - Personal statement
  - LSAC Letter of Recommendation Form (required)
  - Pre-addressed envelope with postage
  - Deadline for letter submission
Collecting the Letters

- LSAC Letter of Recommendation Service
  - Should be used to collect all letters.
  - Recommenders send their letter directly to LSAC to be placed in your CAS account.
  - **REQUIRES** LSAC Letter of Recommendation form to be submitted with each letter.
  - Can send as many letters as you like.
  - Must assign letters to schools through your CAS account.
NEW Electronic LOR Submission Service

- Launched on August 19, 2012 for 2012 application cycle
- Allows recommenders to submit their LORs electronically rather than mailing them
- Recommenders will need to establish an Applicant References account with LSAC online to submit letters electronically
- Applicants can also send the LSAC LOR forms to recommenders by email, rather than printing them out, by clicking the “Email” button next to the recommender’s name inside the LOR portion of their CAS account.
- Email sent to recommender will contain directions on how to open an account and submit their LOR electronically.
NEW Electronic LOR Submission Service

- Recommenders may also submit letters electronically even if applicant gives them the LSAC form on paper.
- Directions are written on the bottom of the form for how recommenders should establish their account and submit their LORs.

In asking for letters, discuss the option with your recommender to see if they have a preference. If so, act accordingly. If not, use your own preference.
LSAC Evaluation Service

- An evaluation is different from a Letter of Recommendation
- Recommenders vs. Evaluators
  - Recommenders write letters
  - Evaluators complete online assessments
- Online assessment of 30 individual attributes and skills in 6 categories:
  - Intellectual skill
  - Personal qualities
  - Integrity and honesty
  - Communication
  - Task management
  - Working with others
- Space is allotted for commentary text at the end of the assessment, should the evaluator choose to add any.
LSAC Evaluation Service

- Evaluator will receive an email from LSAC requesting them to complete the evaluation for the applicant once the applicant lists them as an evaluator in their CAS account.
- Completed evaluations are placed in the CAS file along with letters of recommendation.
- **Bottom line** – Disregard this service unless a school you’re applying to requires it. Although law schools assisted in the creation of the service in 2010, the vast majority of schools still prefer letters at this point.
Following Up

- Stay in contact with your recommenders!!!
- Should give them at least 4-6 weeks to write and mail the letter (or complete online evaluation, if needed).
- Send a hand-written “Thank You” a couple of weeks before your deadline.
- Notify your recommenders if your plans change.
- Inform them of the outcomes of the process.
- Send a formal “Thank You” after the process is completed.
The Pre-Law Advising Office

The Career Center
B. Jones Center, Suite 200
Mon-Fri, 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
404-727-6211
www.prelawadvising.emory.edu

Be sure to meet with the Pre-Law Advisor as needed to get answers to your application questions!