

**Committee on Extramural Graduate Fellowships and Scholarships**  
**Memo to Recommenders for Candidates Seeking Rhodes, Marshall, Mitchell**  
**or Watson Nomination**

The committee has prepared this information sheet for faculty members who are interested in supporting Wellesley College seniors and alumnae applying for one or more of the awards we consider. It is our hope that by explaining our committee requirements and deadlines we can make the process easier for all concerned. Although some students begin their applications months ahead, it is not uncommon for a student to decide to apply days before the college deadline either because she has been encouraged to do so by others or because she finally realizes that she would be a strong candidate. We regret the pressure this places on everyone involved, but this continues to occur each year, in spite of meetings held months or years ahead, notices posted and information mailed to seniors' homes.

We hope you will understand that our campus deadlines are driven by the **final 2008 deadlines imposed by the national scholarship organizations which this year are: October 2 (Marshall), October 6 (Rhodes), October 6 (Mitchell), November 5 (Watson)**. If our committee is to read and evaluate the applications we receive for these awards (last year there were 44), we need to receive them well before those deadlines. After reviewing preliminary applications, we meet to decide on a short list of approximately one-third of the applicants, interview those candidates, and then meet a second time to determine the college nominees. Much has to be completed by the final week of September to allow time for advising nominees concerning application strategies and extensive essay revisions. The committee must also draft and perfect a comprehensive letter of nomination for each nominee and most of these letters must be reviewed and signed by President Bottomly in time to meet a deadline as early as October 2nd.

For you, the recommender, this process may involve writing two letters: the first for a student's preliminary application to the committee, due this year on September 10 for Rhodes, Marshall, and Mitchell or September 29 for Watson (each candidate is required to include one reference from a Wellesley professor); and another more formal letter of reference two weeks later to be sent to the appropriate national committee if she is selected as a college nominee. **Your preliminary letter** is most helpful if it is written with both the fellowship in question and the candidate's proposal in mind. However, the letter itself will be read only by your colleagues and can be an informal assessment sent by E-mail to Ellie Perkins (eperkins@wellesley.edu). If your student is applying for two or more fellowships, feel free to discuss each fellowship proposal separately in the same letter.

If your student is nominated, the committee must draft a careful, comprehensive, and persuasive nomination letter. In order to prepare this, it is essential that we have a copy or draft of **your final letter** as soon as possible to help us get a sense of each of our candidates. In many cases, we will actually quote from the faculty letters in order to create as compelling a nomination letter as possible.

Finally, we cannot impress upon you strongly enough the importance of meeting the final national scholarship deadline. **For some of these awards, one missing reference can end a student's candidacy, regardless of what additional material she may have presented to the national committee on time. This is always the case for the Mitchell Scholarship and often true for various regional Rhodes and Marshall committees.**

We hope that this explanation of the process and the temporal constraints under which the committee functions will help you understand what might otherwise have appeared to be unduly demanding requests for these letters. Your letters of reference are of crucial importance to the campus committee and to the national committees in making it possible to evaluate a candidate's potential and intellectual strengths. We greatly value your assistance and appreciate your cooperation and understanding.

USEFUL RESOURCE: "Writing Recommendation Letters", Joe Schall, Pennsylvania State University, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2006, on reserve in the Center for Work and Service Library.