



NEWS & EVENTS

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[2009-2010](#)[2008-2009](#)[2007-2008](#)[2006-2007](#)[2005-2006](#)[2004-2005](#)[Macalester Sources](#)[Featured News/Stories](#)[Macalester in the News](#)[Events Calendar](#)[Communications and PR Staff](#)[Communications and PR Service Center](#)

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Press Release

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**Macalester Professor Awarded \$1.2M NSF Grant
to Study Tags -**
**Grant split between Macalester and University of
Minnesota**


July 8, 2010 – St. Paul, Minn. – Dr. Shilad Sen, assistant professor in the Mathematics, Statistics, and Computer Science Department at Macalester College, has been awarded a four-year, \$1.2M grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to study tags, or words that people use to describe videos, photographs and web pages online. The grant will lay

the groundwork for research collaboration between Macalester College and the University of Minnesota. Macalester's portion of the grant is about \$250,000.

The grant, which includes support for undergraduate student research, will allow students to learn multiple research methods while gaining valuable experience with real online communities.

"I'm particularly excited that the grant supports a newly formed collaboration between the Grouplens research group at the University of Minnesota (<http://www.grouplens.org>) and my research lab at Macalester," said Sen. "We'll be holding many symposia and social events between the two groups over the coming years. Our students will collaborate with a world-class graduate research lab that studies online communities."

The grant is called **Collaborative Research: Guiding Folksonomy Development to Enable Novel Tagging Applications**. It studies tagging, the assignment of descriptive labels to objects such as videos on YouTube.

Sen and his students will develop ways to measure the health of a tagging system, create tools that help users improve the tags in a system, and explore new web applications that use tags to navigate a collection of items (videos, photos, etc.). Improving the effectiveness of tagging will help millions of users find the information, products, and services they seek.

Two of the students who benefitted from working with Sen were enthusiastic about the award.

"These opportunities will help students academically (they'll be able to design and run awesome experiments),

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Walking Dead's Michonne (Danai Gurira) to give commencement speech at Macalester | City Pages | March 29, 2016

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while preparing them with techniques and tools to stand out as unique prospects in a competitive job market," said recent Macalester graduate Isaac Sparling.

David Klock is also a recent Macalester graduate. "My work with Dr. Sen last summer introduced me to the cutting edge of tagging research, an area rapidly growing in importance in the technology industry. This grant will enable him to involve many more students in this work and put Macalester on the map in the tagging field."

"Dr. Sen's research has already benefitted all of us who use the web," said Provost Kathleen Murray. "The grant allows him and his students to continue to find ways to improve our web experiences."

Macalester College, founded in 1874, is a national liberal arts college with a full-time enrollment of 1,958 students. Macalester is nationally recognized for its long-standing commitment to academic excellence, internationalism, multiculturalism and civic engagement.