

Macalester Senior Receives Watson Grant

St. Paul, Minn. – Sylvia Thomas '14, of Winona, Minn., has been awarded a Thomas J. Watson Fellowship. The fellowship, a one-year grant for independent study and travel outside of the United States, is awarded annually to graduating college/university seniors. This year the Foundation awarded 43 fellowships. Over 700 applications were received by the campus partners and 150 were ultimately nominated. The awardees came from 29 of the 40 colleges on the Watson roster. The fellows come from select private liberal arts colleges and universities.

The Thomas J. Watson Fellowship offers college graduates of "unusual promise" a year of independent, purposeful exploration and travel, in international settings new to them, to enhance their capacity for resourcefulness, imagination, openness, and leadership and to foster their humane and effective participation in the world community.

On her farm in rural Minnesota, Sylvia Thomas had limited access to technology, but the radio was always on. At a young age, she recorded mock radio shows on cassette tapes featuring topics that reflected her social justice values.

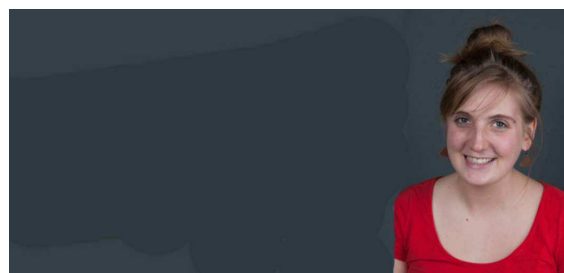
Thomas, a geography major, said receiving the Watson means she'll have opportunity to pursue community radio, a subject, movement, and process that she is "totally crazy about."

"I have actively worked, studied, and created podcasts and community radio here in the U.S. for the last four years, and now, my relationship with my community radio passion seeks a new level," Thomas said. "The Watson Fellowship will provide me with the depth that I am craving."

In the past four years, Thomas has created over 30 podcasts, started a social justice radio show, studied the influence of community radio on development, and implemented and led youth podcasting programs.

Her project proposal, "**Absorbing the Waves of Community Radio,**" will take her to Bolivia, Bangladesh, and Tanzania.

"I seek to live, work and study community radio in three distinct and unique developing countries: Bolivia, Bangladesh, and Tanzania," said Thomas. "In many developing countries, access to technology remains limited and populations depend on radio for affordable and accessible communication. Community radio stations in Bolivia, Bangladesh, and Tanzania are tied together with the same homespun thread: local people



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depend on the station to influence their community. Studios in Bolivia, Bangladesh, and Tanzania actively effect local change, and I am eager to learn new tactics, ideas, and creative technology from each country. On my Watson year, I hope to gain insight into the local community and how ideas are sustained, changed, or perceived on the community radio station.”

What will Thomas do when she finishes her Watson? “I plan to apply to graduate school for journalism, emphasizing my studies in international reporting and radio journalism. I am particularly interested in the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University.”

Based on a project that they have designed, the students are awarded a \$28,000 stipend to execute and evaluate their project over the year.

The Thomas J. Watson Fellowship Program was established in 1968 by the children of Thomas J. Watson, Sr., the founder of International Business Machines Corp., and his wife, Jeannette K. Watson, to honor their parents’ long-standing interest in education and world affairs.

Watson fellows must leave for their travel by August 1 of the year of their fellowship and return in time for the Returning Fellows Conference. During this time they may not return to the United States.

Macalester College, founded in 1874, is a national liberal arts college with a full-time enrollment of 2,011 students. Macalester is nationally recognized for its long-standing commitment to academic excellence, internationalism, multiculturalism, and civic engagement. Learn more at [macalester.edu](http://www.macalester.edu) (<http://www.macalester.edu/>).

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