



Graduate Institute

**Letter of Reference**

NAME OF APPLICANT

APPLICANT'S ADDRESS:

CITY

STATE

ZIP

WRITER OF THIS REFERENCE

ADDRESS:

CITY

STATE

ZIP

TELEPHONE

**MAILING INSTRUCTIONS:**

Please return the completed form as soon as possible to the campus checked below:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate Admissions Office<br>St. John's College<br>60 College Avenue<br>Annapolis, Maryland 21401 | <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate Admissions Office<br>St. John's College<br>1160 Camino Cruz Bianca<br>Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505-4599 |
|---|---|

**TO THE APPLICANT:**

Indicate the program to which you are applying and your planned enrollment date:

- |   |   |                                      |                                    |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Liberal Arts Program | <input type="checkbox"/> Eastern Classics Program |                                      |                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Summer 20__          | <input type="checkbox"/> Fall 20__                | <input type="checkbox"/> Spring 20__ | <input type="checkbox"/> Fall 20__ |

After filling in the above, give this form to the person who will write this letter of reference. It should be someone who knows you well and can write about your academic ability, intellectual curiosity, and general character traits.

Federal law requires that this reference be available to you should you enroll at St. John's College unless you waive your right of access, in which case the letter will be kept confidential. Please sign and date this form in one of the two places on the back of the sheet.

**TO THE WRITER OF THIS REFERENCE:**

The person whose name appears above is applying for admission to the Graduate Institute of St. John's College. Students in the Institute undertake an intensive program of studies that requires the close reading and discussion of primary texts (see attached sheet for more detail on the programs of the Graduate Institute). We would appreciate a statement from you concerning the applicant's intellectual achievement, general aptitude, and motivation; please comment specifically on the applicant's abilities in speaking and writing. We welcome any other information that you think would help us reach a wise decision on this application. Please return your statement to the indicated address as soon as possible.

*Please complete next page*

Federal law requires that references be made available to applicants who enroll at St. John's College unless the applicants agree to waive their right of access. Please have the applicant sign and date this form in the appropriate place if you wish your remarks to remain confidential. Applicants who do not waive their right or do not sign at either place will be permitted to read their references should they enroll in the college.

I *do* wish to waive my right of access to this letter:

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APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE DATE

I *do not* wish to waive my right of access to this letter:

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APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE DATE

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HOW LONG HAVE YOU KNOWN THE APPLICANT? IN WHAT CAPACITY?

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(IF AS PROFESSOR OR INSTRUCTOR, LIST SUBJECT(S) TAUGHT TO APPLICANT)

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SIGNATURE DATE

Check here if you would like to receive more information about the Graduate Institute.

*Thank you for your help.*

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St. John's College is a community dedicated to liberal education. Liberal education seeks to develop in us the arts of understanding, an intelligent and critical appreciation of our intellectual heritage, an awareness of our social and moral obligations, and a lifelong commitment to thoughtful inquiry into fundamental human questions.

The program of study at St. John's College is based on the belief that a genuine liberal education requires the study of great books because they express most originally and most deeply the ideas that have shaped our civilization. These books are our most important teachers. They are both timeless and timely; they illuminate the persisting questions of human existence that bear directly on the problems we face today. Their authors can speak to us as freshly as when they spoke for the first time, because what they have to tell us is not of merely academic concern or remote from our true interests. The books change our minds, move our hearts, and touch our spirits.

At St. John's, the process of learning is not something passive and receptive, but rather it is active and cooperative. All classes are conducted as discussions where the responsibility for clarifying the readings, following through the thoughts, and testing the conclusions lies with the students and their tutors. The demands of the individual and those of the group are in continuous interplay, setting limits within which the discussion moves with the utmost freedom.

Participants bring to the discussion the assumptions derived from experience in the contemporary world. Through discussion, however, they acquire a new perspective, enabling them to recognize both the sameness of a recurrent problem and the variety of its manifestations.

## THE ST. JOHN'S GRADUATE INSTITUTE

The Graduate Institute in Liberal Education was established at St. John's College in 1967 on the Santa Fe campus. Over the years, the size and scope of the Institute have expanded, so that it now offers graduate level study based on the principles of the St. John's undergraduate program to a wide variety of students, a total of approximately 160 per year on the college's two campuses.

Students in the Liberal Arts program explore the persisting questions of human existence by studying classic works of the western tradition, organized into five semester-long thematic segments: Philosophy & Theology, Politics & Society, Literature, Mathematics & Natural Science, and History. Students earn a Master of Arts in Liberal Arts (MALA) by completing four of these five segments. A common curriculum provides the basis for a shared intellectual community; discussion with fellow students and faculty is the mode of learning both inside and outside the classroom.

Since 1994 the Santa Fe campus has offered the Eastern Classics program, a structured reading of literary, philosophical, and theological texts of India, China, and Japan, following the St. John's principles of a common curriculum and discussion classes. Students earn a Master of Arts in Eastern Classics (MAEC) in three consecutive semesters of study: fall, spring, and summer.

Each semester students in both programs attend a seminar, a tutorial, and a preceptorial – all carried out as small-group discussions under the guidance of St. John's faculty members (called tutors). These three types of classes are the framework of the distinctive St. John's educational experience.

The seminar is the heart of the St. John's program. Its task is the discussion of a common text. A tutor begins the seminar with a question on the assigned reading; thereafter the tutors guide the conversation and do more listening than talking. The discussion is shaped by the interplay of differing perspectives, as participants seek to deepen their understanding of the texts and the issues they raise. The seminar presupposes that students are willing to submit their opinions to the scrutiny of their colleagues. It requires that everyone's opinion be heard and explored and that every opinion be supported by argument and evidence. The role of the tutors is not to give information or to produce the "right" opinion or interpretation. It is to guide the discussion, define the issues, raise objections, and help the students in every way possible to understand the issues, the authors, and themselves. In the main, the aims of the seminar are to ascertain how things are, not how things were, to develop the students' powers of reason and communication, and to help them arrive at rational opinions of their own.

The tutorial supplements the free and wide-ranging mode of the seminar discussion with more directed work on shorter assignments. About twelve to sixteen students study together under the guidance of a tutor. While they talk freely with one another and the tutor, the emphasis is on close reading of the text and cultivation of analytical skills.

Preceptorials at St. John's introduce an elective element into an otherwise all-required curriculum. Each semester, students choose from a list of offerings, usually several for each segment. Preceptorial topics vary widely, sometimes offering in-depth study of program works, and sometimes examining works complementary to the required curriculum. The small class size of six to twelve students and the focus on a single book or topic make possible an especially rich learning experience.

## THE STUDENTS

The Graduate Institute attracts students of varied ages, backgrounds, and experiences. Some students enroll shortly after graduating from college, often seeking a foundation in classic texts that they missed in more conventional undergraduate programs. Other students are actively engaged in careers; some already hold graduate degrees. Still other students turn to the Graduate Institute in retirement or in a hiatus from their careers, seizing the opportunity to use their leisure for serious reflection.

Although the Graduate Institute program may offer considerable professional gain to some students, particularly present or prospective teachers, students are generally motivated by the intrinsic rewards of reading great books and discussing them with others who care deeply about the issues they raise.

The Graduate Institute welcomes as students individuals who have been out of an academic setting for some time. The essays written for the admissions application play an important role in assessing the preparation and aptitude of such students, beyond what may be indicated by academic records alone. The most important grounds for admission are a clear understanding of and serious interest in the St. John's approach, as well as evidence that the student will benefit from the program.

## ADMISSION

The Graduate Institute welcomes applications for admission from qualified individuals with a Bachelor's degree; no particular field or major is required. The purpose of the admissions process is to determine if applicants have a clear understanding of the program for which they are applying, a serious commitment to the work of that program, and sufficient ability and preparation to undertake that work.

In judging applications, greatest weight is given to the essays, in which applicants discuss their previous education, their reasons for interest in the Graduate Institute, and their reflections on a book of particular importance to them. Collectively, the essays should be sufficiently long, usually six to nine pages, to demonstrate the applicants' ability to express themselves in a thoughtful and articulate manner. The two letters of reference are also carefully weighed. Undergraduate grades, especially those of applicants who have been out of school for some time, are not the primary or sole factor in judging the present ability of applicants to undertake the work of the Institute. The essays discussing the applicants' previous education and subsequent less formal educational experiences are considered in interpreting and assessing transcripts.

***Visit the St. John's College website at [www.sjc.edu](http://www.sjc.edu).***

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