

February 6, 2017

Instructions for Requesting a Committee Letter of Evaluation and An Interview

The WVU Pre-Health Office and the WVU Pre-Health Committee prepares Committee Letters of Evaluation to assist students who are applying to health professional schools, including medical (allopathic or osteopathic), dental, optometry, and podiatry schools. Most health professional schools prefer to receive committee letters in addition to individual letters, because committee letters offer a substantive evaluation of students in a consistent format. Although most professional health schools do not require a Committee Letter, it is highly recommended. Therefore, obtaining a Committee Letter remains optional for the student. After you submit your application to the Pre-Health Office, the Pre-Health Committee will interview you, provide you with feedback on your interview, and submit the Committee Letter Packet on your behalf.

If you wish to receive a Committee Letter of Evaluation, please do the following:

1. ATTEND AN INFORMATION SESSION (this is optional, but highly recommended)

- a. Tuesday, February 7th 4:30-5:30 PM Hodges Hall 259
- b. Friday, February 10th 2:30-3:30 PM Hodges Hall 259

2. SUBMIT FERPA WAIVER FORM

Print, sign, and return the FERPA Waiver (attached). We cannot proceed with your evaluation until we receive this. Options for submitting FERPA Waiver:

- a. Email a scanned (or picture) copy of signed form to: prehealth@mail.wvu.edu
- b. Mail signed form to:

Pre-Health Professional Development Office
250 Second Street, PO Box 6635
Morgantown, WV 26506-6635

3. COMMITTEE LETTER APPLICATION

The Pre-Health Office's Online Committee Letter Application is modeled after applications you will complete during your professional school process. We decided to model our application closely on those that you will complete soon so that you will have an opportunity to gather the required information needed to apply for your professional schools; so that the Pre-Health Office will have the chance to review and offer feedback to improve your application; and so that you will be afforded the chance to enhance and perfect your application prior to your final submission.

a. Complete the Application Form OFFLINE

Unfortunately, the online application must be completed in one session; you cannot save this form and come back. Therefore, you must complete the Application Form (attached) offline in advance. You will also be required to upload this application form as part of the online application.

Components of the Application (summary; see Application Form for more detail)

1. Information about you
2. Information about your family
 - a. **Request of Personal Information**

We request some family background and other information that may seem personal. We do this because health professional schools ask for this information, as well, and admissions committees frequently use it to generate a discussion during interviews. Also, it gives us an idea of who you are as a person. Your responses to these questions are purely voluntary, but please know that our office will treat your personal information with the utmost discretion and sensitivity. No one will see your

submission other than those staff and faculty involved in your interview and the composition of your letter.

3. Activities

a. **An Excellent Applicant**

Please do not be modest when filling out these forms! Health professional schools are very interested in your leadership, volunteer, research, and service experiences. And so are we! The more we know about your accomplishments, the more effective your letter will be. We will be copying and pasting your descriptions of your activities from this application to the Committee Letter; please make sure you are careful to check for typos and that your lists are formatted clearly and consistently. We provide examples of how these lists should look in the application.

4. Application Information

- a. Type of Professional school
- b. Early Decision?
- c. Standardized test scores (e.g. MCAT, DAT, OAT, GRE)
- d. Date of next exam, if scheduled
- e. Tentative list of schools
- f. List of Individual Letter writers
- g. Are you a re-applicant?
 - i. List improvements since last application
- h. Transcript (can be unofficial)
- i. Personal statement

Your personal statement must be an individualized expression of your experiences. There are many websites that provide advice on how to construct a personal statement for each health profession for which you are applying. If you do not have a draft of your personal statement ready at the time of the application, you will be responsible for providing a copy of it to the Pre-Health Committee at least 1 week before your scheduled interview in the summer. The personal statement that you send to us can – and should – be a solid draft of the same one that you will include in your application to professional school.

b. Complete the Online Application

Complete the online application form by clicking on the link below.

<https://aspirewvu.wufoo.com/forms/request-for-wvu-committee-letter-2017/>

The form will be stored on the same secure website used for letters of evaluation, accessible only to the Pre-Health Office staff and members of the Pre-Health Committee

Copy and paste your responses from the Application Form into the online Application.

Upload your Application form as an editable text document (e.g. Word document) to the online application. Do not upload this form as a PDF.

4. SELECTING INDIVIDUALS TO WRITE LETTERS OF EVALUATION ON YOUR BEHALF

It is imperative that you select each of your references carefully. Request letters of evaluation from individuals that can provide a strong, positive recommendation. Your references must be selected because they have thorough knowledge of your academic, intellectual, interpersonal, ethical, and leadership capabilities. The Committee Letter is written, in part, based on the individual letters and they are submitted as part of the Committee Letter packet to your designated schools.

We prefer a minimum of **four** Letters of Evaluation from each student to include with your application to demonstrate a well-rounded student. We do not recommend having more than **six**. We are not interested in

letters from important people who barely know you. Please do not include letters from family friends unless they interacted with you in a supervisory capacity.

a. Letters of Evaluation for Science Majors

If you are a *science major*, please choose **at least two science faculty members** and **at least one non-science faculty member** for your letters of evaluation. One of these letters must be from a professor in your major.

b. Letters of Evaluation for Non-Science Majors

If you are a *non-science major*, please choose **at least two faculty members from your major** and **at least one science faculty member**.

c. One Character Letter of Evaluation Required

At least one of your letters must be from someone who knows you well and can speak to your character.

d. Additional Letters of Evaluation

In addition, you may include a letter of evaluation from someone who is not a professor but who is in a position of authority over you, if this person is very familiar with you. Volunteer coordinators, advisors, research faculty, and employers are all good choices. So are doctors who you have shadowed **IF** you have worked with them extensively.

5. REQUEST FOR INDIVIDUAL LETTERS OF EVALUATION

Using the link below, you will complete an online request form for **each** letter-writer whose letter you want us to consider in your evaluation. Have the letter writer's name, email address, and a brief description of how you know them prepared when you complete the form. Once you complete the online request form with your letter-writer's contact information, it automatically will generate an email (using the email address you provide) to the letter-writer. When your letter-writer receives the email, it will provide instructions for electronically submitting their individual letter of evaluation.

<https://aspirewvu.wufoo.com/forms/request-for-individual-letters-2017/>

a. Complete A Separate Individual Letter of Evaluation Form

For each letter-writer who will be sending us a letter of recommendation, you must fill out a separate Request for Individual Letter of Evaluation Form. For each form you fill out, an email will be sent to the specified letter-writer with instructions for uploading the letter of evaluation to a secure website, accessible only to the Pre-Health Office staff. Please make certain that you enter each letter-writer's email address accurately, or your submission will generate a letter request to the wrong person.

b. The Pre-Health Office Will Send Letters to Your Designated Schools

After we compose your Committee Letter of Evaluation, we will distribute all your individual letters, along with your committee letter, to the schools of your choice. In other words, your individual letter-writers do not need to send letters to two places – only to the Pre-Health Office.

c. It is your responsibility to track your letters!

Once a recommender submits his or her letter for you, you will get an email confirmation. You should then thank the writer and keep the confirmation for your records. Please do not email the Pre-Health Office about your letter submissions unless you are experiencing a problem, and do not contact the office to ask if we have received your letters. It is your responsibility to keep track of which letters have been submitted via your email confirmations, and to follow up with anyone who has not submitted a letter.

d. Decision to Waive Right to View Letters of Evaluation

Decide whether to waive your right to view your letters of evaluation. Select the appropriate box on your application and on the Letter of Evaluation Form you complete for **each** letter-writer. Admissions committees prefer confidential letters of evaluation by a large margin. Further, many faculty will not write non-confidential letters. Therefore, we *strongly* encourage you to check the box waiving your right to view your letters. If you choose not to do so, we must inform professional schools, and your letters will be viewed as non-confidential.

6. PRE-HEALTH COMMITTEE INTERVIEW

An important aspect of the Committee Letter process is the Pre-Health Committee Interview. Each student will have the benefit of interviewing with two professionals [West Virginia University faculty, Honors College staff, and/or the Pre-Health Office Director]. The Interviewers will select questions specific to the health profession school for which you are applying to simulate the interview as realistically as possible to the actual interview. During your interview, your interviewers will provide interview skills feedback, offer professional development, and discuss your application.

a. The Pre-Health Office Will Schedule A 30-minute Interview

A representative from the Pre-Health Professional Development Office will reach out to schedule a 30-minute interview with the Pre-Health Committee. Interviews will begin in **late May** and continue through **early August**. Interviews will be scheduled based on the order in which students complete their application, along with consideration of other factors. Please ensure that the contact information [telephone number, email address, and home address] you provide is correct for reaching you during the summer.

b. Special Scheduling Accommodations

If you are not in town over the summer, it is likely that you will have to travel to Morgantown at a time that is less than convenient. Please contact our office as soon as possible to indicate the best time for your interview. Although we will attempt to accommodate **special** situations, the Pre-Health Office cannot guarantee that we can accommodate scheduling requests. Likewise, if you are traveling extensively this summer, please let us know so that we can schedule your interview at a time that does not conflict with your plans.

c. All Letters of Evaluation Received Prior To Interview

To evaluate you fairly, we strongly prefer to have received **all your individual letters of evaluation** by your scheduled interview date. It is your responsibility to keep track of your letters and verify that they have uploaded their letters by your interview date (you will get confirmation emails when you do). We have indicated that the deadline for letters of evaluation is **May 31, 2017**, except for special circumstances. This deadline will help ensure that your letters are submitted before your interview.

7. PREVIOUSLY RECEIVED A COMMITTEE LETTER AND INTERVIEW

For students who previously have received a Committee Letter Evaluation from the Pre-Health Committee, you must engage in the process to “Request A Committee Letter of Evaluation and an Interview” anew: which means that you **MUST** complete a new FERPA Form, request new letters of evaluation, decide whether to waive your right to review your letters of evaluation, complete the online application, and participate in an interview. All information is only valid for one calendar year. Although a great deal of the information you provided last year may be the same this year, you will want to update your Evaluation Form with the most recent information. The Pre-Health Committee and the Admissions Committees will want to know what you have accomplished during the additional year. There is a place within the application for you to specifically explain how your application has improved since the last cycle.

8. REQUIRED INFORMATION TO SUBMIT YOUR COMMITTEE LETTER

When you apply to professional school, you will (likely) need to complete an application through an application service. We upload your committee letter packet (which includes the individual letters) through the application service. To accomplish this, we require some information from your application to submit your committee letter. Each type of health professional program has a different application service: Allopathic Medical School [AAMC-AMCAS application]; Osteopathic Medical School [AACOMAS]; Dental School [ADEA AADSAS], Podiatry School [AACPMAS], and Optometry School [OptomCAS]. See below for the specific details we need from each type of applicant to submit your final letter.

NOTE: The GPAs we require are calculated by the application services and take 4-6 weeks to appear in your application AFTER you submit your application through the application services (e.g. AMCAS, AADSAS, AACOMAS, etc.).

a. Allopathic Medical School

We will need your AAMC ID#, your Letter ID#, AMCAS calculated GPA and MCAT score. You can send this information to the Pre-Health Office at prehealth@mail.wvu.edu OR you can select to release your application to advisors and we will retrieve the information directly from the application service.

For all schools that will receive the committee letter, please select the “Committee Letter” designation in your AMCAS application. List “Pre-Health Committee” as the author. *You do not need to list all your individual letter-writers.* Unless there is a reason that you do not want specific letters routed through our office, *your letter-writers do not need to upload their letters to AMCAS*, and they should not have their own Letter ID#s. We will upload your committee letter, *along with all your individual letters*, to AMCAS using the Letter ID# that you provide.

If you have already designated individual letter-writers in AMCAS, you can change this very easily. If you have already sent Letter ID#s to your individual letter-writers, please inform that they will *not* need to upload their letters to AMCAS and that they can ignore the Letter ID#s.

b. Osteopathic Medical School

We will need your AACOMAS ID#, AACOMAS calculated Science GPA and MCAT score. You can send this information to the Pre-Health Office at prehealth@mail.wvu.edu OR you can select to release your application to advisors and we will retrieve the information directly from the application service.

You will enter “Pre-Health Committee” and prehealth@mail.wvu.edu for the author of your letter in AACOMAS. We will then be sent a link to upload your letter.

Keep in mind that nearly all osteopathic schools require a letter from a DO that should be sent to schools or uploaded to AACOMAS separately from the committee letter. You may have the DO send a letter to our office, as long as he or she *also* delivers it to your school separately.

c. Dental School

We will need your AADSAS ID#, AADSAS calculated Science GPA and DAT score. Note that we can use the unofficial DAT score you receive on your test day. You can send this information to the Pre-Health Office at prehealth@mail.wvu.edu OR you can select to release your application to advisors and we will retrieve the information directly from the application service.

For dental school [ADEA AADSAS], please select “Committee Letter” in the “Evaluators” section and indicate that the submission will be electronic. List “Pre-Health Committee” as the evaluator, with the contact information below. In addition to the committee letter, you may include one letter that is not routed through our office, if you desire.

d. Other health professional schools

For all other health professional schools, please contact our office for specific instructions at prehealth@mail.wvu.edu

9. CONTACT INFORMATION TO ENTER IN APPLICATION SERVICE FOR COMMITTEE LETTER

Victoria Sanchez, PhD
Pre-Health Professional Development Office
West Virginia University
250 Second Street, PO Box 6635
Morgantown, WV 26506-6635
Phone: 304-293-9390
prehealth@mail.wvu.edu

10. Feel free to reach out if you have any questions!

Victoria Sanchez, PhD
Director, Pre-Health Professional Development Office
prehealth@mail.wvu.edu

Seriously, this email is the BEST way to get in contact with me.