**GUIDELINES FOR LETTERS OF EVALUATION FOR PRE-HEALTH STUDENTS**

Dear letter writer,

Thank you for taking the time to provide a letter in support of this medical or dental school applicant. The letter you are providing for this professional school applicant is an important component of his or her application and will be read carefully by members of the admissions committee. We are aware that writing letters is a time-consuming activity, and we are most grateful for your efforts.

**Here are a few important FAQ regarding the letter you produce.**

**What format is required for my letter?**

- Your letter must be on LETTERHEAD, it must have a CURRENT DATE, and it must be SIGNED. There is no minimum or maximum length requirement. No additional form is required.

**Where should I send my letter after I have written it?**

- Do not give your completed letter to the applicant for delivery.

- You may e-mail your letter as an attachment or send a hard copy via regular mail to the applicant’s pre-health advisor.

Dr. Marilyn Banta Dr. Erica Nierth

Department of Biology Department of Biology

Texas State University Texas State University

601 University Dr. 601 University Dr.

San Marcos, TX 78666 San Marcos, TX 78666

(off) 512-245-3367 (off) 512-245-

marilyn.banta@txstate.edu erica.nierth@txstate.edu

**What should I include in my letter to make it a useful and valuable tool for admissions officers?**

General guidelines for your letter:

Please provide a single letter that will be used for all the schools the applicant is applying to. Using a generic “Dear Admissions Committee” type heading is fine. Provide a brief explanation of your relationship with and the length of time you’ve known the applicant. Personalize your letter. When possible, cite specific examples of the applicant’s abilities and achievements rather than using vague generalizations. When possible, give comparative information showing how the applicant compares with others you have known. Please provide your candid assessment of the likelihood for success of this applicant in medical or dental school and beyond as a health care provider. Avoid commenting on the applicant’s physical appearance, marital status, religion, gender identity, or other irrelevant qualities.

Here is some additional information that you should try to include in your letters of evaluation:

The next page includes a list of **competencies** that the admissions committees will be evaluating. Addressing some of these competencies explicitly in your letter will make it more valuable to the members of the admissions committees.

Instructors: comparative information about critical thinking skills; knowledge of the scientific process and comprehension of content; examples of leadership, interpersonal skills, oral and written communication skills, integrity, and motivation

Research or lab supervisors: comparative information about their reliability, independence, perseverance, discipline, curiosity, and leadership; examples of competent laboratory technique, competence at instructing others, ability to interpret data

Employers or volunteer coordinators: comparative information about reliability, maturity, compassion, professionalism, poise, and integrity; examples demonstrating independence, good interpersonal skills, tolerance, good communication skills, and the ability to work well with others

Health care professionals: comparative information about compassion, attention to detail, curiosity about the career, motivation for medicine or dentistry, maturity, professionalism; examples of poise, communication skills, empathy, and interpersonal relationships; information about the nature (quality, duration, substance) of the health care experience the applicant has received with you

**Who should I contact if I still have questions?**

Please do not hesitate to reach out to the applicant’s pre-health advisor using the contact information provided above.

**Important Competencies for Medical and Dental School Applicants**

Descriptions for many of these competencies are taken from the AAMC GSA Committee on Admissions.

**Thinking and Reasoning Competencies**

**Critical Thinking**: Uses logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions, or approaches to problems.

**Scientific Inquiry**: Applies knowledge of the scientific process to integrate and synthesize information, solve problems, and formulate research questions and hypotheses. Is facile in the language of science and uses it to participate in the discourse of science and explain how scientific knowledge is discovered and validated.

**Written Communication**: Effectively conveys information to others using written words and sentences.

**Professional Competencies**

**Service Orientation/Empathy/Compassion**: Shows a commitment to something larger than oneself, demonstrates dedication to service and a commitment to making meaningful contributions; recognizes, understands and acknowledges others’ experiences, feelings, perspectives; sensitive to others’ needs

**Commitment to Learning and Growth:** Practices continuous personal and professional growth for improvement; sets and communicates goals, reflects on successes, challenges and mistakes; pursues opportunities to improve understanding; asks for and incorporates feedback

**Social Skills**: Demonstrates awareness of others’ needs, goals, feelings, and the ways social and behavioral cues affect peoples’ interactions and behaviors. Adjusts behaviors appropriately in response to these cues. Treats others with respect.

**Teamwork and Collaboration**: Works collaboratively with others to achieve shared goals. Shares information and knowledge with others and provides feedback. Puts team goals ahead of individual goals.

**Oral Communication**: Effectively conveys information to others using spoken words and sentences. Listens effectively. Recognizes potential communication barriers and adjusts approach or clarifies information as needed.

**Ethical Responsibility to Self and Others**: Behaves in an honest and ethical manner. Cultivates personal and academic integrity. Adheres to ethical principles and follows rules and procedures. Resists peer pressure to engage in unethical behavior and encourages others to behave in honest and ethical ways. Develops and demonstrates ethical and moral reasoning.

**Reliability and Dependability**: Consistently fulfills obligations in a timely and satisfactory manner. Takes responsibility for personal actions and performance.

**Motivation for Medicine/Dentistry**: Demonstrates a passion for the field. Has taken the time and put in the effort to adequately explore the field through employment, volunteer activities, shadowing or other means.