



## **Essay Writing Tips**

- **Make your essay stand out:** The U.S. Embassy receives hundreds of applications for our exchange programs. Use your essay space creatively to tell us something about you. Essays that are funny, clever, or particularly well-written are more memorable!

*Two attention-getting, successful examples were:*

- An essay was structured as a letter from the applicant to her mother. In the letter, the applicant described how her participation in the exchange program changed her personally and enabled her to pursue important projects after her return to her home country.
  - Another essay described how the applicant's favorite piece of Americana is the TV show "How I Met Your Mother". This was a bold decision, but the humorous essay gave insight into the applicant's thinking.
- **Answer the question that is asked:** One frequent question on the SUSI application, for example, asks applicants to describe an influential living leader. Applicants frequently reference leaders who have already passed away. This is not necessarily a disqualification, but it weakens the application unnecessarily.
  - **Use your own words:** We know it's hard to write essays in another language. Over the past year we've had to disqualify several *very* promising applicants because they borrowed small phrases (or whole paragraphs) from Wikipedia, or essay-preparation websites, or others. We have software to track this, and we use it. We do not accept plagiarized work.
  - **Proofread:** We know our applicants are not native speakers of English and we don't expect perfection. We do, however, expect attention to detail. If, for example, an applicant is describing Hillary Clinton's leadership, we expect that her first name will be spelled with two Ls.
  - **Typing the essays is strongly advised:** We know it's challenging to get to a cybercafé to type essays, but we find it's a lot easier for our selection committee to read typewritten statements.
  - **Keep the focus on the "big picture":** Often our applicants write essays and tell us that going to the United States "would be a great opportunity" for them. We see that. But what we'd *really* like to know is how *your* going would be valuable in terms of building bridges between Algeria and the United States.