

Writing Effective Letters of Recommendations – questions and answers from the end of the presentation - Dr. Joyce Brown

Are there times when I should not write a recommendation?

- If your student /counselor experience results in a perspective that hinders your ability to effectively advocate for the student.

What if a student is “blah” and bland?

- Regardless of a student’s personality, remember you must serve as an advocate for the student
- Highlight a student’s strengths and limitations
- Provide insight into a student’s character and potential to thrive at the school
- Show context in which to evaluate student’s preparation for college
- Have a one on one conversation with the student to gather insight on his/her personality.
- Use your counseling skills and “best words” to bring the student to life for the reader.

What can I divulge in a letter of recommendation?

- Mention how you know the student. ...
- **Include** specific **examples**. ...
- Remain positive. ...
- Avoid clichés. ...
- Share your contact information.
- Character and personal strengths and challenges
- Academic strengths and challenges
- Passions and interests

What if the student does not “waive his rights” to view my letter?

- Share with students that admission officers will trust the content of the recommendations more if they haven’t seen them.
- If students choose not to waive their right, recommenders can decline the request, and some colleges may disregard letters submitted on your behalf. FERPA does not give students the right to inspect recommendations before they are sent to colleges.

How do I speak about a student’s weaknesses without hurting his chances for admission?

- Avoid talking about failures and weaknesses of a student - rather what the student has demonstrated learning from encountering challenges.