Editing Prompts for Personal Essay

1. THE STORY: SUMMARY AND OVERALL IMPRESSION
   a. What is the story the author of the essay is telling? How would you summarize it in your own words?
   b. Is this a story about someone who would make a desirable Fulbright scholar for a host country? Is the story impressive? What would make it more impressive?

2. THE STORY: RELEVANCE TO PROJECT AND COHESIVE FOCUS
   a. Does this essay make a compelling reason for why the applicant should pursue a project or do graduate study in a particular country or at a particular institution? Does the reader get a sense of how the author’s background and interests motivated him/her to pursue the scholarship? What elements of the story might you add, delete, or develop in order to build a stronger connection to the Fulbright project and make the author seem a more attractive Fulbright candidate?
   b. Does the essay provide an overall sense of vision or focus that ties all the assertions, information, and examples together? Is there a cohesive structure to the essay? Does the author strike a balance between showing that s/he has diverse interests, but also has focus? How might you strengthen the focus of the essay?

3. THE STORY: INTEREST
   a. Does the story take the reader somewhere unexpected? Does it provide a “hook” for the reader/draw the reader in? How might the author further draw you in?
   b. Is the story an applicant tells as interesting and multi-faceted as you know the applicant to be? What suggestions can you give to make the picture the applicant offers of him/herself more interesting?

4. THE STORY: BUILDING AUTHENTICITY BY SHOWING (NOT TELLING)
   a. Does the author “show” (i.e. prove via examples) as opposed to “tell” why s/he is interesting, what motivates him or her, etc.? Where do you think the author could benefit from additional examples? Where could the author delete sections that “tell”? Where and how could the author develop or deepen examples that s/he provides?
   b. Does the author effectively employ tone, examples, reflections, etc. to indirectly build a picture of him or herself as interesting, unique, capable, curious, intelligent, adaptable, creative, etc.? Where might the author’s self-promotion need to be more subtle, and/or need to come out more clearly?

5. THE STORY: LEVERAGING OLIN COLLEGE
   a. Does the student effectively address and integrate the question of “what on earth is Olin College?” Does the author foreground the initiative, involvement, etc. it takes to be part of a start-up school? Does the author use Olin to his or her advantage in the essay? How might the author better leverage how s/he talks about Olin in the essay?

6. THE STORY: IN CONCLUSION
   a. Does the essay/story conclude with abundant possibilities for next steps in the applicant’s life, as opposed to seeming like a (dead) end to the story? How might the reader get a stronger sense of where the applicant might become or what s/he might do after getting the Fulbright?

7. THE STORY: MECHANICS AND PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATION
   a. Does the author use correct grammar, appropriate word choice, clear and interesting sentence structure, and appropriate and formal tone? What trends do you see in the essay in terms of needs for improving mechanics and tone?