

APPENDIX Q

COLLEGE LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

NOTE: The sample letters of recommendation shown here are the result of cooperative projects, each fully involving the candidate.

Susan Jones

Although I have known Sue Jones for about five years and I am familiar with her fine record at Madison High School, it is through her unusually rapid advancement in and contributions to the United States Pony Clubs (USPC) that I know her best. To understand the significance of this comment, an explanation of Pony Club is in order.

USPC is part of an international equestrian organization for young riders through the age of 21. USPC currently has over 12,000 members in more than 620 clubs across the nation. (See www.ponyclub.org)

A unique feature of Pony Club is a rating system, which at each of nine levels, places emphasis equally on horse care and riding skill. Sue's progress in Pony Club has been most unusual. She joined as an unrated member in 1996. Two summers ago, she earned her H-A and this past summer, the A rating; less than 1% of Pony Club members attain this level. Along the way, she has qualified through Regional competitions for the National Championships in knowledge and riding skill competitions. Sue has twice been named "Most Exemplary Stone County Member."

For many years, I was involved in secondary education and have written dozens of college recommendations. Assuming adequate academic credentials, the best candidates time and again were those who had become involved early on in an area of strong personal interest and commitment and, over a period of time, had progressed through the inevitable setbacks and successes to levels of genuine accomplishment.

Sue Jones has clearly demonstrated this pattern through her interest in horses and her membership in the United States Pony Clubs. She is, indeed, a most unusual young woman. Bright, well organized, self-directed, and motivated to achieve over the long haul, I would say Sue is an excellent bet for success at the college of her choice.

Sincerely,

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Barbara Jane Smith

I am pleased to recommend Barbara Smith, a senior at Maplewood Regional High School, as a candidate for admission to Crawford University. I am told she is an A/B student, with good SAT and Achievement scores and ranks in the top 10% of her class. My association with Barb has been through her membership in the United States Pony Clubs, Inc. (USPC).

Pony Club (the name is misleading because it refers to the age of the rider, not the size of the mount) is an organization for young riders through age 21. Its primary purpose is sound instruction in riding and horse care, using nine levels of proficiency as a guide. On average, only 4% of the 12,000 national members will achieve the highest ratings. This past summer, Barb successfully met the demanding standards of the second-highest rating, and I have confidence that she will soon achieve the highest rating.

Barb presently cares for and rides two horses of her own, in addition to keeping a full schedule of academic and extra-curricular activities at school. To help with expenses, she works part-time at a local stable. One day each weekend, she has full responsibility for the thirty horse barn.

Pony Club activity has been more than just local for Barb. For two years running, she qualified Regionally for the National Eventing Championships. This past summer, she rode in the National Dressage Championships. In all three instances, team selection was highly competitive and required long and dedicated hours of training.

Barb describes herself as an independent thinker, a nonconformist. I would add that she is thoroughly responsible, self-directed, and well-organized. These traits become clearly evident when one adds the following activities to Pony Club involvement and daily riding and horse care: four years of varsity cross-country, four years of spring track, President of the Student Service club, and seven years of flute instruction.

Not surprisingly, Barb plans a career in animal sciences. She has selected Crawford for its excellent programs and, in all probability, will pursue a pre-veterinary course of study.

It has been my observation over the years that success in any serious endeavor, including college, is closely related to one's ability to make an early commitment along the uneven path of disappointments to levels of genuine achievement.

Barbara Smith has already demonstrated this trait in her progress as a Pony Club member and in her activities at Maplewood Regional High School. Accordingly, she has my enthusiastic recommendation as a candidate for this fall's freshman class.

Sincerely,

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REGIONAL SUPERVISOR'S LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT

NOTE: The following letter is a sample of what could be sent out to a school administrator for high school-aged USPC members at the member's request. The member should supply the RS with his/her school address and a contact name, and include a typed page of his/her Pony Club activities/involvement, which would then be mailed with this letter to the school administrator. A USPC Fact sheet, which can be downloaded from the USPC Website (www.ponyclub.org; under forms, under P (for PR), is a suggested enclosure.

- ▶ DCs could notify appropriate members of this service, which has been particularly helpful to high school juniors being considered for National Honor Society who have good grades but lack the 'school activities' to make them prime contenders.
- ▶ Each letter should be customized for the individual member, including rating level.
- ▶ A variation of this letter could also be used in college recommendations.

DEAR ADMINISTRATOR,

As Regional Supervisor of the _____ Region of the United States Pony Clubs, Inc. (USPC), I am writing to you on behalf of _____, a student at your school and a member of USPC. The USPC is an equestrian educational organization for youth up to 21 years of age. Pony Club began in England and today includes clubs throughout the world. There are ____ clubs in the _____ Region, including _____, locally.

As well as teaching equestrian skills, the USPC seeks to develop in its youth members the characteristics of responsibility, moral judgment, leadership and self-confidence. Through our rating system, which requires members to demonstrate their level of skill and knowledge through both riding and oral testing, we help members set personal goals and then acknowledge their achievements as they realize those goals. Rating levels progress from a simple D-level -- where members are introduced to riding and horse care -- through the A-level, which requires extreme aptitude and commitment. To achieve an upper level rating, it is necessary for members to demonstrate the above qualities over a period of several years by participating in team activities and progressing through required levels of proficiency. As an administrator of an educational institution, you are well aware of the importance of the aforementioned characteristics.

A copy of the ____ level Standards of Proficiency is included to give you an overview of the level of competency and commitment required of Pony Club members.

USPC wants our members to learn, to develop, and to succeed. However, a challenge exists in the USPC to keep our older youth members involved. The skills, time and dedication

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required to reach the standards of the upper levels are most consuming. Of the 12,000 USPC members, fewer than one percent reach a level of proficiency to attempt the highest rating in any given year, which are administered by nationally appointed panels of examiners. The tests require not only equestrian ability, but also extensive veterinary, training, and barn management knowledge, and also skills in communication and teaching.

USPC is addressing the challenge of keeping older members active by explaining our educational goals and purposes to the schools our members attend, thereby establishing credibility for the achievements of our members. Our youth are often excellent students at their schools, but due to their time spent in equestrian pursuits, are usually unable to be active in school organizations and sports. As a result, some other schools have taken the following steps to recognize USPC members.

1. Recognition by school athletic department of individual and team competition.
2. Display of equestrian awards and ribbons in the athletic department trophy case.
3. Inclusion of qualified USPC members in honors/awards for athlete/scholars.
4. Credit as a Physical Education course, qualifying student to opt out of P.E. (riding log required).
5. Inclusion of USPC credentials in student personal file to be considered as qualified activities for honors/scholarships.

Your kind consideration of these points will be appreciated. As _____ Regional Supervisor, I especially ask that you consider item #5 for your students actively involved as a member of the United States Pony Clubs, Inc. Included in this mailing please find USPC credential for _____, a nationally “___” rated member of USPC, and a student at your school. We hope you will be willing to keep these credentials in her file. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Regional Supervisor, USPC