

Macalester Student Receives U.S. State Dept. CLS to study critical need language

St. Paul, Minn. - Abigail Stowe-Thurston '16, of Northampton, Mass., has been awarded a U.S. State Department Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) to study critical languages this summer. She will study Azerbaijani.

Stowe-Thurston is one of approximately 550 U.S. undergraduate and graduate students who received a scholarship from the U.S. Department of State's Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program in 2014. CLS participants will spend seven to ten weeks in intensive language institutes in one of 13 countries to study Arabic, Azerbaijani, Bangla, Chinese, Hindi, Korean, Indonesian, Japanese, Persian, Punjabi, Russian, Turkish, or Urdu. The CLS Program provides fully funded, group-based intensive language instruction and structured cultural enrichment experiences. Participants are expected to continue their language study beyond the scholarship and apply their critical language skills in their future professional careers.

Stowe-Thurston will be in Baku, Azerbaijan from June 8 – August 10, 2014. During that time, she'll be living with a host family and studying the Azerbaijani language. She will be immersed in intensive Azerbaijani language programs. "I am looking forward to getting to know the city and becoming comfortable in the culture," she said.

The 2014 CLS Program received over 5,500 applications. Selected finalists for the 2014 CLS Program hail from all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia and represent more than 200 institutions of higher education from across the United States.

Stowe-Thurston is a Russian Studies major. "At the moment, I am fascinated by the idea of what it means to live in a post-Soviet world," she said. "We often talk about this idea only in relation to the countries of the former Soviet Union, and forget that America also partakes in this post-Soviet existence as we are continually affected by the history of the Cold War. I hope that connecting across linguistic and cultural barriers will be an avenue through which to explore my own post-Soviet identity."

In 2006, its inaugural year, the CLS Program offered intensive overseas study in the critical need foreign languages of Arabic, Bangla, Hindi, Punjabi, Turkish and Urdu. In 2013, approximately 600 scholarships were awarded for thirteen languages, including Arabic, Azerbaijani, Bangla, Chinese, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Persian, Punjabi, Russian, Turkish, and Urdu.

The CLS Program institutes cover approximately one academic year of university-level language coursework and are designed to meet the needs of students from a variety of language levels and backgrounds. Some CLS institutes require one to two years of prior language study (or the equivalent), while others accept students with no prior knowledge of the language.



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Formal classroom language instruction is provided for a minimum of 20 hours per week. Extracurricular activities are designed to supplement the formal curriculum, including regular one-on-one meetings with native speaker language partners for conversational practice, as well as cultural activities and excursions designed to expand students' understanding of the history, politics, culture and daily life of their host country.

Consistent with the U.S. Department of State's goals to increase diversity among international educational exchange program participants, the CLS Program actively recruits in states and regions of the United States that have been historically under-represented in international exchange and encourages students from diverse backgrounds and academic majors to apply. The CLS Program also promotes diversity in the independent review process, and includes readers and panelists from 43 states and the District of Columbia and 183 institutions, including land-grant public universities, liberal arts colleges, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, Ivy League institutions, and community colleges.

CLS Program participants are among the more than 40,000 academic and professional exchange program participants supported annually by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs to promote mutual understanding and respect between the people of the United States and the people of other countries. The CLS Program is administered by American Councils for International Education and The Ohio State University/ Ohio University.

After her CLS Program, Stowe-Thurston will be studying abroad in Dushanbe, Tajikistan next fall, where she will continue to explore the question of life in a post-Soviet world.

For further information about the CLS Program or other exchange programs offered by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, visit <http://www.clscholarship.org> (<http://www.clscholarship.org/>) and <http://exchanges.state.gov> (<http://exchanges.state.gov>).

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