

# The 3 ways you need faculty in your application process

**Insider information**

**Sponsorship/  
Recommendation**

**Feedback**

# Insider information

## Who are they?

- People who know the **institution** that you're applying to and the **position**.
- When you make first contact with these individuals **you are essentially 'interviewing'** for the position

## What do they do?

- Someone familiar with the department can talk about:
  - The overall **direction** of the department
  - **Strengths and gaps** of the department
  - Individual players in the department

## How does that help you?

- This information enables you to **target and tailor** your application materials

## Examples

- Are there any alums of UCSF, UC, your graduate program, or any labs you've worked in on the faculty?
- Does anyone in your lab have a connection (ie, a collaboration) with someone at that institution?

# Who should you reach out to and why?

## Insider information

### Who?

- People who know the **institution** that you're applying to and the **position**.
- When you make first contact with these individuals **you are essentially 'interviewing'** for the position – even if they aren't on the hiring committee, they may be in, or familiar to the department.

### Why?

- Someone on the ground and familiar with the department can talk about:
  - The overall direction of the department
  - Strengths and gaps of the department
  - Individual players in the department

## Examples

- Are there any alums of UCSF, UC, your graduate program, or any labs you've worked in on the faculty?
- Does anyone in your lab have a connection (ie, a collaboration) with someone at that institution?

# Brainstorm time! **5 minutes**

## Insider information

### Who do you know?

- Ready to engage:
  - People you already know
- Potential:
  - People you've met once
  - People you haven't talked to in a while
  - People you have a shared connection with
  - People who have been recommended to you

## Examples

- Are there any alums of UCSF, UC, your graduate program, or any labs you've worked in on the faculty?
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### Start a spreadsheet or document

1. Make a list of **institutions** you're applying to
2. Make a list of **people** who could provide insider information

Don't worry yet **how** you'll talk to them, **just brainstorm names** for now!

Are there any alums of UCSF, UC, your graduate program, or any labs you've worked in on the faculty?

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# Sponsorship and recommendations

## Who are they?

- People who **know you**
- People who **think highly of your work**
- People who **believe in your potential**
- People who **know the institution** that you're applying to and potentially people in the **department**

## What do they do?

- They write recommendation **letters**
- They use their **network** for you
- They **call institutions** on your behalf

## How does that help you?

- **Stand out** from the applicant pool
- Someone not involved in your training is seen as **"impartial"**

## Is it better if...?

- They're a big name but don't know me well
- **They're not a big name, but they know me well**



**ALWAYS  
BETTER!**

# Sponsorship and recommendations

## Ready to engage

- Postdoc advisor
- PhD advisor
- Undergraduate mentor
- Collaborator

## Potential - you haven't spoken in a while

- K99 mentor
- Department chair
- Professor who chaired your panel at a conference

## What they can do

- Write a recommendation letter
- Write an email to the chair to explain a gap/weakness in your application
- Call a chair to speak highly of you when you submit
- Let you use their name
- Put you in touch with other people who can help you (ie, insider information)



# Letters of recommendation: What you're aiming for

“Next generation of promising scientists prepared to make a significant impact on the field”

## The British style:

'Jones is one of my PhD students. For a PhD student, his work is quite good. Indeed, I would even say it compares favourably with the work of some of my other PhD students.'

## The American style:

'I have never recommended anyone more highly than this. Jones is, without doubt, the most agile thinker of his generation, and perhaps of any generation in living memory. I would like to say he will revolutionize the field, but such an understatement would do no justice to his true abilities. More likely, he will define an entirely new field, Jones Studies, that will enjoy such prestige that a Nobel Prize in Jones Studies will soon be created, with Jones as its inaugural recipient. Indeed, I would not be surprised to see Jones win three or four Nobel prizes, given his strong side-interests in medicine, physics and peace. While you may be concerned that Jones has no publications, I assure you this is only because Jones's research, like Darwin's, is so potent that it would be reckless to release it on the world prematurely.'

## Keep in mind

- People may have different ideas about the purpose of a recommendation letter
  - Champion
  - Honest assessment
- Cultural differences impact letter-writing style
  - American
  - European

# Letters of recommendation: How to ask for it

Dr. Jones, as you know, I'm going on the market this year. I'm now pulling together a list of those able to write me letters of recommendation, and was wondering if you have the time to write me a strong letter of recommendation based on the sum of my work and experience.

[If this isn't your PI] I'm specifically asking you, because you had the opportunity to see me do X/worked with me on Y/ have a deep familiarity with my work on Z.

But I realize that this is busy time of year and you probably have a number of requests, so I thought I would ask.

I know how busy you are and completely understand if you just haven't had the time to reach back out. But I don't want to bombard you with emails if you're not interested. Just let me know if you'd prefer I stop following up.

....that's okay. I understand. I appreciate you considering it.

**Why you're asking them/what you want them to address**

**If they don't respond**

**If they respond with ANY hesitation, walk away!**

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# Feedback: Who to ask

## Who are they?

- Willing to **critique** your application materials
- Familiar with or represent the **type of faculty** that will be reviewing your application

## What do they do?

- Provide **their perspective** on your application materials
  - More common to ask about **statements** than CV/CL

## How does that help you?

- Makes your research pitch more **compelling**
- **Assessment** of whether your materials meet ACRA qualifications (vision, rationale, fundability, independence, communication, etc)

## Examples

- Mentor you haven't spoken to in a while
- Collaborator past or present
- Invited speaker to UCSF
- Someone who came to your poster
- Someone you reached out to to learn about a position
- Postdoc advisor

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## Is it better if...?

- You like them
- You know them
- Both
- Neither



**Poll!**

# Feedback: Other ways to get it

## Step 5: Get feedback through peer-review

- ~~Wednesday August 24, 2022~~
- Thursday September 22, 2022
- Monday October 10, 2022

## Organize your own peer review

## Use our rubrics to structure the feedback you get

- Research Statement rubric for R positions:
  - [bit.ly/ACRARS-R](https://bit.ly/ACRARS-R)
- Teaching Statement rubric for RT positions:
  - [bit.ly/ACRATS-RT](https://bit.ly/ACRATS-RT)

# Feedback: How to ask for it

Dear Dr. Einstein,

I know it's been a while, and I hope you're well. I'm applying for tenure track R1 positions and would like to ask if you would consider reviewing my research statement.

It would be extremely helpful to your got perspective on my research program, because of your work on X, Y and Z. I would be grateful for any feedback you find necessary, but in particular your thoughts on the scope of my work and it's potential fundability would be most welcome.

Currently, I'm preparing materials for UPenn's Biology department and Harvard's Biochemistry department. I've attached my materials to this email. If you are able, I defer to your preferred style of giving feedback (by email, in person, on the phone, etc.).

Thank you for considering my request.

Best,  
Rosalind Franklin

**Direct them to a specific component or aspect of your application**

**Tell them why you are asking *them***

**Give them context**

**Defer to their preference**

**Don't give them a deadline unless they ask**

**Do give them plenty of time**

# Feedback: Another way to ask for it

Dear Dr. Einstein,

I hope you're well. I wanted to reach out because I recently published my first author paper in *[journal]* and my PI and I agree that I am ready to go on the market this year.

My PI has agreed to make calls for me, but I'm wondering if you would be willing to read my application materials. Since I am targeting primarily undergraduate institutions, your perspective about achievements to highlight and language to use would be more valuable.

Many thanks,  
Rosalind

**Direct them to a specific component or aspect of your application**

**Tell them why you are asking *them***

**Give them context**

**Defer to their preference**

**Don't give them a deadline unless they ask**

**Do give them plenty of time**



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**Feedback**

Often people are concerned about reaching out for these forms of help.

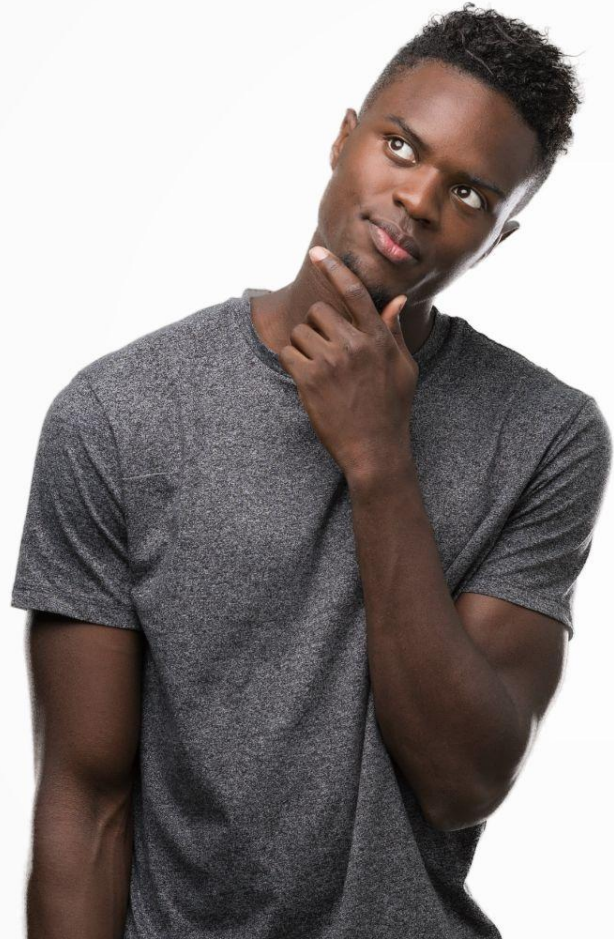
This last section is about how to increase your chances of successfully getting the help you are looking for.

# But why would your professional community help you?

1. Because you're doing interesting work
2. Because you're doing interesting work that could also forward their goals
3. To share their knowledge
4. Because they have hard won lessons
5. To repay a favor
6. To help a friend
7. They have the time/interest to do so
8. Because they wish someone had helped them
9. Because they consider it part of their job
10. You have an affinity to each other; they see themselves in you
11. Because they like something about you
12. Because you remind them of someone
13. Because you asked respectfully

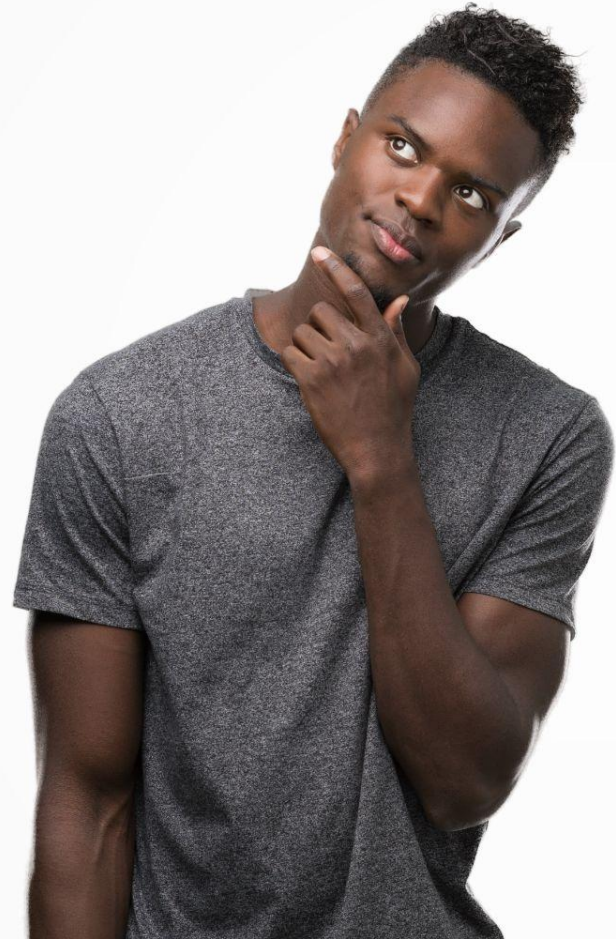
**Don't believe  
me?**

**Let's try!**



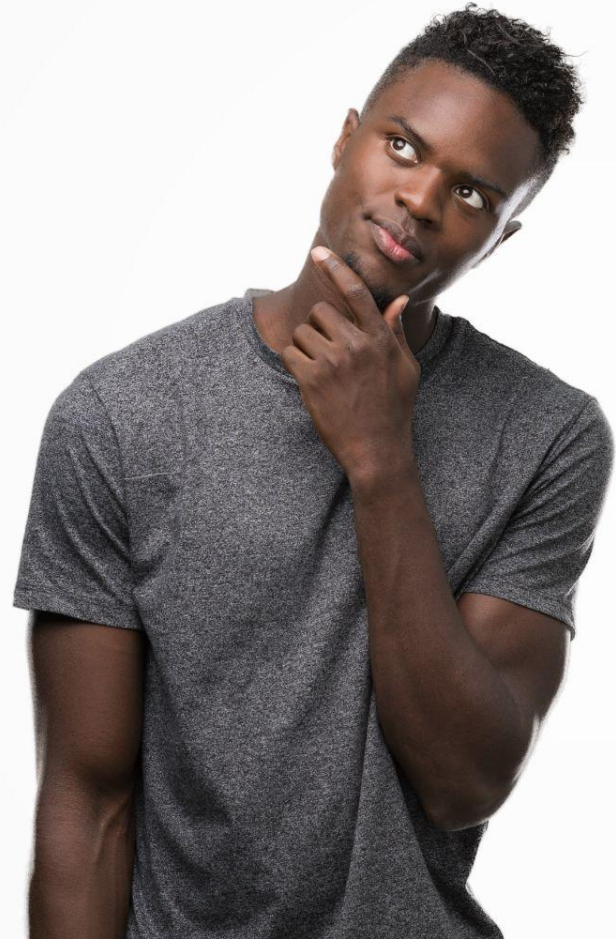
Your old PhD advisor contacts you to ask you to speak with a current advisee of hers, who is considering a postdoc at UCSF.

Poll:  
**What would  
you say?**  
What would  
inspire you to  
say yes?



It's 2024 and you're faculty at University of Michigan. Someone you met at their poster last year contacts you and asks you to talk about a new opening in your department.

Poll:  
**What would  
you say?**  
What would  
inspire you to  
say yes?



# How to prepare for a conversation with faculty

Take it slow

Be prepared

Follow up

## **Do your research**

Ask faculty to chat about:

- What they are looking for in a candidate
- How you fit the position
- How they perceive your application

# How to prepare for a conversation with faculty

## Take it slow

- Send a short, specific email to faculty that invites them to chat with you for 20-30 minutes. Express interest for their background, their department or their institution.
- Make it easy for them by asking them to:
  - Discuss their own search experience
  - Provide advice on your transition to a faculty job
  - Share their experience being on hiring committees
  - Describe what they think their department is looking for
  - Provide advice on your research program ideas
  - Help you figure out if you are the right fit for the job
- Don't give up if they don't respond right away

## Do your research

Ask faculty to chat about:

- What they are looking for in a candidate
- How you fit the position
- How they perceive your application

# How to prepare for a conversation with faculty

## Be prepared

- Prepare a 2-minute presentation of yourself
- Research their work, their lab, and their department
- Have a list of questions ready
  - What do they think made them competitive for a faculty job offer
  - What hiring committees look at when hiring
  - Specifically, how will your experience be perceived by a department like theirs
  - Who else you should speak to in academia
- If they offer to help, ask them if they would be willing to provide some feedback on your application

## Do your research

Ask faculty to chat about:

- What they are looking for in a candidate
- How you fit the position
- How they perceive your application



# How to prepare for a conversation with faculty

## Follow up

- Thank them for their time and advice, and highlight what you found useful in the conversation
- Maintain the relationship
  - Keep them informed of your progress on the job market
- Continue building the relationship
  - If they seemed open to it, ask them if they would have time to provide feedback on your application materials
  - If you had a great conversation, reach out to them again for other questions later on

## Do your research

Ask faculty to chat about:

- What they are looking for in a candidate
- How you fit the position
- How they perceive your application

# Sample language for reaching out to faculty

## You will find these faculty through your community (colleagues of colleagues)

1. You will ask your mentors and colleagues for information by sharing the institutions you are applying to
2. Your colleague will either introduce you, or you will be allowed to 'use their name'

**Talking to someone in your field? Get more specific:**

**I'm an immunologist  
studying the role that  
Tregs play in type 1  
diabetes**

Dear Dr. Tereshkova,

My K99 mentor, Marie Curie, suggested I reach out to you, as I shared with her that UC Berkeley is one of the institutions where I intend to apply for a faculty position this year. I'm wondering if you might have 20 minutes to chat with me about your experience at your institution.

To share a bit about my background, I'm an immunologist who focuses on autoimmunity, using a type 1 diabetes mouse model. I've attached my CV to give you a sense of my background.

If you're going to ASCB this year, perhaps we can meet at the conference, but we can also talk by phone or Skype; I'm flexible and will adapt to your schedule. Thank you for considering my request.

Mae Jemison