OPALGA+ Scholarship Guidance for Letters of Recommendation

Thank you for your willingness to write a letter of recommendation for an applicant of the OPALGA+ Scholarship from Out With Purpose. Your support is a crucial part of our evaluation process, as the committee places significant value on these letters to understand each applicant's dedication to service, commitment to advocacy, and overall personal character.

We would like to offer some guidance to assist you in writing an impactful letter. The scholarship committee will use your letter to assess the applicant on three key criteria: **Service, Advocacy, and Personal Character**. We understand that you may not have detailed knowledge in all these areas, so we encourage you to share your insights on the criteria where you feel you have the most personal experience with the candidate.

For New Applicants (High School Seniors)

Recommenders may include:

- High school teachers, counselors, administrators, or staff.
- Community leaders, coaches, religious leaders, or supervisors who know the student well.

Letters should:

- Provide examples of the applicant’s service and advocacy in high school and/or the community.
- Speak to the applicant’s personal character, integrity, and ability to contribute positively to the LGBTQIA+ community.
- Highlight any leadership roles or growth the applicant has demonstrated.
- Offer specific, detailed examples rather than general praise.

For Returning Scholars (College Students – Previous OPALGA+ Scholarship Recipients)

Recommenders should preferably be:

- College professors or academic advisors.

- Internship or workplace supervisors.
- Leaders of campus organizations or community/service groups where the applicant has been active.

Letters should:

- Provide evidence of the applicant's academic and professional growth since entering college.
- Highlight examples of leadership and advocacy in collegiate, workplace, or community contexts.
- Address the applicant's continued commitment to service, particularly to the LGBTQIA+ community.
- Speak to the applicant's maturity, resilience, and progression since their initial scholarship award.
- Include specific, detailed examples of achievements, outcomes, and impact at the college level.

General Tips for Writing the Letter

- **Provide context**: Explain how you know the applicant and in what capacity. Highlight the duration of your relationship and any specific instances that showcase their contributions in these areas.
- **Be specific**: The strongest letters include detailed examples of the applicant's contributions in service, advocacy, and personal character. General statements of praise are less helpful to the committee than concrete evidence of the applicant's actions and their impact.
- **Keep it concise**: While detail is important, letters should be focused and concise, typically between one to two pages.

Below are descriptions of what the committee looks for in each area.

1. Service: Evidence of the applicant's contributions to service activities that demonstrate their commitment to helping others and improving their community.

Your letter should provide compelling and detailed evidence of the applicant's exceptional service contributions. Please include specific,

relevant examples highlighting the unique service activities the applicant has engaged in and their impact.

2. Advocacy: Evidence of the applicant's commitment to advocacy, especially within the LGBTQIA+ community or other social justice areas. The committee wants to see that the applicant has taken leadership roles in promoting positive change.

Your letter should provide compelling and detailed evidence of the applicant's strong advocacy efforts. Please include specific, relevant examples highlighting the applicant's leadership and impact in advocacy.

3. Personal Character: Evidence of the applicant's character, particularly their integrity, empathy, and any other traits that make them an outstanding individual.

Your letter should provide compelling and detailed evidence of the applicant's outstanding personal character. Please include specific, relevant examples highlighting the applicant's integrity, empathy, and other strong personal traits.

General Notes (Apply to All Recommenders)

- Letters must be original and written for this year's application. Applicants may not reuse past letters.
- Letters should be addressed to Out With Purpose's OPALGA+ Scholarship Committee.
- Letters should be submitted electronically by the deadline communicated by the applicant.
- Content should remain confidential between the recommender and the committee.

Thank you for taking the time to support your applicant. Your insights are invaluable in helping us recognize and celebrate the contributions of exceptional scholars in the LGBTQIA+ community.