

2008-2009 Watson Fellowship Application Instructions

1) Timing:

Your completed application is due **via online and email submission** to the Watson Fellowship Committee by **Friday, September 26, 2008, at 4:00 p.m.**, and must include four parts:

- a. The **online submission form**. This form is available at: <http://www.bates.edu/thomas-watson-fellowships.xml>. Click on the link provided. This will open a new browser page with all the appropriate fields. Type in your information, proof it carefully, then click on “Submit.” You cannot retrieve or amend the form after clicking “Submit.”
- b. A **one-page resumé** that includes previous fellowships/honors, extracurricular activities and the names and email addresses of referees (see part d). The resumé must be submitted as a **Microsoft Word email attachment**, to Watson@bates.edu by the above deadline, and must be named by the convention:

Watson_Resume_SmithS.doc (example for someone named Susan Smith)

- c. A **specific project proposal/personal statement**. The proposal/personal statement must be submitted as a **Microsoft Word email attachment** (with the .doc file extension), to Watson@bates.edu by the above deadline. Name the file:

Watson_Prop_SmithS.doc (example for someone named Susan Smith)

- d. **Two letters of recommendation** from either two Bates faculty members, or from one Bates faculty member and one other person (e.g., Bates administrative staff, study abroad supervisor). Each letter should be submitted by the recommender as a **Microsoft Word email attachment** (with the .doc file extension) to Watson@bates.edu by the above deadline. Recommenders should name the file:

Watson_Rec_SmithS.doc (example for someone named Susan Smith)

The Watson Fellowship Committee reserves the right to ignore or downgrade applications that come in late, or do not conform fully to the following rules.

2) Structure of the project proposal/personal statement:

You must submit one copy of a two-part printed manuscript, no more than seven pages long. One part (roughly three pages) is a Personal Statement, which (in the Foundation’s words) “should discuss how this is your project—how it reflects your talents, concerns and commitments. You may also want to describe your background, your college years, your professional goals and aspirations, and your reasons for seeking a Watson Fellowship.” The

other part (roughly three pages) is a Project Proposal, which “should describe your plan for the 12-month fellowship year, including a description of your proposed project and details about how you intend to carry it out. In addition, you should discuss how you are prepared to undertake your project.” It is sometimes difficult to separate the two statements as cleanly as the Foundation’s guidelines suggest, but you should make the effort. Assemble the two parts of your manuscript as one Microsoft Word document, in whichever order works best for you, but stick to the structure and length given.

3) Mechanics:

The committee expects a Microsoft Word document in a plain font in a size no smaller than 11 points. Set margins to 1". The line spacing is up to you, but keep in mind that although the text of the final application to the Watson Foundation may be longer (10 pages), the Foundation requires double spacing. We will not read past the seventh page in any case. Please do not include an additional cover sheet.

The first line of the text on the first page of your project proposal/personal statement should be a brief summary title for your project, plus a list of the country or countries involved, in the following format:

METEORITE HUNTING

Morocco/Tasmania

EMPOWERING THE HANDICAPPED

Argentina

Do not include photos and graphic files in this version of the application. Links to a personal web page, if appropriate, are acceptable.

4) Acknowledgement:

Applicants will receive email acknowledgement of receipt of application. If there is a problem accessing the email attachment, a committee member will notify the applicant in question. Please check your email frequently for any messages from the committee.

In early October all applicants will receive an email message indicating who amongst the applicants will be interviewed by the Bates Committee. If there is some reason why the committee will have trouble reaching you during the first week of October, please warn us.

IMPORTANT:

Please note that your ability to follow these instructions does bear on how we evaluate your application. We are looking for people who will impress the foundation with their final application and interview, and be able to carry out a year’s independent research project effectively. Filing a correct application is the easy part, and should be a matter of course. Every year someone hurts their chances by sending the application to the wrong location, or ignoring the prescribed format. Please read all these instructions carefully, and save them for future reference!

Supplemental Information

To repeat a couple of foundation rules that people routinely try to work around without success:

1. You must do your project **OUTSIDE** the territorial borders of the United States. Native Americans, refugees, immigrants, etc., are all worthy of study, but you must study them somewhere else. (Navaho in Canada are fine, but Navaho in Arizona don't qualify as Watson subjects, any more than do Russian emigrés in Brooklyn, or Chinese illegal aliens on a prison farm in California.) Puerto Rico, however, is a permissible destination, not being a state.
2. You must leave the country by mid-August, and **STAY GONE** for a year. (Obviously, this rule can be waived in case of personal or familial emergency. However, coming back in four months for your parents' thirtieth anniversary, and back again three months later for your roommate's wedding, is definitely a violation of the terms of the fellowship.)

Some special considerations that may apply to you:

- 1) You do **NOT** have to be a United States citizen — you only need to be graduating from a college that is a member of the Watson Fellowship Program. If you are a foreign national, however, **DO NOT** make the mistake of applying to go home, no matter how fascinating the opportunity you have found. That is not “independent study and travel abroad” for you, even if the same topic and location would be perfectly suitable for an applicant who has never been outside Maine before.
- 2) If you are a U.S. citizen, but reside yourself, or have close relatives, in another country, you may not submit a project that sends you there. The Watson Foundation wants, above all else, to make a difference in the lives of its fellows, not just to ease their way along paths that already lie open before them.
- 3) You may have noticed that many of the example projects listed on the Foundation website have involved more than one country. There is no rule that requires you to work in more than one country. Indeed, one of the easiest ways to make your project look badly planned is to sketch out grandiose scenarios for which the time could not possibly be found in a year. On the other hand, the Foundation would rather have you reach for more than you can grasp, than see you play it so safe that there is no room left for flexibility and surprises. Once again, the golden rule in picking a location or locations is to make sure that your proposal makes sense in terms of who you are.
- 4) Neither the Bates Committee nor the Watson Foundation will knowingly help you destroy your life. If your project is obviously illegal, or guaranteed to send you directly in harm's way (“Participating in the Intifada”), we are not going to nominate you, because we don't want to endanger you recklessly, and we know the foundation will refuse to fund your project. **DO NOT APPLY** for travel to any country assigned a US State Department “travel warning” (see www.state.gov), or under embargo (<http://www.treasury.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac/programs/>). Cuba's status is currently in

flux in this regard. The Foundation's rule in the past has been to reject proposals involving Cuba, but this will presumably change someday. Keep in mind that most countries have very strict definitions of visa status, and what activities can be legitimately pursued under specific types of entry document. You may be in a different legal category from a tourist who has a two-week permit to spend as many traveler's checks as possible, although you will probably not qualify for professional researcher status. Find out enough about your proposed location to be reasonably confident that someone holding your passport can obtain a visitor status that will make it possible to carry out your proposal. The Foundation will not approach a foreign government on your behalf. Please be aware that many countries will not allow you to spend an uninterrupted calendar year within their borders—one of the reasons why many Watson proposals assume a change of scene after a number of months.

- 5) If you have previously lived for significant amounts of time abroad, think hard about how that is related to your application, and to the foundation's objectives. If you plan a year within an African community that speaks only its tribal language, a language that can be formally studied only at the University of Nairobi, then your junior year spent studying this language in Kenya starts to look like a key part of your justification for your project. However, under the rules, you must work with tribe members living outside Kenya. If you went on a high school exchange program to Venezuela, a Bates Fall Semester Abroad to Venezuela, and a junior year abroad to Venezuela, make those Spanish-language skills a plus for your application by planning to go somewhere else where they will be of value.

When the program was created, undergraduate study abroad was the exception. Prior overseas experience is now the rule among Watson applicants. The Foundation is very conscious of this change, and understands the argument that previous experience and links may be almost essential to making the most effective use of the fellowship in some countries. However, after years of considering the trade-offs involved, the Foundation has decided to impose an absolute ban on significant prior experience in the target area. (A Bates Short Term is "significant.")

- 6) You may already have special contacts, relative to your topic or in your target location, and you should certainly start to look for them now if you don't, assuming that such things are relevant to your proposal. Our assumption is that any such ties will be in their beginning stages when we interview you, and, if you are one of our nominees, will have progressed somewhat by the time of the foundation application deadline (early November), and even farther by the time of the foundation interview. These interviews may be very soon after that deadline, or as late as February of the following calendar year. If you are interviewed at the end of the cycle, in February, it will be expected that your plans are more fully developed. In the initial round, we are looking primarily at you as a person, and at the conceptual strength of your proposal, but evidence of planning doesn't hurt.
- 7) If you are picked as one of our four official nominees, you will need as part of your final application:
 - a) downloaded, unofficial copies of your college transcripts, and official copies of those transcripts addressed to the chair of the Watson Committee at Bates (the Registrar

requires a written, signed request from you for the latter that might take 2 weeks to process),

- b) a recent digital photograph of yourself, and
- c) two or three letters of reference (which, if your project has changed significantly, or you add a new recommender, might need updating).

The transcripts and letters of reference can be time-consuming to assemble, especially if one of your references is hard to reach (for example, a Bates faculty member on leave in another country, a faculty member of the school you spent a junior year abroad at, etc.). In any case, you may want to check with your references now to make sure they are willing to submit a letter twice, and that they understand that their final letter will have to be uploaded to the Foundation website by about November 1st at the latest (we cannot submit their previous letter for them).

- 8) Keep in mind that your proposal does not exist in a cultural vacuum. Both the Foundation and the college committee try to approach each applicant with fresh eyes, but it is impossible not to be affected by one's social and intellectual context. Some time ago, we received an amazing number of proposals in the general area of ecotourism, none of which got an interview. This seems like a natural as a Watson topic, but it is a conceptually difficult subject, and each proposal managed to point out serious shortcomings in all the others. Unless you have done significant reading and thinking in relevant areas of anthropological theory, you would be better off leaving ecotourism strictly alone, despite its many fascinations. Applications at Bates since then have not revealed an equally faddish subject, but be wary of seizing on a topic that is in the air everywhere you turn, unless you have both specialized skills and a new perspective that will distinguish you from every other college's nominee with the same clever idea.

You are not the first person to have thought that it would be clever to have the Watson Foundation fund an extended ski trip ("Comparative Economics of Winter Tourism in France and Switzerland," anyone?), or the chartering of a yacht (hmmm..., "An Ecological Survey of Small Caribbean Islands"?). Those applications just waste your paper and our time. We see the Watson Fellowship as a very special opportunity, and we want it to go to someone with a serious purpose.

- 9) You must plan to do your project alone. Despite the benefits of an anthropologist and a biochemist working cooperatively on an ethnopharmacology project in the Amazon basin, the Watson Foundation will not fund such a two-person project. They will also reject projects that depend on specific service providers (e.g., a particular helicopter pilot who has agreed to fly you into the mouth of every volcano in Indonesia), whose backing out would leave you helpless.

Responsibilities of College Nominees

Until 2001-2002, it was the practice of the Bates Watson Committee to advise our four nominees as to what the committee's members saw as the strengths and weaknesses of their projects. It was then up to the nominees to decide whether, and to what extent, they wished to implement our recommendations in preparing their final applications for the Watson Foundation. We saw this as placing responsibility where it belonged, with the applicant. However, events have forced us to change our policy.

Many, if not most, Watson colleges now have a fulltime dean who works with fellowship hopefuls to improve their application materials. This has brought a new level of professional polish to what is submitted. In contrast, the undergraduate individualism of the Bates applications has come increasingly to look undisciplined and careless. As a result, in 2000-2001, the Foundation simply rejected all our nominees for the first time in the history of Bates' relationship with it, and warned us that our applicants were going to have to produce more thoughtful and appropriate documentation of their proposals.

The following steps are designed to improve your chances of success:

- 1) Please try to think through your project idea with a variety of people before you write your proposal this fall. Talk with your parents, friends, spiritual advisers, employers—whoever it is whose judgment and intelligence you trust. Give them the official criteria for the program, and encourage them to force you to justify your project on the Foundation's terms.
- 2) As you write up your preliminary application for the Bates committee, keep it in mind that this is merely the first step if you end up as one of our nominees, and that you will need to have taken your project to a higher level by the time you submit your final application a month later.
- 3) Sagaree Sengupta (ssengupt@bates.edu) is available to mentor students through the initial grant writing process, and will help prepare nominees for the national competition. The Writing Workshop has also worked with Watson nominees in the past, as necessary. Remember to call early for an appointment.
- 4) Our analysis of your proposal's strengths and weaknesses will no longer be a number of suggestions, but rather a list of requirements that your revised proposal must meet. If, in our judgment, you fail to produce a final document of the required level of finish, we will revoke your nomination, and the Foundation will not consider your project. This will involve each nominee meeting with the member of the committee assigned to her or him both before and after the October Recess. If these meetings do not take place, that will be sufficient cause to revoke your nomination. In 2001-2002 and 2003-2004, we did not nominate a full slate of four people, because we were not convinced that we had four strong, well-prepared candidates, and the Foundation congratulated us on our good judgment and self-restraint.

Our conclusion is that if we allow sloppy, poorly thought-out applications to characterize Bates' relationship with the Foundation, we are not only misleading you as to what is required for success in this kind of a competitive environment, we are also damaging the chances of future Bates applicants.

Nominees who are awarded Watson Fellowships may be asked by the Bates Watson Committee or the Dean of the Faculty to come back to the college following their fellowship year to speak to Bates sophomores about their experiences. Awardees are therefore asked to keep in touch with the college following their return. All expenses for such a trip to Bates will be covered by the college and/or the Foundation.

Seniors Abroad

Increasingly, the Committee finds itself receiving electronic applications from seniors who are abroad during the Fall semester. These applications should meet the same guidelines described above.

Obviously, the Committee is not in a position to interview candidates who are off campus during early October. Our first attempt to solve this dilemma, having candidates interviewed wherever they might be by appropriate authorities on location who then wrote a letter to the Committee, did not work well. Our current method is to devise a series of questions on the basis of our reading of the preliminary application, send them electronically to the applicant, and expect a prompt written electronic response, as a substitute for a face-to-face interview.

Given the tight scheduling of the process, any off-campus applicant will need to have frequent access to a reliable internet connection during the month of October. This is not a perfect solution to the problem of interviewing an absent senior, and the committee would be happy to consider suggestions for an improved process next year.

Materials Available on the Internet

The Watson Foundation has a website at www.watsonfellowship.org, which contains the official self-description and videos that include experiences of former Watson fellows. You should read/view these materials carefully to determine whether you should apply to the College for a Watson Fellowship. Keep in mind that the power of the local Bates Watson Committee to select fellowship nominees from Bates is absolute, and where its initial application procedure differs from that of the Foundation, it is the Bates rules that govern your preliminary application, as described in this document. You may not deal directly with the Foundation, and attempts to do so will not produce anything but irritation at the Foundation's headquarters.