

ACM Summer Institute for Counselors

Session: Writing Recommendations

Presenters

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Writing Recommendations

Why are letters of recommendation important?

- Broadens our perspective
- Essential part of the student's application
- Provides an external perspective on a student's progress

Gathering Information about the student

- Personal meeting or interview with the student
- Résumé
- Self-assessment from the student
- Ask colleagues (both college counselors and teachers)

What to include in your letter

- Introduce yourself and your relationship with the student
- Place the student in the context of the school
- Showcase the student's distinctive qualities
- Demonstrate all qualities of the student
- Show how the student will be an asset to the college (classroom and community)
- Address growth and development (academic and social)

What to Include in Your Letter

- Use examples to support your statements
- Describe the match between the student and the specific institution to which the student is applying
- Proofread your letter
- Include your contact information
- Keep a copy of the recommendation

Common Mistakes

- Reiterate the student's application
- Write an entire letter on a student's athletic ability
- List GPA, test score and rank unless you are providing additional context to this information
- Use the same letter for multiple students
- Generalizations

Suggestions for pushing through writer's block

- What qualities does this student have that can't be measured in grades?
- What are your favorite things about this student?
- What are some of his/her most positive/negative traits?
- Choose a word or phrase that best describes this student.
- Describe the student's general intellectual ability/potential.

Group Activity

- Review three letters of recommendation
 - What do you like?
 - What do you dislike?
 - Discussion