10 Tips for a Competitive Application

1. Answer the questions asked:
   a. Draft your essays
   b. Read the questions again
   c. Make sure you have addressed each component thoroughly
   d. Emphasize how your goals coincide with the Boren goals

2. Use transitions:
   a. Address ALL components in one cohesive response (not point by point)
   b. Should be a well-written essay

3. Don’t tell us what we already know:
   a. “My name is Joe and I am applying for the Boren Scholarship...”
   b. Don’t spend a lot of time talking generally about studying languages in general, or studying abroad in general. Go deeper into your interests specifically.

4. The essay is not a research paper:
   a. Do not include footnotes (if citations are absolutely needed, then include a short citation within the sentence)
   b. Do not include quotes from famous politicians
   c. Yes, do research to inform your ideas and plans, but tell us what you think

5. Nor a personal statement:
   a. Do not use overly flowery language...“when I first saw the sun rise over the Serengeti...”

6. Spellcheck is not always your friend
   a. “I would like to study aboard”; “I would like to expose myself...”

7. Use the space provided but be concise
   a. If we give you 2 pages, don’t just write 1 paragraph
   b. Don’t go off on tangents just to fill the space. If you don’t have much to say, do more research and think more critically about the prompt
   c. Don’t be redundant

8. Choose references wisely
   a. Meet with them to talk about your plans and interests and the Boren Scholarship
   b. Provide them with a draft of your essays
   c. Have them address feasibility

9. Work with Campus Reps and advisers
   a. Get feedback on application essays and other components

10. Use all borenawards.org resources

Essay #1: Significance (6,000 characters)

DO:
• Address national security based on your own background & field of study—you define it and discuss it from the angles that make sense for you and your area(s) of study
• Address future career interests & service requirement—give some specific thoughts to where you would like to end up, but everyone realizes things will change over time
• Explain why you would like to work in particular parts of the government—do your homework to learn about government jobs and what agencies work on the issues you’re interested in
• Relate all components of the essay to one another
• Give equal attention to all parts of the question.

AVOID:
• Vague future goals (“I want to be an ambassador”—you won’t be ready straight out of undergrad; and ambassador of what? Where?; “Foreign Service”—what cone(s)? why? How are you preparing now and what more preparation will you need?)
  o In identifying future job(s) that you won’t be ready for right out of undergrad (which will be most), discuss the steps you’ll need to take to get there (grad school? More experience? Etc.) and how the Boren experience will be helpful in taking those steps
  o Be realistic and do your homework to understand what steps are needed to prepare for the job(s) you want, and then discuss that knowledgeably and reasonably in the essay (i.e. overly idealistic, lofty, or flowery goals are not what they’re looking for. Well-reasoned, well-researched goals that make sense for you and the impact you’d like to have within your areas of interest, short and long-term, will be more persuasive).
• General national security arguments—don’t feel the need to solve all of the US’ national security issues related to the country you’re planning to travel to; just narrow in on those issues that are relevant to you and your field of study related to that country, discuss them, and how you would like to be involved.
• Don’t use “shopping list” approach. Better to focus on a couple of issues in detail.

**Essay #2: Study Abroad Program Explanation** (6,000 characters)
**DO:**
• Be clear about why the study abroad program is right for you—how you will take advantage of the opportunities it offers (don’t just list what it offers or recap the program description...not “the program provides...”, instead emphasize “I will engage in...”)
  o Housing example—What will your living situation be? How will that living situation benefit your language learning & cultural understanding? If you don’t think it will benefit you much (for example, living with another American), then don’t spend much space in the essay on this. Focus on those things that will benefit your language learning & cultural understanding.
• Give concrete language study examples—in and out of class (extracurricular activities, campus resources/clubs, hobbies, etc. that will get you out and meeting people and practicing language & cultural understanding skills). Don’t just rely on what the program provides, but what you want to do while you’re there. Have a plan for meeting people (warning: a plan of “I’ll hang out at coffee shops and chat with people” is not a solid enough plan).
• Explain preparation (or if new language for you, explain why you want to study it)
• Show ongoing commitment to studying the language

AVOID:
• Weak reasons for picking the study abroad program (ex. “my school offers it”) – make the case for yourself and the language learning & cultural understanding you will do and how this program will help you to make the biggest strides
• Listing language goals as an afterthought
  • What have you done to prepare?
  • If you’ve never taken the language before, how do you know it’s the right thing for you to do now? If you’ve studied other languages, how has that helped you to learn how to learn languages better? How does it all fit together (adding vs. switching languages)?
  • In what ways (formal and informal) have you already connected with the language and/or culture and/or country before (student clubs, community connections, extracurricular things, etc.)
  • How will you use this opportunity to make significant language learning strides (describe how the program provides the right level of language learning to challenge you)
  • Specific, concrete details of how you will continue language studies after returning. Be creative—formal classes (which ones? When?), research (what? When? How?), independent study (how? With whom? When?), extracurricular engagement (what, who, how?), conversation partners (who, how, when?)