Finally, a Unified Recommendation Form

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Written in the season of recommendations, in some requests, in some-what jumbled packages, from around the globe, on letters and off-

line forms, across the sea, to graduate-admissions committees, fel-

onship committees, and professional com-

mittees. As more and more universities and graduate-schools move toward online applications and recommenda-

tion forms, the unified, simplified version of the recommendation form becomes im-

perative. The unified form should be rela-

tively straightforward; it should cover the gamut of possible responses; and it

should be based on the kinds of ques-

tions traditionally asked of referees on the old-fashioned-paper version.

Below is my modest proposal for a

new standard form. Its questions are molded on those found on existing forms and will be recognizable to any refi-er, even the first-year assistant pro-

fessor who has been approached for a

recommendation by an unfamiliar sen-

tor in the second week of the fall sess-

on. Of course, the usefulness of the form will have to be judged after it has been put to the test. But one thing is certain: It can't be worse than those al-

readily on the market.

NAME ____________________________

The person named above is thing an application for: (Circle)

Graduate program__________________

Fellowship program__________________

Other: ______________________________

and has given you as a reference. Please provide a brief assess-

ment of the applicant's abilities by answering the questions

below. Separate letters will be considered only if they are written

on official stationery or a mixture of $20 bills.

1. How long have you known the applicant?

Yes: ________ months ________ years ________

2. Time since last contact with applicant:

Yes: ________ months ________ years ________

3. In what capacity have you known the applicant? (Check all that apply):

Professor in only one class

Professor in more than one class

Major advisor

Minor advisor

Friend

Other: ______________________________

4. Please rate the applicant's abilities in questions 6 through 14, according to the following scale:

1 = poor

2 = fair

3 = good

4 = very good

5 = excellent

6. In evaluating the applicant, how would you rate the following?

a. Technical knowledge

b. Problem-solving ability

c. Oral presentation

d. Written presentation

7. How would you rate the applicant's ability to work independently?

8. How would you rate the applicant's ability to work in a group?

9. What is your estimate of the applicant's potential for success in graduate school?

10. In what field(s) do you feel the applicant may be a leader?

11. Potential as a teacher:

a. Exceptional

b. Above average

c. Average

d. Below average

12. Writing ability:

a. Exceptional

b. Above average

c. Average

d. Below average

13. Capacity for future self-promotion:

a. Exceptional

b. Above average

c. Average

d. Below average

14. Ability to head family of three in graduate-student stipend

15. This applicant is likely to be given (you may check more than one):

a. A fellowship

b. A fellowship

c. A fellowship

d. A fellowship

16. Would you say the student:

a. In your least student in the last year

b. In your second student in the last year

c. In your third student in the last year

17. If you had to choose, which of the three students in the last year is the best?

18. If you had to choose, which of the three students in the last year is the next best one?

19. If you had to choose, which of the three students in the last year is the third best?

20. If you had to choose, which of the three students in the last year is the least likely to succeed?

21. If you had to choose, which of the three students in the last year is the least likely to succeed?

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33. If you had to choose, which of the three students in the last year is the least likely to succeed?

34. If you had to choose, which of the three students in the last year is the least likely to succeed?

35. If you had to choose, which of the three students in the last year is the least likely to succeed?