Boren Awards: Guidance for Recommenders

Recommendation letters for national scholarships and fellowships are different from those that may be submitted for a campus opportunity, for a professional experience, and even for graduate school. They are typically 1.5 – 2 pages long and provide a detailed account of the student as seen by that particular faculty member or other professional.

Deadlines
Fellowship: Jan. 30, 2018
Scholarship: Feb. 8, 2018

Boren Scholarship Overview
Boren Scholars represent highly motivated individuals who are interested in federal national security and long-term linguistic and cultural immersion. The Boren scholarship is funded by the National Security Education Program (NSEP) to address sustainable development, environmental degradation, global disease and hunger, population growth and migration, and economic competitiveness. The scholarship provides up to $20,000 to study abroad in areas of the world considered critical to U.S. interests and underrepresented in study abroad. Boren Scholarships promote long term linguistic and cultural immersion, and therefore study abroad proposals for two or more semesters are strongly encouraged. Boren Scholars must agree to the NSEP service requirement of one year of federal service. Summer-only programs must be eight (8) weeks or more and are limited to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) students.

Boren Fellowship Overview
Boren Fellowships provide unique funding opportunities for U.S. graduate students to study less commonly taught languages in world regions critical to U.S. interests, and underrepresented in study abroad. In exchange for funding, Boren Fellows commit to working in the federal government for at least one year after graduation. Boren Fellowships provide up to $24,000 for overseas study. Boren Fellowships promote long term linguistic and cultural immersion. Therefore, preference will be given to applicants proposing overseas programs of 6 months or longer. However, applicants proposing overseas programs of 3-6 months, especially those in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields are encouraged to apply.

Key Points
- Boren Scholarship applicants are required to submit two academic letters of reference, but may submit three. Boren Fellowship applicants are required to submit three letters via the online system. Two of the letters must be from academic sources. Applicants may include a recommender for the optional language proficiency form.
- Letters should be academic and comment on the student’s academic, linguistic, and personal preparation for the study abroad program, especially as they relate to the Boren Scholarship objectives. Where possible, specific/detailed commentary on the applicant’s skill in language-learning can be especially helpful.
- Letters should address the student’s ability to carry out the proposed study abroad or research plan, their U.S. national security argument and their career interests.
- Big picture: Review committees assume these are very bright students; what a review committee needs to hear are those things that set apart a particular student from the others they will be reading about. You might consider how: the student showed unusual skill, initiative, and/or ability to be self-directed; addressed some difficult questions; showed resilience and adaptability; and/or developed/matured over the duration of your relationship.

Procedures
Recommendation letter requests are automatically generated and sent via the online application. The student must input your contact information into the application before the request can be sent.