Writing a Recommendation for the British Marshall Scholarship

Approximately 40 Marshall Scholarships are awarded each year to “…intellectually distinguished young Americans who will one day become leaders, opinion formers and decision makers in their own country…” Applicants must demonstrate exceptional academic ability, mature character and the capacity to play an active part in the life of a U.K. university. In addition to a 1000-word personal essay and a shorter, but important proposed program of study, applications also require recommendation letters from four persons. At least two of the recommenders must be academics and three must be in the U.S. If you do not know the student well enough to write a detailed letter that emphasizes his or her achievements, while also reflecting warm regard, or if you cannot write in strong support, please encourage him or her to seek another reference.

Applicants should provide copies of their draft personal essays and proposed academic program to each prospective recommender and must work particularly closely with the individual designated as the Preferred Reference, whose letter carries greatest weight and is expected to be a detailed discussion of academic performance and potential.

Criteria for the Scholarship

- Distinction of intellect and character as evidenced by both academic attainments and other activities and achievements.
- Demonstrated strength in the major field and adequate preparation for the proposed course of study.
- Ability to participate actively in the U.K. university and potential to make a significant contribution in the U.S.

Your letter should

- Corroborate the applicant’s own assessment of readiness to undertake the proposed course of study.
- Explain why the student stands out above others and why you have confidence in the student’s personal and professional promise.
- Include detail about your personal connection with the student and his or her contribution to this relationship.
- Present your assessment of the student’s character and what you know about the esteem in which others hold this student.
- Discuss appropriateness of the chosen U.K. academic programs and why the applicant should study in the U.K.
- Be warm, concrete, frank and truthful.

The following is the advice provided by the Marshall Commission on the contents of the letters of recommendation:

"Please use the form provided for a letter of recommendation commenting on the candidate’s general fitness for the course proposed and the suitability of the university chosen as well as considering how they meet the commission’s criteria of academic merit, leadership and ambassadorial potential. Confidential observations, negative as well as positive, on the candidate’s general character as well as academic standing and ability will be of great value to the selection authorities in their task of deciding which candidates should be summoned to the Regional Centre for interview.

In appointing scholars, the selectors will look for candidates who have the potential to excel as scholars, as leaders and as contributors to improved UK-US understanding. Assessment will be based on
academic merit, leadership potential and ambassadorial potential. We ask that you consider our criteria when completing your letter.

The selectors will also look for adequate preparation for the proposed course of study, particularly in the upper-level course work and real strength in the major field. Preference will be given to candidates who combine high academic ability with the capacity to play an active part in the life of the United Kingdom university to which they go, and to those who display a potential to make a significant contribution to their own society.”

Submission of the Letter of Recommendation
Letters must be submitted to the internal UB fellowship committee by September 1, 2017. Candidates will be evaluated at that point by the faculty selection committee. If your student is recommended to move forward to the national competition, you will be asked to upload your official letter into the Marshall Application Portal.

http://www.marshallscholarship.org/