

## **For Letter Writers:**

Letters of recommendation are an important and required part of a professional health school application. The application process has become increasingly competitive, and a persuasive recommendation letter can have a significant impact on an applicant's chances of acceptance into their program of choice.

### **Do you know them well?**

Before you agree to write a recommendation, you should think carefully about how well you know the applicant. Do you know him or her well enough to write an endorsement for health school? If for any reason you don't feel that you can write positively or in depth on a student's behalf, be honest with them and decline to write the letter. Generic or superficial letters are frustrating to the admissions committee and won't help the applicant. In fact, it could even hurt their chances. If you feel like you need additional information prior to your decision, you can choose to sit down with the student and discuss his or her interest in the field of medicine and reasons for pursuing a medical education.

### **What to include**

Make sure that you briefly explain your relationship with the applicant. You should briefly mention how long you've known the applicant and in what capacity you've interacted with them (as faculty, pre-health advisor, research supervisor, shadowing physician, etc.).

Don't include information found elsewhere in the application. You should only include information on grades, GPA or Admission Test scores if you're providing context to help interpret anomalies in a candidate's academic record or circumstances contributing to a dip in academic performance.

Provide an accurate assessment of the applicant's suitability for medical school rather than advocating for the applicant. Focus on behaviors that you yourself observed directly when describing the applicant's suitability for medical school. Consider describing: the situation or context of the behavior, the actual behaviors you observed, and any outcomes of that behavior. Also, be as specific as possible. Give concrete examples to illustrate your characterizations of the student.

Consider adding whether the applicant offers any unique contributions to the incoming class. Feel free to describe obstacles that the applicant had to overcome, and if applicable, how those obstacles led to new learning and growth. Explain how the applicant may contribute to a health school's diversity and diversity in healthcare in general (such as background, attributes, experiences, etc.).

You may also wish to conclude your letter with a reaffirmation of your endorsement of the student's application and an offer to answer follow-up questions if necessary.

**What about the Format?**

All letters should be written on official letterhead. You should sign your letter and make sure to use your full name and professional title. Quality is more important than letter length. Focus on the applicant rather than little details. Be complete, but concise.

**Submission**

Unless they refuse the confidentiality waiver, applicants will not see or handle the letter after you've written it. Recommendation letters are submitted to the NMSU OMPP Representative. The letter should be submitted with the student's applications not separately.