

Instructions for Composing the *Unique Characteristics* Section Medical Student Performance Evaluation

Please forward your draft by email to Scott Davenport at daven016@umn.edu one week prior to your MSPE appointment.

You will review the paragraph with your letter-writer at your MSPE appointment. Your writer will edit and change these prior to the final version being placed into your MSPE. You will have an opportunity to review and update the information when you review your MSPE in late October.

THE FOLLOWING PAGES CONTAIN INSTRUCTIONS AND EXAMPLES FOR YOUR REFERENCE

IN A MAXIMUM OF 300 WORDS, PLEASE WRITE A PARAGRAPH THAT TOUCHES UPON SOME OR ALL OF THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:

- **What personal values or characteristics have influenced your medical education?**

Example:

“...life has been guided by his international experiences, working with the underserved and challenging his boundaries.”

- **In addition to your studies, characterize the activities have you engaged in and explain why you have chosen them.**

Example:

“...has sought to balance the varied facets of his personality while achieving academic excellence. His commitment to science is augmented by a love for the arts; this has allowed him to craft a successful beginning to his medical career.”

“... possesses a passion for music. As an undergraduate, he was a guitarist and songwriter for a successful acoustic rock band. He has continued this interest throughout medical school; composing and performing music gives him a creative outlet and provides an important source of balance throughout his training.”

- **Are there other interests or hobbies you wish to mention?**

Example:

“...has an adventurous spirit, and pursues a wide variety of interests. She learned to fly Cessna airplanes in high school and she has competed in swim meets, rides horses, snowboards, volunteers at medical facilities, and has regularly traveled overseas where she has assisted medical teams at two hospitals.”

- **After college and prior to medical school did you have experiences you wish to mention (e.g. other career, graduate education, peace corps, etc.)**

Example:

“...is a dedicated student who has engaged in diverse experiences. After graduating from college, she worked as the Education Coordinator for two environmental non-profit organizations in the Monterey Bay Area. She then moved with her husband to San Antonio, where she conducted research in Addiction Medicine with Dr. Richard Lamb while earning a B.S. in Nursing from the University of Texas Health Sciences Center. During this period, she also worked in the NICU and the MICU at University Hospital as well as volunteered as a

planning committee member and head counselor for Camp Discovery, a camp for children with cancer.”

- **Describe the research have you done? Have you published papers, written abstracts, presented at meetings?**

Example:

“After graduating from... She accepted a position in a research laboratory at Oregon Health and Sciences University where she worked in the field of cancer genetics. She was employed for two years in this research laboratory, where she learned basic science techniques and formed hypotheses focusing on DNA mismatch repair.”

- **Do you wish to mention any challenges you experienced during medical school?**

Example:

“While in medical school, NAME overcame a significant personal hardship. In NAME’S second year of medical school, her mother died of breast cancer after a five year battle. NAME spent countless hours at doctor appointments and chemotherapy treatments with her mother. She has experienced first hand the triumph, the frustration, and the uncertainty of medicine.”

- **If you experienced academic difficulty please explain why this occurred and what steps you took to address the issues.**

Example:

"NAME has persevered through many setbacks in order to become a physician. He weathered the disappointment of narrowly missing passing the step 1 exam on his first attempt. While his father in-law battled terminal melanoma, NAME helped with hospice care and supported his family. At the same time as he carried out these responsibilities, he successfully prepared for the reexamination and improved his score substantially. NAME has emerged from these experiences with a renewed sense of direction and a deep compassion for patients and families that suffer together through the adversity of disease."

PLEASE DO NOT INCLUDE:

- Information about what specialty you selected and why.
- Summative judgments about either your academic progress or your personal qualities.
- A listing of your activities, either in medical school or college.

Example 1

NAME seeks to combine his academic pursuits with humanitarian activities. He has aimed to improve his educational experience by immersing himself in activities inside and outside the classroom with the intent to connect to future patients and to gain their trust. He volunteered at a community center called Youthlink, which provides free healthcare to homeless, inner-city youth of Minneapolis, and supports his peers through the Confidential Peer Assistance Program. NAME has demonstrated leadership in medical activism, multicultural affairs, and health advocacy through his involvement in his local Student National Medical Association (SNMA) chapter. Throughout all four years medical school, NAME has been an active member of the American Medical Association (AMA). He was elected to chair their Minority Issues Committee (MIC) at the national level and also to represent medical students on the Minority Affairs Consortium (MAC), a nine-member grassroots physician workforce that serves as the advocacy group for all minority physicians in the United States. As a member of this influential counsel, he organized national meetings and caucuses that worked to reduce racial and ethnic healthcare disparities by increasing diversity in medical education, improving cross-cultural education, and passing national policy to promote equal access to healthcare. NAME's also pursued his interest in minority health in a scholarly manner by publishing a first-authored paper on cultural competence education in JAMA.

NAME's interest in scholarship led him to undertake a substantive clinical research experience. He was granted a one year's leave of absence in order to participate in the Doris Duke Clinical Research Fellowship at Yale University. In studying molecular targets for neuroendocrine tumors and their treatments, NAME was a member of a laboratory group that published the first complete isolation of human enterochromaffin cells in the literature. This project required novel methodology designed in part by himself. NAME also is an author of a number of research articles and book chapters, published, still in press, or in preparation.

Example 2

NAME's multicultural experiences include having lived in North America, England, and Pakistan, and have nurtured her avid appetite for challenging situations and a curiosity of mind. As an undergraduate student, she immersed herself in the study of science and the literary arts: while researching new treatments for cervical dystonia, she also elaborated on the post-colonial literature of resistance. She pursued her enthusiasms for literature, the basic sciences, and civic responsibility by working as a Teaching Assistant for the English Department, and by tutoring the social sciences at an inner-city school in Minneapolis.

These enthusiasms also led NAME to seek a master's degree in Public Health: NAME examined how the distribution of public facilities in the Twin Cities, such as parks, walkways, restaurants, and schools, affected children's cardiovascular health. NAME was also involved in several other research projects related to the effect of various risk factors on underserved populations, such as an examination of screening facilities for Hepatitis C among juvenile prison populations, and a study of the benefit of providing

chloroquine-treated nets to children in Uganda, and how these facilities could further improve public service for underserved populations.

In medical school, NAME continued to do research. Between her first and second years she worked as a junior scientist at the VA Medical Center to study the risk factors for enteric infections among HIV-infected adults in Uganda. NAME also edited supplemental learning materials in Biochemistry for first year medical students for the Knowledge Coop, and participated in her class Note Coop. NAME's involvement with student organizations included coordinating the Internal Medicine Interest Group's Journal Club and helping to host AMSA's Regional Conference. In her free time, she is an enthusiast for road cycling and the theater arts.

Example 3

NAME was able to see medicine at an early age from a patient's perspective, watching both of his parent's survive two separate and serious medical conditions. Through this, he was able to learn how the decisions and actions of medical personnel affect not only the primary patient, but their family as well. Because of these past experiences, he was able to learn as a student and apply his medical knowledge through both a physician and a patient's perspective.

Throughout his undergraduate and medical school years, NAME has continued to seek information concerning not only the science of medicine, but its social aspects as well. He spent the summer following his first year of medical school as a student intern in the hospital which he was born, seeing the community he grew up in for over twenty years again, this time as a member of the healthcare team.

He has become a member of the volunteering family at Ronald McDonald House Charities in the Twin Cities. NAME has also been able to use his mother's influence as an elementary school teacher. While in Duluth, he went to numerous elementary schools with a preserved human brain, teaching students about the nervous system and igniting interest in both science and medicine.

Outside of medicine, NAME has many interests and has remained quite active. He has traveled to Honduras and Guatemala and is planning a trip to Uganda before residency. NAME was involved with a church planting in an underserved community, enjoys spending time at his family's cabin in Northern Minnesota, and has begun preparation to qualify for an upcoming Boston Marathon.

Example 4

As a medical student at the University of Minnesota, NAME has sought to integrate her undergraduate education in philosophy with her commitment to social justice through patient care, activism, and scholarship. During her first two years, she worked as a student volunteer at the Phillips Neighborhood Clinic, which serves uninsured patients in one of Minneapolis' poorest neighborhoods. In keeping with these goals, NAME co-founded a chapter of Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) at the medical school. In her role as PHR chairperson, she wrote op-ed articles; organized informational lectures for physicians; lobbied at the state and national legislative levels; and initiated a "town hall" meeting to discuss the global AIDS crisis with U.S. Senator Norm Coleman (R-MN),

health care professionals, and community activists. She also served for two years as a student representative on the Medical School Diversity Task Force. Finally, NAME is writing an article on the civic responsibilities of physicians for the University of Minnesota's Consortium on Law and Values in Health, the Life Sciences, and the Environment.

In order to gain insight into the needs of globally underserved communities, NAME extended her graduation by a year to study abroad. A 2005 Amnesty International Patrick Stewart grant enabled her to complete a research internship examining civil society organizations in South Africa where human rights frameworks are utilized to achieve improvements in health. A grant from the American Medical Women's Association allowed NAME to undertake an extended clinical outpatient rotation in rural Ecuador. As a medical student, she has also visited Ghana, Uganda, Rwanda, Turkey, Cuba, and Nicaragua.