## How to ask for-and get-strong letters of recommendation

1) Approach potential recommenders first as advisers. Get to know them and let them get to know you.

Discuss your larger interests and goals. Ask for their advice about potential projects, reading, courses of study, graduate programs. . . . These conversations will be invaluable in themselves, but they will also allow you to judge who is likely to be your most enthusiastic recommenders; these meetings will also allow those who write for you to write more informed a "Do you feel you know me (or my academic record, my leadership qualities) well enough strong letter of recommendation for the X scholarship?" You've now given the professor the decline gracefully. If the answer is "no," don't push. This inquiry may be done via email—if you an established relationship with the potential recommender.