**Writing a sample reference letter**

In composing your letter, where possible, please consider some of the following aspects (it is impossible to comment on all aspects, but commenting on some if you can is very useful):

**RELIABILITY**: How did you impress me as to your sense of responsibility, dependability and consistency?

**INITIATIVE**: Are you resourceful, energetic, industrious, imaginative and independent?

**INTELLECTUAL ABILITY**: Are you intellectually keen, talented and skillful? How would you describe your ability to apply general information and to handle abstract ideas?

**EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENT** Are stable, self-controlled, sensitive and adaptable and how did you show this to me?

**SELF CONCEPT**: Do you show confidence in your own abilities and decisions and how did you display that to me?

**MATURITY**: Are you capable of good decision-making and how did you display that to me??

**COOPERATION**: Are you considerate of others; does you take advice well and work well on a team and how did you display that to me??

**INTEGRITY**: How would I rate your sense of honesty and trustworthiness and why?

**COURSE PERFORMANCE**: How would I rate your speaking and writing skills and why? Have you

demonstrated laboratory proficiency and orderliness and how?

**MOTIVATION FOR THE PROFESSION/MOTIVATION TO SUCCEED:** How strongly have you shown an interest in the chosen field?

**POTENTIAL FOR LIFELONG LEARNING:** Do you seek out information and how did you display toward me? Strive not only for a “grade” but rather for a good understanding?

**LEADERSHIP:** Can you effectively guide others and how did you show that to me? And/or effectively follow when necessary?

**EMPATHY:** How have you demonstrated kindness towards others?

**ABILITY TO WORK WITH DIVERSE POPULATIONS**

**OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE SUITABILITY OF THIS CANDIDATE FOR THE FIELD**

Additional content tips are given below. Where possible, concrete examples of these behaviors demonstrated by you are useful.

When writing letters of evaluation for students applying for a graduate program in a health profession or medical school, the following information may be helpful to you in writing a sample letter. The information was obtained from medical school admissions committee members, but it is applicable to all health professions

**MOST HELPFUL CONTENT**

1. Relationship between you and me, the extent of personal knowledge about the applicant and the ability to give specific examples and document evidence about behavior. Statements included: how and for how long I knew you, whether you and I have ever worked together outside of class, and an accounting of specific interactions we had.

**2.** Information on your personal characteristics, including integrity, honesty, reliability, professionalism, determination, leadership and motivation. Desirable information includes: examples or statements that reflect your character, service commitment, personal struggle; pointed remarks concerning the seriousness, aptitude, and integrity of the applicant; potential as a physician and personal assessment as an individual with respect to humanity, responsibility and examples of those qualities; and impressions of professionalism, character, seriousness, sincerity of the applicant.

**3.** Contrasted strengths and weaknesses you have, including narrative comparisons of the applicant with other applicants and global numerical comparisons of applicants. Examples include: information about motivation/character strengths and weaknesses; what I admire in you.

**4.** Description of your social skills, including interpersonal skills, the ability to interact in groups and participate in class, and the ability to establish peer relationships. Committee members wrote: some idea that the applicant works well with others; their work ethic and suitability for the demands of medicine; interactive style/communication skills; evidence of the ability to interact with peers/patients; and evidence of a compassionate and 'giving' nature.

**5. Your** Academic performance, describing academic aptitude and scholarship in a manner not addressed in your application, and clarification of unique circumstances. Examples include: a statement of preparedness/appropriateness of this applicant for medical school; academic attributes aside from material in the application; clarification of hardship faced such as 'she did not do well in the second quarter because her sister died.'