

Writing Guidelines for Individual Letters of Recommendation for Medical/Dental/Veterinary Schools

Wesleyan students and graduates who are applying to medical, dental, or veterinary school are eligible to receive an institutional committee letter on behalf of the Health Professions Panel in support of the health professions application. The panel is appointed by the Provost and is comprised of faculty and administrative staff members. While not all colleges and universities offer this type of confidential, composite letter of sponsorship, it is considered very important by most admissions committees in their evaluation and selection process.

In writing our committee letter, we make use of information provided by the applicant – transcripts, a detailed resume, a personal statement addressing their interest in and suitability for a health profession, a two-hour interview, and individual letters of recommendation for the applicant and submitted to veCollect. In drafting the committee letter, we may quote directly from these letters of recommendation, citing your name and title. Because applicants waive their right to read the committee letter, your letter remains confidential. The completed committee letter is sent out to the applicant's designated schools accompanied by all of the individual letters of recommendation that are used in its development.

To be of benefit to Wesleyan applicants, our committee letters must be highly credible and well documented, presenting a clear and individualized portrait of each applicant's abilities, motivation, and commitment to their chosen health profession. If you have been asked to write a letter of recommendation, it is most helpful to us if your letter is candid and specific. Please be sure to state in what setting you have interacted with the applicant and how well you know them. If you do not feel that you know the applicant well enough to write a strong letter on their behalf, please decline. If you do feel that you know the applicant reasonably well, it is still appropriate to ask for a resume that includes additional information about her/his/they academic preparation, employment, community service, research experience, and extracurricular activities. Hopefully, you will be able to spend some time talking with the applicant about her/his/they interest in the field and practice of the health profession they are interested in pursuing.

Health profession schools learn more about the applicant as a person from recommendation letters. Based on your experience with the applicant, please address some of the following:

communication skills (oral, written, and listening);
observational abilities, comprehensive vision, and attention to detail;
qualities of mind, such as the ability to grasp, analyze, and synthesize information and ideas;
intellectual curiosity;
aptitude for sustained hard work and commitment;
cross-disciplinary fluency;
organizational and problem-solving skills;
interpersonal skills, such as tact and thoughtfulness;
critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, scientific inquiry, competency with human behavior

integrity and responsibility;
personal qualities, such as maturity, warmth, and emotional balance;
resilience and adaptability when confronting challenges;
contributions to, and concern for, the wellbeing of others;
cultural sensitivity;
initiative, flexibility, capacity to engage in productive teamwork
capacity for improvement and personal growth;
reflective capacities, knowledge of limits, and willingness to ask for help

In assessing an application, admissions committees also consider what is sometimes termed *distance traveled*. If the applicant has overcome significant obstacles, weathered difficult circumstances, learned from some perhaps regrettable mistakes, or persevered in the face of difficulties out of a sense of responsibility, this may be brought to the attention of the admissions committees.

Most importantly, consider what qualities and abilities you value in a physician, dentist, or veterinarian and whether you believe this individual has the capacity to become a skilled health care professional. Because there are many individuals who are very capable and well suited for other professions, but not necessarily for clinical practice, make sure that you specify at some point in your letter that you are recommending this person for medical, dental, or vet school.

Please be sure your letter is dated, includes your full name and title, and is printed on letterhead stationery if you are associated with an academic institution or professional organization (if you do not have letterhead, make sure to include your email address and phone number below your signature). Your letter should be single-spaced and in 12-point type for readability. Because the letter you submit to veCollect will be used for all the applicant's health professional schools, letters should not be addressed to any specific school or program. A salutation is not required, but you may address your letters generically as "Dear Admissions Committee Members."

You will submit your letter electronically to veCollect. The applicant that has requested your letter will create an "Evaluator" file for you on veCollect and you will receive an email with instructions on how to upload your document. veCollect reviews the letters and is **unable to accept unsigned letters**. The applicant should have provided you with a signed Reference/Waiver form which is part of the individual letter of rec request form that also provided you with some basic guidelines.

Your signature on the letter certifies that it was written in its entirety by you on behalf of the applicant. Please try to upload your letter by the third Wednesday of March of the application year.

We appreciate the great care and thoughtfulness that characterize the letters of recommendation written for our applicants to medical, dental, and veterinary school. Thank you for your efforts on their behalf. Should you have any questions about the work of the Wesleyan Health Professions Panel or the committee letter process for Wesleyan students and graduates, please contact Mildred Rodríguez, PhD, Health Professions Advisor/Program Coordinator and Co-Chair of the Wesleyan Health Professions Panel, 860/685-2199. Questions about veCollect and/or how to upload your letter of recommendation may be directed to the Health Professions Administrative Assistant, Rosalind Adgers, 860/685-3376, Boger Hall, Gordon Career Center, 41 Wyllys Avenue, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT 06459 or by email at health.professions@wesleyan.edu and Cc radgers@wesleyan.edu