

# Assembling a Recommendation Portfolio

## PreMedical Professions Program University of North Florida

Professional school admission committees welcome evaluations from those who know an applicant well and can compare him/her to others who have been successful in earning medical degrees. Admission committees encourage recommendations that provide insight into a candidate's character and abilities and discuss his/her attributes in a realistic way.

### What Admission Committees Find Most Helpful<sup>1</sup>

1. The relationship between the applicant and the evaluator
2. Information on the personal characteristics of the applicant
3. Contrasted strengths and weaknesses of the applicant
4. Description of the applicant's social skills
5. Academic performance that is *not* repetitive of other data e.g., *not* MCAT, GPA, etc.

### What Admission Committees Find Least Helpful

1. Repetition of information already available (MCAT, GPA, etc.)
2. Unsubstantiated superlatives or vague generalities
3. Comments on grades in one particular class
4. Indicators of a lack of a strong relationship between applicant and evaluator
5. Irrelevant information

To assist UNF preprofessional students in assembling a *recommendation portfolio* that will be valued by admission committees, the UNF PreProfessional Program has developed a *centralized recommendation service*. UNF PreMedical Professions Program has available forms for use by the following types of evaluators:

**faculty** with whom a student has studied or performed research

**mentors** with whom the student has established a relationship

**volunteer supervisors** for whom a student has completed volunteer work

*Use of UNF PreMed Program evaluation forms is voluntary<sup>2</sup>*. The primary advantage of using the forms is that faculty, volunteer supervisors, and mentors need only fill out one form or write one letter per student and send it to the UNF PreMedical Professions Advisor. The completed forms and letter comprise a recommendation portfolio for the student and copies are sent, upon request of the student, to professional schools of the student's choice. A student may update the list of schools to which his/her recommendation portfolio is to be sent at any time by a single request to the PreMed Advisor. Included with the evaluations is a composite evaluation sheet showing how each evaluator rated the student applicant. A composite evaluation is possible only for faculty members and mentors who use the UNF PreMed Program evaluation forms. Many medical schools now require such a "composite" or "committee" evaluation.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Advisor, *Letters of Recommendation: Medical School Admission Committee Members= Recommendations*, Summer 1998.

<sup>2</sup> A student may instead elect to ask his/her instructors, volunteer supervisors, and mentors to send individual letters of recommendation directly to each school to which the student is applying.

When a student asks a faculty member for an evaluation, the student should supply a **current resume** including (but not limited to) the following information:

- Student's name and UNF n number
- The type of professional school to which the student is applying (medical school, pharmacy school, veterinary school, etc.)
- Student's overall GPA and BCPM GPA (**biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics**)
- All available admission test scores (MCAT, DAT, PCAT, OAT, GRE, etc.)
- *A list of courses the student took from the faculty member with semesters.*
- A brief "personal statement" that provides personal information you think may be valuable to the person evaluating you, including honors and awards, special projects or experiences, why you wish to attend professional school, etc.

It is recommended that evaluations be provided by at least two faculty from the student's major field and the rest chosen from those who know the student well and can give positive recommendations.

Most types of professional schools are in various stages of converting to a "paperless" letter of evaluation process. The UNF PreMed Evaluation Service is prepared to handle any of the common transmittal mechanisms. Advantages to paperless procedures include:

- No more "lost in the mail" letters (too common in the past)
- Email confirmation to the student that the letter(s) have been received.

VirtualEvals ([www.virtualevals.org](http://www.virtualevals.org)) will be used for students applying to allopathic medical, osteopathic medical, and optometry schools. Your letter packet will be converted to a .pdf file and uploaded to VirtualEvals; they will deliver it to the schools of your choice.

AADSAS (dental school application service) accepts paper or electronic letters, but prefers electronic. If you are a dental school applicant and wish to use the UNF recommendation service, those writing letters on your behalf should send them to our office. The following is from the AADSAS Instructions:

Many institutions utilize a Pre-dental Committee Letter/Report for their dental school applicants. These Letters/Reports come in three basic formats:

- Committee letter with supporting letters attached.
- Committee letter that is composed and uses quotes from various evaluators but does not have supporting letters attached.
- Composite letter which usually consists of a cover letter from an advising office and a collection of individual evaluation letters that are attached. The advising office serves as a central collection service for the applicant, but does not make additional assessments of the candidate **[This is UNFs format]**.

All three types of Committee Letters/Reports are acceptable, regardless of the number of evaluations that may be contained within the document. AADSAS respects the varying philosophies of colleges and universities as to how best to provide a Committee Letter/Report; therefore, AADSAS does not limit the number of evaluations included.

**Applicants should be instructed to provide only the name of the individual submitting the evaluation, [Prof. Lentz] not the individual names of the evaluators contained within the Committee Letter/Report. If submitting electronically, advise applicants of the email address that should be used to notify you to submit their evaluations [mlentz@unf.edu].**

In order for the PreMedical Professions Office to send your recommendation portfolio to professional schools in a timely way, provide the following information and materials to the PreMed Advisor:

- A completed copy of the Recommendation Letter Submission Form (available from the UNF PreMed Website or the PreMed Blackboard site).
- VirtualEvals charges UNF \$10 per student record. In lieu of postage, envelopes, etc., and to keep everything as consistent as possible, we ask that each applicant using the premed recommendation service pay a one-time, \$10 “LOR fee”. This can be waived under extenuating circumstances. Checks should be made out to “UNF PreMed Program”.

The PreMed Advisor must receive completed recommendations at least one week before the deadline for receipt by schools to which you are applying.

***To avoid misunderstanding, all instructions to the PreMed Advisor must be in writing (email is OK). When UNF classes are not in session, the PreMedical Professions Program and PreMedical Professions Advisor cannot respond to requests for portfolio development nor to requests to send student portfolios to prospective medical professional schools.***

***It is your responsibility to see that your application file is complete. Call the schools to which you are applying to confirm the timely arrival of your recommendations.***