**Prof. Ochoa’s**

**GUIDELINES FOR REQUESTING LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION OR REFERENCE**

When deciding which professors to ask for a letter of reference, you should ask a recommender who is most familiar with you and with your best work, and who can comment on it convincingly. This means: professors with whom you have worked extensively (the more courses you have taken with him or her, the better; if you have done a research project or an honors thesis even better); professors who might have knowledge of you as a person (i.e. if you have worked with them outside of class, or if they know about your extracurricular activities).

I, like most professors, will rarely say no to a request to write a letter, since I consider it part of my job. But I will be honest; if I don’t really know you, I will have to say that. I might write something general like:

“Mr. X was my student in a large lecture class, where there was limited opportunity for interaction or dialogue. He performed well on written work and exams, and earned a grade of B for the semester. “

Conversely, if I have gotten to know you and your work habits, I can write:

“Ms. X has taken three courses with me. She has consistently achieved As in these courses, no mean feat. She is clearly reliable, and assiduous in completing tasks on time. The last course she took with me was an upper-division seminar with only seventeen students in it, and I got to know her and her ideas fairly well. She strikes me as creative and thoughtful, someone capable of bringing insight to unfamiliar texts, and who clearly listened to and accounted for the directions I suggested. . . . “

You decide.

An obvious suggestion: don’t ask for letters from professors in whose courses you have done poorly.

IF I AM TO WRITE A LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION, I WILL NEED FROM YOU:

1) A signed and dated note from you saying that you allow me to release records (I always mention the final grade you achieved in any courses you have taken with me), the purpose of this disclosure (job, grad school recommendation, etc.) and specifying the party(ies) to whom disclosure may be made (where it will be sent).

2) If it is to be submitted electronically, the website where I need to do this, and any access codes necessary. You need to arrange this beforehand.

3) If there is an official paper form to fill out, I need it with the CONFIDENTIALITY WAIVER signed, stating that you waive the right to read your own letter.

4) If you expect me to send the letter directly, I need an addressed, stamped envelope.

5) An absolute deadline by which it needs to be downloaded or sent.