BOREN SCHOLARSHIPS
for language study abroad

Preparing a Competitive Application
Notes from the 12/16/09 Boren webinar, with supplementary tips

These notes do not cover all parts of the application, only those meaty portions of the application and those that usually raise questions. Complete online application instructions and details are at http://www.borenawards.org/boren_scholarship/how_apply.html.

ONLINE APPLICATION FORM

Among other things, the application form requests study abroad program budget information:

- Should be entered in U.S. dollar amounts. If your study abroad program provides you a budget in the local currency, you must convert that into U.S. dollars as best as you can for the Boren application.

- If no budget information is yet available for your program, you can use last year’s budget if necessary. You will have the ability to update your budget information later on in the process if needed.

Once you submit the online application by the campus deadline, the Boren Campus Representative (Robin Chang in the Office of Merit Scholarships, Fellowships & Awards) has the ability to “unsubmit” it so you can access it again, if needed.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE – PART I

Answer the prompt, but be sure to include your experiences!

Format:

- 2 pages, 10 pt. font, single-spaced. No other formatting is necessary. When you copy and paste your essay into the online application, all other formatting will be removed.

- Work on your essays outside of the online application first. Once you have the final draft, then copy & paste it into the application.

THE MOST CRITICAL FACTOR in this essay is to make clear connections between the country, language, study abroad program you’ve chosen with your academic work, career goals, national security, and plans to fulfill the service requirement. All these pieces need to be tied together in a coherent and persuasive way.

- TO DO THIS PERSUASIVELY, you must demonstrate your interests by discussing how you have connected with those interests so far. Don’t just say you have the interest/intension/hopes/plans, but show that you have already started working on them by doing something (internship experiences, volunteer experiences, research experiences,
coursework, campus involvement, self-study, etc.). Don’t exclude experiential or informal connections. Any experience is good experience!

- There is no resume or CV in this application, so the essays are your only chance to show how well-prepared you are for this experience.

Do some research into the national security issues related to the country, language, and field of study you’ve chosen. Talk to faculty about your interests and your ideas; get feedback from them throughout your application process!

Describe the big picture:

- What are your academic goals?
- How will your study abroad program help you reach those goals?
- How are your goals related to national security?

Avoid vague language, like “I want to be a liaison between the US and country X.”

- You need to be as specific as you can about how you will fulfill the service requirement and what your long-term career goals are. If you don’t know, start researching! Talk with faculty, UW Career Center staff, do online research
  - One good place to start is [http://makingthedifference.org/index.shtml](http://makingthedifference.org/index.shtml).
  - Having a sense for what the options are in the area you’re interested in is half the battle with this point!
- Some examples of past Boren Scholars and their methods of service are at [http://www.borenawards.org/service_examples.html](http://www.borenawards.org/service_examples.html).

This is not an academic essay, so no (or very few) citations should be needed.

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE – PART II**

**Answer the prompt, but be sure to include…**

Format: same page limit and formatting guidelines as Part I.

Discuss both your primary and alternate study abroad program choices (heavily weighted toward primary). Cover thoroughly how much language study you will do and how you will do it.

- This should include information about the formal coursework AND other informal methods of learning the language (homestays, local roommates, any other ways of interacting with native speakers you plan to do).

Discuss your facility with language acquisition. This could be past experiences learning another language if you’re new to the language you are applying to learn with the Boren.

- Again, don’t just say it, demonstrate it through discussions of past experiences.
- Be sure to establish that this program offers the right level of language instruction for you.

Show that you’ve been strategic about choosing this language, country, and study abroad program, and that you have a reason for those choices.
• A weak reason = “I chose this program because my school offers it.”
• Why are you interested in the language/country? What are you excited to do there? How do you plan to engage with the community there?

Demonstrate a commitment to continuing to learn/use the language before, during and after the study abroad program.

• Give concrete details and examples.
• Do your homework if you don’t know what opportunities there are to continue language study after you return, both through formal courses and informal means.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Two are required, a third is optional.

• 2 required – should be college-level, academic; one should be from a language professor; none should be from TAs
• 1 additional optional – could be another academic, or could be from a supervisor of relevant work/internship/volunteer experiences
• DO NOT submit letters from family or friends.

Letters should be from people who can be specific about your abilities, your interests, and how they relate to the Boren Scholarship.

• Not all faculty members are aware of what the Boren Scholarship is, so you may need to educate them about it so they can write their letter specifically to the Boren selection criteria.
• Provide them with copies of your essay drafts, resume, anything else that would provide them with specific details about you they may not already know or remember.

Final letters should be on letterhead, signed, sealed, and signed over the flap. They should also be sure to include the cover sheet.

• You can collect the sealed letters and deliver them to the Boren Campus Representative, or the writers can send them to her directly at UW Box 352803.

TRANSCRIPTS

Transcripts must be official, no faxed or e-mailed transcripts will be accepted.

You must include transcripts from all universities/colleges you have attended.

• If you have credits from a previous study abroad at an institution abroad, as long as those credits are detailed on your UW (or other) transcript, you don’t need a transcript from the abroad institution.
• If you have credits from a previous US institution, get that official transcript, even if the credits transferred to UW.

STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM DESCRIPTION
You must provide a one-page program description for each program (primary & alternative) that provides the basic facts. These descriptions can be copied from the program website or brochure, but you may need to reformat the information to get it to fit onto one page.

- Should include budget information, dates and length of the programs, and a brief description.

Those applicants proposing an individually arranged study or direct enrollment must get letters of support from both home and host institutions.

- UW International Programs & Exchange Office would provide the home letter of support.

**LANGUAGE SELF-ASSESSMENT FORM**

You fill this out to indicate what level of language skill you feel you have.

**LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY FORM**

Optional, but highly recommended

This form should be completed by a language instructor or qualified evaluator.

- Ideally this would be a faculty member who teaches the language, not a TA.
- It can be someone you’ve studied the language from, or not. If not, they will need to spend a few minutes with you to test your skills.
- If you have some knowledge of the language already, including this form will only benefit your application.

**ADDRESS THE SELECTION CRITERIA**

In every part of the application

Scholarship award recipients will be selected on the basis of merit with consideration for

- Program preferences,
- Academic record and potential to succeed in the proposed study abroad program,
- Commitment to international education to fulfill academic and career goals,
- Language interest and aptitude, and
- The quality and appropriateness of the proposed program and its relevance to the National Security Education Program.
- The student is academically prepared to benefit fully from this overseas experience.
- The student has prior experience in language training and/or demonstrates serious commitment to acquiring the target language overseas, and continuing to study that language upon return home.
- The student's proposal indicates high motivation to study abroad based on evidence of interest in using the experience to support his/her academic and federal career goals.
The student's proposal presents a plan for applying overseas studies (e.g., language and cultural studies) to his/her academic or professional program in the United States.

The student is mature and flexible and possesses the common sense needed to succeed in the proposed study abroad program.

The student is knowledgeable about the study abroad program he or she intends to pursue, including its formal (classroom) and informal instruction, the quality and scope of the program's language component, and the administrative structure of the program.

The student's proposal addresses U.S. national security, as broadly defined on the Program Basics page, and based upon the student's own academic and professional perspective.

The student's professional goals are international in scope and support U.S. national security interests.

The student's proposal expresses a commitment to pursue a career in federal service.