Guidelines for writing Letters of Recommendation (LoR) for Students Applying to Health Professions Schools.

  The Letter of Recommendation (LoR) is a very integral part of a student's application. There are several functions that a LoR may perform: detailing academic performance in the classroom, describing work performed in the laboratory, evaluating performance in the workplace. However, the LoR is most beneficial when it address issues not readily obvious from other forms of information (i.e. the college transcript). Letters that address the candidate's characteristics that are pertinent to a career in health care are especially desirable. Those characteristics include, but are not limited to, motivation, dependability, leadership development and potential, communication skills (both written and oral), ability to prioritize, ability to work with team members from varied backgrounds, empathy, persistence, and passion.

Note: Prior to writing the LoR, verify the confidentiality status of the letter as the information in a *non-confidential* letter is available to the student as well as other individuals.

  Typical Areas to address in a letter of recommendation (not all areas will be addressed in the typical LoR):

- Relationship: How long and in what capacity have you know the student

- Strength of Character: Altruism, Knowledge, Skill sets, Sense of Duty, Honesty, Integrity, Responsibility.

- Academic commitment: Strength of intellectual challenge, Variety/Challenge of Non-major courses, Increased Depth and Rigor of classes over the years, Clarification of poor performance in a particular class.

- Knowledge of "unique" life experiences or personal challenges overcome that have impacted the "path travelled" by the student

- Creativity, Originality

- Work Ethic

  It is desirable to provide specific examples that are illustrative. Generalities such as "XXX is able to integrate new scientific knowledge into her other course work" are not very useful. Of much more use to the Health Professions Advising Committee and the medical school Admissions Committee are statements such as "XXX used her knowledge of iron metabolism from her honors thesis research to enhance the small group discussion and subsequent class presentation on liver metabolism in my Biochemistry class last semester."

  Many of us write multiple letters for students. In an effort to save time, we often cut and paste from previous letters, either for the same individual or another student. As LoR are now being submitted directly to the health professional schools, it is IMPERATIVE that you proof read them to avoid some embarrassingly common mistakes such as submitting a previously used recommendation letter where the names of two different students are used in letter, or "XXX will make a great addition to your graduate program" when the letter is going to medical schools. These types of errors reflect poorly on the letter writer and the College.

  The vast majority of professional schools WILL NOT accept letters of recommendation that are not printed on College/Department letterhead and signed. Electronic submission of letters should take the form of a scanned pdf file.

  Finally, I would like to thank you for this incredibly valuable service that you are providing for the students and the College. If you have any questions at all, please call me at x2215.

Bill Church – HPAC Chair