

# Bates Medical Studies Committee



## BATES COLLEGE MEDICAL STUDIES COMMITTEE GUIDELINES FOR REFERENCE WRITERS

Letters of recommendation are an important and required component of a student's application to medical or dental school. The application process has become increasingly competitive, and a persuasive recommendation letter can have a significant impact on an applicant's candidacy. After reading this material if you have questions please contact James H. Smith at 207-786-6467 or [jsmith6@bates.edu](mailto:jsmith6@bates.edu).

### The Basics

- Think carefully about how well you know the applicant. Do you know him/her well enough to write an endorsement for medical or dental school? If for any reason you do not feel that you can write positively on an applicant's behalf, be honest with him/her and decline to write the letter.
- Please check the Medical Studies Reference Form to determine whether or not the applicant has waived his or her right to review the letter you are writing, and whether or not the applicant has given you permission to discuss matters related to the applicant's GPA or academic record. It is the applicant's right to decide if the letter will remain confidential or non-confidential. Confidential letters are taken much more seriously than non-confidential letters, and we strongly encourage applicants to keep their letters confidential.
- We advise applicants to give recommenders information about their academic studies, employment history, extracurricular activities, volunteer work, and research. Ask for this material if it is not provided.

### What to Include

The following suggestions regarding letters of reference have been made by medical and dental school admissions officers and can serve as a useful guide.

- Indicate the length and context of your association with the applicant.
- It is important that what you write is consistent with the applicant's academic record. Try to use superlatives judiciously.
- Be sure to write enough—a short letter may be taken by an admissions committee to mean that the applicant is shallow or that little can be said about the applicant.
- Try to be specific—generalizations are not very helpful.
- Discuss the applicant's potential in his/her chosen field. How has the applicant demonstrated a commitment to the chosen profession? Does he/she strike you as a compassionate individual who will make a good health professional someday?
- Try to quantify the student's strengths versus other applicants that you have observed. Describe your qualifications for comparing the applicant to other applicants.

### What to Avoid

- Don't speculate. Be as specific and factual as possible. Give concrete examples to illustrate your characterizations of the applicant. Base your statements on observations and information obtained through direct contact with the applicant or his/her academic record.
- Avoid discussing an individual's race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, citizenship status, or marital status. Also avoid commenting on the applicant's appearance, family background, health, or other personal circumstances unless they are immediately relative to his/her application.

### How to Submit Your Letter

Recommendations are kept on file at the Bates Center for Purposeful Work. Medical and dental schools require your letter to be; **written on departmental stationery or letterhead, signed, and dated**. The Medical Studies Reference Form should be provided to you by the applicant. They are responsible for filling out the top portion. Please fill out the bottom portion and forward this along with your letter to James H. Smith by:

Email (preferred): [jsmith6@bates.edu](mailto:jsmith6@bates.edu)

Mail: Bates Center for Purposeful Work, 146 Wood Street Lewiston, ME 04240 or  
Fax 207-786-6126