

Solicitation/Guidelines for students writing faculty letters*
MCEN DRAFT (03/18/20)

Dear XX,

The Department of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Colorado at Boulder is considering the promotion of Associate Professor xxx to Full Professor. As part of our review process for making personnel decisions, we contact current and former students of courses taught/supervised by Professor XXX. In this regard, as the representative of the department's personnel committee, I would like to request your help in our evaluation of Prof XXX's teaching and/or mentoring. I hope you will find the time to give us your candid impressions. Your statements will be used only as part of this review process. The statements are considered confidential under the policies of the University and are not subject to disclosure under the Colorado Open Records Act, except as otherwise may be required by court order or by law. I therefore hope you will be quite candid in your comments.

See below for suggestions for writing your letter and aspects to consider when writing about Professor xxx's teaching and mentoring.

Please use the following honor statement at the top of your letter: I pledge the highest level of ethical principles in support of the department's academic excellence by upholding honesty and integrity in all my statements in this letter.

Please respond with your evaluation via e-mail (xxx@Colorado.Edu) by xxxx

Suggestions for writing your letter (1):

1. Start with a brief statement of who you are and how you know Professor xxx (e.g., how long have you known them and in what capacity?), and a clear statement of support (or not) for Professor xxx (e.g., "I am pleased to strongly recommend Professor xxx for promotion to the position of [position title]" or "I respectfully do not recommend Professor xxx for promotion to the position of [position title]").
2. If you can describe some particularly memorable examples about Professor xxx's teaching, advising, and/or mentoring, they should be included to give your letter more substance and provide support for your opinions. The examples need not be elaborate. More aspects to consider are given below.
3. End with a paragraph that includes a summary of your review and that reiterates your recommendation. In other words, briefly restate 1-3 key points, experiences, or interactions with Professor xxx and how they demonstrate why it is important to keep Professor xxx on campus (or how they demonstrate why you do not think Professor xxx should be promoted). End by clearly re-stating your recommendation (as in 1. above).
4. A good length is between half a page (minimum) and two pages. A one-page letter is typical.

*Developed by the MCEN Departmental Action Team (Jean Hertzberg, Daniel Knight, and Baowen Li) in partnership with the Teaching Quality Framework Initiative (TQF), which is supported by NSF (DUE-1725959), the Association of American Universities, and CU Boulder Colleges of Arts & Sciences and Engineering & Applied Science. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the NSF or other funding sources. For more information about the Teaching Quality Framework, please visit our website: www.colorado.edu/teaching-quality-framework. See also <http://teval.net/> for information about the broader NSF-funded multi-institutional teaching evaluation project.

Additional aspects to consider when writing about Professor xxx's teaching and mentoring (2):

Please note you are not required to address all of the following in your letter. Instead, pick a few that are most relevant to your experiences with Professor xxx. If your experiences with Professor xxx were not positive, or if they made improvements in regard to any of the following please explain why/how.

1. If you worked with Professor xxx on research projects, how did they encourage you to explore different and challenging research projects? Describe that experience and what you learned from your involvement.
2. Explain how Professor xxx's teaching activities, content and materials they provided, and/or their creative teaching techniques helped you to become immersed in course content and/or develop your knowledge, comprehension, conceptual understanding, and/or new skills.
3. Explain how Professor xxx provided students with opportunities to practice important skills and concepts by applying meaningful assignments (e.g., that connect to real world applications, prior knowledge, and/or future course applications), welcoming and encouraging students' feedback, and incorporating feedback to improve the learning environment.
4. In what ways did Professor xxx adequately prepare you for exams (and other assessments)? For example, you may explain how they helped you prepare for exams (e.g., did what they teach in class align with what you were tested on?), answered questions in ways that were helpful and improved your understanding of content, and/or provided feedback on your work that helped you improve your performance.
5. What has Professor xxx done to enhance your sense of belonging and create an inclusive, respectful environment in and outside of the classroom (e.g., team projects, advising, etc.) and why was it important to you?
6. How has Professor xxx made an impact on who you are as a student, your understanding of what you want to do after graduation, and your future career path?
7. Highlight unique activities Professor xxx did that positively impacted students (e.g., guest lectures, planning and attending industry tours, etc.).

(1) These suggestions are adapted from the following sources, which may be helpful if you'd like further advice on writing your recommendation letter: "[When your adviser wants a letter of support](#)", "[How I write tenure and promotion letters](#)", and "[How to write a support for tenure letter for my professor.](#)"

(2) These suggestions are adapted from the [Teaching Quality Framework Assessment Rubric](#), [CU Boulder's Faculty Course Questionnaire](#), the [MCEN Teaching Statement Self-Reflection Guide](#), and "[Best Practices and Sample Questions for Course Evaluation Surveys.](#)"