# Fulbright Applications

## *Personal Statement*
### Danny Nelson, Graduate School

Writing a *Compelling* Personal Statement

# TRUTH #1 YOU DESERVE A FULBRIGHT.

YOUR JOB IS TO CONVINCE THEM YOU DESERVE IT.

# HOW CAN I CONVINCE THE COMMITTEE I DESERVE THE FULBRIGHT?
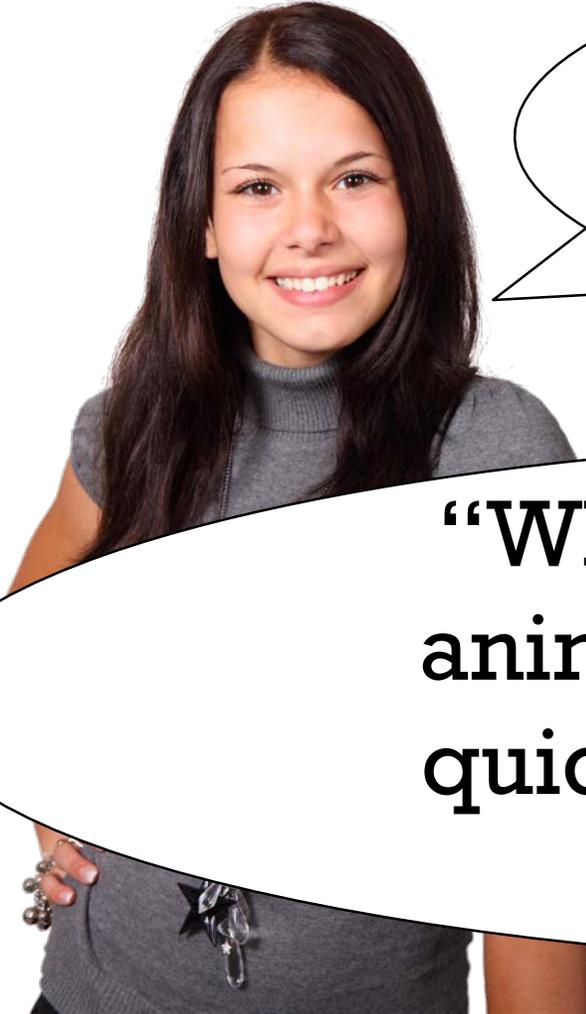
- be unique
- connect
- show your knowledge

BE UNIQUE

TRUTH #2
YOU ARE UNIQUE.

# FIRST INFORMATION

- Starts with a compelling sentence—a question, experience, description, etc.

- Highlights an experience, attitude, observation, or preparation unique to you

- Sets the tone and "road map"

- Is filled with intriguing details
  - Emotional details
  - Sensory details
  - Physical details
    - CAUTION: don't go overboard!

- Is simple, clear, and relevant

# ASK YOURSELF – FIRST INFORMATION

- How am I different?
  - Internal and External differences

- What qualities do I have that others applying for the Fulbright will not have?

- How can I specify common qualities to be unique to me?

- What experience show my difference? Can I present these experiences quickly and effectively?

# CONNECT

# TRUTH #3
# YOU ARE UNIQUELY QUALIFIED AND PREPARED FOR THE FULBRIGHT.

# WRITING THE BODY

- Clearly connects your story with the requirements/qualifications of the Fulbright
  - Provides evidence
  - Explains the connection

Connects detail to detail
- You are unique—so is the award!

Is simple and clear

# WRITING THE BODY

"This statement provides you with an opportunity to introduce yourself to the screening committee members on a personal level. The style is up to you, but the content should convey your background and your motivation for applying to the specific Fulbright Program in question and how this background relates to the proposed project and your future goals."

# Ask Yourself – Connection

- What does the prompt ask for?

- How do my unique experiences specifically answer the prompt?

- What would a critic say about my approach?

# COMPARISONS

- **It is clear that people love to be complimented.** vs **Whenever someone gives me a compliment, I glow.**

- **When I was a kid, I studied hard at school.** vs **Once when I was studying for a test, I wrote so much I sprained my fingers.**

- **I'm sure you're tired of reading these personal statements, so I'll just let my essay speak for itself.** vs **I'm grateful for the opportunity of applying for the Fulbright, and look forward to the additional opportunities it will give me.**

- **As Obama's appointed ambassador for the University of Utah, I've observed many different cultures.** vs **As a keen observer of people, I've observed many different cultures.**

# DO'S AND DON'T DO'S

- **Do:**
  - Get personal
  - Get creative
  - Show, don't tell
  - Get help with writing
- **Don't:**
  - Be too clever or cute
  - Exaggerate – code for lie
  - Repetitive

# SHOW KNOWLEDGE

## TRUTH #4
# THE FULBRIGHT COMMITTEE WANTS YOU TO SUCCEED.

BUT YOU HAVE TO SHOW THEM YOU **WILL** SUCCEED

# WHAT IS THE FULBRIGHT COMMITTEE LOOKING FOR?

- Understand the audience
- Reveal the kind of person you are
  - Be authentic!
- Show appreciation for cultural differences and bridge-building
- Focus on experiences that demonstrate leadership
- Focus on experiences that illustrate your independence and maturity
- Show modesty, restraint, and compassion
- Demonstrate your language competency.
- No writing mistakes!

# ASK YOURSELF – KNOWLEDGE

- What specific things do I know about the award?

- If I were giving the Fulbright to someone, what attributes and knowledge would I want them to have?

- How can I demonstrate these attributes and knowledge?

# WRITING THE CONCLUSION

- Bring the discussion to a close

- Tie up loose ends and/or put the topic in a meaningful perspective

- Engage the reader with a specific example or quote

- End with a memorable sentence or image

# WRITING CONVENTIONS

- Use concrete and specific language

- No jargon

- Avoid clichés, sentimental language, and platitudes

- Use active, not passive voice
  - *The attorney won the court case*, not *the court case was won by the attorney*.

- Write concisely
  - *Obviously*, not *it is obvious that*
  - *Consider* instead of *Give consideration to*
  - *Finished*, not *completely finished*
  - *We want*, instead of *there is a desire for….*

# PRACTICE

One of my earliest memories is a dream: as I lay, animals danced in a circle around my bed. As a child, I saw myself as an animal connected to all other animals. This is of course true—I am an animal. But it took me some years to realize the separation humans place between themselves and other species. To my sorrow I discovered I was of a species that intentionally separated themselves from other animals. I felt as though I had been misplaced, as nonhuman animals were some of my closest friends. Despite this, I made friends with other humans easily. This was in part due to the fact that I did not discriminate against other humans for the usual social reasons, but rather viewed them as fellow living creatures. Yet as humans we were creatures who belonged to a culture that discriminated against other animals for what seemed arbitrary reasons.

# PRACTICE

My family migrated to the United States from Lima, Perú when I was six years old. School was where I first encountered peers from predominantly white backgrounds. The first day of class, I remember being referenced as "Brown/Hispanic" by my peers and I was intrigued by what it meant to be "Brown." I wanted to relate to such identity from a powerful and empowering context and took the meaning quite literally. So I convinced my mother to buy me a set of Crayola crayons early in the school year and one by one, I aligned my fist to the brown pieces tirelessly trying to match each with my skin in hopes of finding relatable and affirming ways to match my identity. From that day forward, I was able to step back from seeing things as either/or.

# PRACTICE

The summer I went to Morocco, I discovered my second passion. After my junior year of high school, I was accepted for a language-intensive summer study-abroad learning Arabic with the National Security Language Initiative for Youth in the State Department. My first night in Morocco, my host-family took me to a quiet, bright green room and sat me at a table with a fish bowl full of spaghetti and a single spoon before they left me alone to have dinner together as a family. By my last night, we were breaking the Ramadan fast together with a light soup before digging into the family tajine. I loved interacting with the people I met in Morocco, and when I got home, all I wanted to do was tell as many people as I could about my experience. My experience abroad, like the experience of many students, committed me to the ideals of global citizenship and peace through mutual understanding.

# PRACTICE – FIRST LINES

- I never knew I loved robotics until I got a Furby for my seventh birthday.

- Most people can't tell you the value of pi past the third digit, but I can recite it to 15 digits.

- Watching people struggling to do something I do well frustrates me.

- Letting people know that I spend the majority of my time examining worm guts doesn't make me popular at parties.

- Whenever I fly at night, it amazes me that each point of light below represents a person or a family.

- Clinging to a side of a cliff might not be the best moment to make life decisions, but that was the moment I decided I wanted to be a veterinarian.