Dear recommender,

Thank you for taking the time to write a letter of evaluation for this applicant. A strong and informative letter can play a key role in distinguishing one very qualified applicant from another. Your letter will be shared with health profession schools and will directly inform this applicant’s committee letter. Committee letters are widely appreciated by health profession schools. A committee letter is a narrative evaluation of an applicant’s qualifications and reflects information gathered from individual letters. Your letter will be quoted in the committee letter and attached in its entirety at the end. The Board of Prehealth Advisers requests that you submit your letter to Interfolio no later than June 1. The applicant will provide you with instructions.

We have provided some suggestions to help expedite your letter writing process. These instructions were written in collaboration with the Lazarus Center for Career Development and are based on recommendations from the Association of American Medical Colleges.

Key elements of a strong letter of evaluation for a health profession school:

1. **State how long you have known the applicant**, and in what context.
2. Most helpful are **reflections based on your direct experiences with the applicant**.
3. Admission committees encourage you to **assess core competencies** sought in future health care providers, including critical thought, organization, communication, scientific inquiry, intrinsic motivation, integrity, cultural competency, resilience, and passion for science and service. A complete list for medical schools can be found at https://www.aamc.org/download/349990/data/lettersguidelinesbrochure.pdf.
4. **Instances where applicants have stood out** or provided unique contributions are particularly helpful, as well as longitudinal, evidence-based examples. Comparisons may be useful provided you offer a relative frame of reference for context.
5. Admission committees appreciate insights into **challenges the applicant has faced**, especially if you believe this has shaped her path to a career in health care.
6. **Please ensure that your letter is signed and on institutional letterhead**. If you are a Smith College employee and are unsure how to find letterhead and/or include your signature on a digital document, please contact the assistant for your department or office.
7. Admission committees have noted that the mention of grades or test scores and comments that fall outside the evaluator’s direct experience with the applicant (for example, from an applicant’s resume) are not useful, therefore we recommend leaving these out.

Lastly but importantly, we encourage you to let your applicant know if you are unable to provide a strong recommendation. Applicants understand the importance of these letters and will appreciate the opportunity to seek a stronger recommendation elsewhere if need be.

We hope this information will be useful as you compose your letter. Thank you again for taking the time to help this applicant achieve her professional goals.

The Smith College Board of Prehealth Advisers
Kathryn Lipp, M.Ed., Prehealth Program Director
http://www.smith.edu/prehealth, klipp@smith.edu

Updated October 2015