



# How to Serve as a Reference for Student Employees

As a supervisor of student employees, you'll likely be asked to serve as a reference when they transition to the workforce. Providing a strong reference can significantly impact their job prospects.

## Accepting the Request

Before agreeing, consider how well you know the student's work ethic and skills. If they have consistently delivered high-quality work and demonstrated strong professional behavior, supporting them as a reference is a valuable way to help their career.

## Declining the Request

If you're unsure about your ability to serve as a strong reference, it's best to decline politely. Honesty is key—you don't want to provide a lukewarm endorsement that could hinder the student's chances. Here are some ways to professionally decline:

- *"I don't think I'm familiar enough with your working style to be a strong reference."*
- *"I'm not well-acquainted with the skills required for this role. I think another reference would be more beneficial for you."*

## Being a Strong Reference

A compelling reference highlights specific examples of the student's strengths and accomplishments. Consider:

- What made them excel in their role?
- What qualities or skills set them apart?
- Why did you enjoy working with them?

To provide the most relevant information, ask the student for a job description or details about their career goals. Tailoring your reference to align with the employer's expectations makes it more impactful.

Instead of a vague statement like, *"Karen was a good leader,"* you could say: *"Karen demonstrated strong leadership by taking initiative on an office presentation, organizing the materials, and guiding her team to deliver an outstanding final product."*