Dear Medical School Admissions Officer,

At Wellesley College, we are proud of the rigor and breadth of our liberal arts curriculum and of our highly accomplished and motivated students, students whose academic records reflect their willingness to challenge themselves intellectually and to produce first-rate work in a demanding course of study.

Wellesley's Grading Policy. In 2004, in response to widespread national concern about grade inflation, the Wellesley College faculty made a commitment to hold all introductory and intermediate-level courses with 10 or more students to an average grade of no more than a B+ (3.33). It is worth noting that in many courses, particularly in the sciences, the average grade has been, and continues to be, lower than the one set by the grading policy. By holding both students and faculty to such high standards, and by pushing back against the national trend, we believe we are restoring value to grades as an indicator of academic performance. This policy, reaffirmed in 2008 and 2011, was instituted to provide exceptional young women with an educational environment in which their work is evaluated with the honesty and rigor it deserves. Further detail is available at www.wellesley.edu/registrar/grading/grading_policy.

First-Semester Shadow-Grading Policy. You should also be aware that Wellesley has instituted a shadow-grading policy beginning with students entering in the fall of 2014 or later. These students will receive pass/no pass grades in all of their classes for the first semester of their first year. They will in fact be given a report of the letter grades that they would have received—"shadow grades," but these will not appear on their official transcripts and will not be released outside the College. This policy provides first-year students with the opportunity to learn about the standards for academic achievement at Wellesley and to assess the quality of their work in relation to these standards. It further enables them to use their first semester to refocus attention from grades to intellectual engagement and inspiration and to learn how to grow as a learner in college. Further detail is available at:
http://www.wellesley.edu/registrar/grading/grading_policy/shadow_grading_policy.

In sending you her transcript, a Wellesley student is presenting credentials that may well be compared to those from institutions with less rigorous grading practices—and standards—than ours. To the extent that such indicators as GPA or individual course grades are a part of your decision-making process, we hope that you will view her record in light of our policies and our commitment to evaluation integrity.

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have about our grading policies. Please feel free to contact me at rfrench@wellesley.edu or by telephone at 781-283-3583.

Many thanks,

Richard G. French
Dean of Academic Affairs
Professor of Astronomy