



TRAILBLAZERS

PHOENIX ZOO YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

PROFESSIONAL REFERENCE GUIDELINES FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

As you progress through high school and prepare for college applications, internships or jobs, it is important to have a strong network of professional references who can speak to your skills, abilities and character. This guideline document aims to assist you in identifying suitable professional references, requesting their assistance and following up on reference requests.

1. IDENTIFYING A PROFESSIONAL REFERENCE:

- **Choose Individuals Who Know You Well:** Consider selecting references who have a good understanding of your academic performance, extracurricular involvement, work ethic and personal qualities.
- **Seek Diversity:** Aim for a diverse range of references, including teachers, coaches, employers, mentors or community leaders. This will provide a comprehensive perspective on your abilities and strengths.
- **Strong Relationships:** Select references with whom you have established a positive and professional rapport. They should be able to speak confidently about your skills, achievements and character.

2. REQUESTING A PROFESSIONAL REFERENCE

- **Timing:** Make sure to approach potential references well in advance, allowing them ample time to consider your request and provide a thoughtful recommendation.
- **Personal Communication:** Request references in person whenever possible, as it shows sincerity and allows for a more personal interaction. Alternatively, a polite and well-written email can also be used to make the request.
- **Explain Your Intentions:** Clearly explain why you are asking for their reference, providing details about the opportunity you are pursuing and why you believe they would be an excellent reference for you.
- **Provide Relevant Information:** State the deadline for their reference and offer to share information about your achievements, experiences and personal qualities that you would like them to highlight in their recommendation. This will guide them in crafting a more specific and effective reference.

3. FOLLOWING UP ON REFERENCE REQUESTS

- **Express Gratitude:** Once you have received a positive response to your reference request, promptly express your gratitude in person or via email, thanking them for their willingness to support you.
- **Share Pertinent Details:** Restate the deadline for their submission, explain how the submission process works and provide any additional information your reference stated would be helpful to complete their reference.
- **Reminder and Gentle Follow-Up:** If the reference deadline is approaching and you have not received confirmation that the reference has been submitted, it is acceptable to send a gentle follow-up message or have a conversation to inquire about the status. Be polite and understanding, as they may have been busy or faced unexpected circumstances.
- **Keep Them Informed:** Once you have received the outcome of the application or opportunity, inform your references about the results and express your appreciation for their support and guidance.