

The Watson (Thomas J. Watson Fellowship) – <https://watson.foundation/fellowships/tj>

UPDATED 9/1/16

What is the Watson?

The Watson supports a rare window of time after college and pre-career to engage your deepest interest on a world scale. Watson Fellows conceive original projects, execute them outside of the United States for one year and embrace the ensuing journey. They decide where to go, who to meet and when to change course. They do not affiliate with academic institutions and may not hold formal employment. The program produces a year of personal insight, perspective and confidence that shapes the arc of Fellows' lives. Started in 1968, Watson Fellows comprise leaders in every field. **The one-year stipend is \$30,000.**

Colorado College is one of 40 liberal arts schools invited to nominate four graduating seniors for this unique fellowship. The Watson Fellowship supports a year of directed exploration and independent travel outside of the United States. Fellows have traveled in anywhere from 2 to 12 countries. Single country proposals are extremely rare. The Watson is *not* a research fellowship directed at data gathering or scholarship. It is not based on academic merit. **Rather, the Watson Foundation seeks to find and support students of “unusual promise” to give them the opportunity to enhance their capacity for resourcefulness, imagination, openness, and leadership, and to foster their humane and effective participation in the world.** Since 1968, The Watson Foundation has awarded over 2,500 fellowships, providing support to future global leaders in every field of experience.

Selection is highly competitive. Students must be nominated by Colorado College in order to compete at the national level. The Watson National Committee then evaluates the national pool of nominees, and a select group of Fellows are chosen. These Fellows receive an award of \$30,000 to allow them the year of travel in places new to them, so that they may pursue a project that represents deep personal passion. If a fellow travels with a spouse or requires a personal care assistant, the Watson Foundation may provide an additional \$10,000 stipend supplement.

Who is the 2016-17 CC Watson Committee?

- Re Evitt, Associate Professor, English (Watson Liaison, Humanities Representative) rmevitt@coloradocollege.edu
- Pedro de Araujo, Associate Professor, Economics (Social Sciences Representative) pedro.dearaujo@coloradocollege.edu
- Lynne Gratz, Assistant Professor, Environmental Program (Natural Sciences Representative) lynne.gratz@coloradocollege.edu
- Roy Jo Sartin, Fellowship Coordinator and Writing Specialist royjo.sartin@coloradocollege.edu
- John Zirkle, Artistic Director, Warren Miller Performing Arts Center, Big Sky, MT (CC Alum '08 Representative; Watson Fellow, 2008-09) johnzirkle@gmail.com

Application Timeline/Application Process – Advice for Candidates

[1] Connect with your Watson Liaison – BLOCK 7-8, 2016

Schedule a time to call or meet in person with Watson Liaison, Re Evitt. Brainstorm about your project and discuss:

- your Watson ideas
- your person-project connections
- possible faculty and/or staff mentors, contacts
- resources at Colorado College
- how to identify and develop global contacts for your Watson year
- other questions?

At this meeting, Re will add you to the CANVAS Watson webpage where you'll find **examples of successful Colorado College Watson personal and project statements.**

[2] Work on Watson Proposal Drafts – JUNE-JULY-AUGUST 2016

- Write and revise **3-5 drafts each** of your Watson Personal and Project Statements.
- Consult with Fellowship Coordinator and Writing Specialist Roy Jo Sartin on at least one of these drafts.
- Discuss your drafts, in person or by phone, with at least 2 Watson committee members or CC faculty or staff mentors **before** Monday, August 29

[3] CC WATSON APPLICATIONS DUE– FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2016, 5:00 pm (Second Friday of Block 1)

- CC candidates, submit your applications by email to the Dean's Office (karen.smith@coloradocollege.edu; rmevitt@coloradocollege.edu).

[4] Proposal Review – LAST TWO WEEKS OF BLOCK 1 (Saturday, September 10-Wednesday, September 21, 2016)

[5] Watson Semi-Finalist Interviews – FIRST WEEK OF BLOCK 2 (Monday September 26-Friday, September 30, 2016)

[6] Watson CC Finalist Announcement – SECOND WEEK OF BLOCK 2 (Monday, October 3-Friday, October 7, 2016)

[7] NATIONAL WATSON APPLICATIONS DUE – TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2016, 12:00 pm

- CC Watson Finalists, upload your Watson Fellowship National Applications to the national Watson Foundation website by noon on TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8 (ELECTION DAY) in anticipation of the Wednesday, November 9 Watson National deadline.

What Does the Watson Application Include?

Watson invests in people, not projects. Follow your heart rather than formal research methodologies. Your project should be experiential, not driven by data collection or narrowly focused through a research question. In the Watson selection process, **we look first and foremost at the unique individual promise of each applicant.** Only after being convinced by the “person” do we begin to look seriously at the other side of the equation, the project. The project neither makes nor breaks an application. Watson does fund “just-average” projects, if we are convincingly “wowed” by the person. Watson does not fund “average” persons, just because their proposed project happens to be groundbreaking, innovative, or otherwise compelling. Watson is more interested in the “traveler” herself (the “person”) than in the “suitcase” (the “project”) that she proposes to pack for the journey. They’re “not looking for a polio vaccine . . . [they’re] looking for the next Jonas Salk.”

Key application elements

- **Personal Statement** – The Personal Statement introduces the candidate and provides the backdrop for the entire application. (It should also introduce the project topic but save most details for the Project Proposal.) This statement should explain the personal significance—provide the personal context—for the proposed project. The candidate should discuss why she chose her topic, how it developed out of previous interests or experiences, and how it represents a new challenge. It should be clear from the personal statement why, of all the topics she could have chosen, she chose this one. Personal anecdotes are often helpful, but they must be genuine, not forced; creative minds can find clever ways to connect life experience to a chosen topic, but only authentically-felt experiences will ring true. In addition to documenting the fit between applicant and project, the Personal Statement is also one place we look for glimpses of “unusual promise.” The personal statement should be **no more than 1500 words.**
- **Project Proposal** – The project proposal is read in tandem with the Personal Statement, so the information in one place need not be repeated in the other. The candidate should describe his plan for the 12-month fellowship year, including a description of his project and an outline for carrying it out. The project proposal should detail the challenges the candidate expects to face and the preparation/strategy he has to confront them. The project proposal should be **no more than 1500 words.**
 - All proposals must indicate the efforts taken to secure contacts “on the ground” in the proposed project countries. A list of project-related names/institutions obtained from an internet search cannot substitute for real communication.
 - Please ensure that the project can be carried out in compliance with Watson guidelines (for example, that it does not hinge on travel to countries under a U.S. travel warning, embargo and CDC level 3 warning list).
- **Biographical Abstract** – The Biographical Abstract provides the candidate with an opportunity to detail their accomplishments while demonstrating how their projects are rooted in their past or present lives. It allows affords the candidate a chance to demonstrate the connection between person and project for Watson Selection Committee. **(100 words)**
- **Project Abstract** – The Project Abstract allows the candidate to succinctly sum up the project for the Watson Selection Committee **(100 words)**
- **Transcript** – Your transcript provides the Watson Selection Committee context for the kinds of preparation you may have to pursue your project.
- **Recommenders** – The candidate should provide the Watson Selection Committee with the names and contact information (telephone; email) for 2-3 recommenders. (Do not solicit letters initially. Only the students selected as one of our four finalists need to ask for letters of recommendation.)

Further application information you should provide

- **Activities** – The list of activities allows us to see the individual’s areas of interest and involvement. Listed here should be the highlights of a student’s career; this list need not be exhaustive. This is NOT intended to provide the level of detail that a resumé might. We discourage extensive annotations, preferring to solicit such information in the interview. Brief annotations are sometimes helpful, but candidates should NOT provide bulleted lists of responsibilities/accomplishments

for their various activities.

- **Countries lived in or traveled to** – This information helps us evaluate a candidate’s preparation for work in a particular region as well as determine a candidate’s “no –return” countries. Candidates must indicate the length of stay in each country and purpose for the visit.
- **Language proficiency** – Our expectations of language proficiency vary according to the needs of the project; one project may demand a more nuanced command of a language than another. We understand that no candidate will have a command of every language she may confront in the course of a Watson year. Lacking a language need not lessen a candidate’s chances, as long as a convincing strategy is offered (interpreters, translated informational and survey materials, work through English-speaking NGOs, etc.)
- **Proposed project countries** – This list is non-binding and may evolve between the time of application and interview, interview and departure, and during the actual fellowship year. Countries on “warning” may be listed provisionally (we suggest denoting these with an asterisk), in the event that that status changes.

Characteristics of a Watson Fellow

Watson awards its fellowship to individuals with “unusual promise” evident in any combination of several areas:

- **Leadership** – The capacity to command a following for what one thinks, does, or creates.
- **Resourcefulness** – Able to deal promptly and effectively with problems, using what is available.
- **Imagination or Vision** – The power of framing new and striking conceptions.
- **Independence** – Self-reliance; freedom from the influence, guidance, or control of others.
- **Integrity** – Strong ethical character and trustworthiness.
- **Responsibility** – Following through on work or plans without guidance or superior authority.
- **Emotional Maturity** – Inner stability, a grounded individual.
- **Courage** – They show a boldness of spirit, openness to new and challenging circumstances, and perseverance in pursuit of a purpose or goal.

Characteristics of a Watson Project

Watson views the project—the thought behind it, its planning, and expression—as a window into the person, not as a formal research agenda.

- **Organic** – The project grows from a candidate’s background, interests, and activities.
- **Inspiring** – The project provides the energy to sustain and propel the Fellow through the ups and downs of the year. The project is more important for this role in the Fellow’s life than in any potential it has to contribute to the “body of knowledge” in one’s discipline.
- **Transformative** – The project may be inspired by an academic interest, but it is not dominated by formal research. A Watson Year is about personal transformation through intentional travel and interaction with the world’s peoples. A research agenda must support these priorities rather than overshadowing them.
- **Time Out** – Typically, a project represents a clear break with the candidate’s specific academic or career trajectory. It is not just a follow-up to a senior thesis or a prequel to graduate research. It capitalizes on this unique opportunity to pursue a deeply personal interest without the constraints of institutional structure, research process, or professional expectations.
- **Timeless** – A project may grow from a long-dormant interest, put on hold during years of formal academic study. It can also be a new interest, if the stimulus of the idea is truly personal, significant, and organic to the candidate’s background. The strongest projects tend to be those for which a candidate can document a long, sustained, deeply-rooted passion, rather than a new idea that has bubbled up from a recent college class or activity.
- **Bold** – A Watson Fellowship gives the Fellow permission to fail. We are interested in what the Fellow learns in the process of searching, not in specific research achievements. As long as a project can be demonstrated to be feasible, applicants are encouraged to push the envelope. Significantly, our reporting procedures do not require any formal product centered on the project. We ask for reflective reports that require Fellows to think holistically about their quest.
- **Realistic** – Without institutional affiliations, Watson Fellows have little support structure in the field. Given this independence, the project must balance boldness/drive/passion with pragmatism. The project should demonstrate that the candidate has removed his rose-colored glasses and is thinking about the year in realistic terms. “What is achievable, given my subject matter, my preparation, my funding, my contacts, my skill set?”
- **Connected** – The project is a means through which Fellows connect with the world. Throughout the application process, candidates should be exploring possible connections in each proposed project country. We are most interested in project-related connections, demonstrating the feasibility of the project, but even connections for housing or other assistance (especially in regions where travel is particularly challenging) demonstrate that the candidate is thinking about the realities of life in the field. Many candidates express reticence about contacting people in advance when there is no guarantee that

their application will be successful. We encourage, nevertheless, that candidates start developing their contact lists early in the process: “If I receive this fellowship, would you be willing to consult with me...”

- **Peripatetic** – The project allows the Fellow to take full advantage of human and institutional resources in the “field,” accepting the Watson’s encouragement to pursue a question around the globe in person, rather than while tied to a single place. With few exceptions, a Watson year unfolds in multiple countries on multiple continents, with a range from six months in two countries to one month in twelve.
- **3-Dimensional** – While a typical academic project might consist of a thesis and a plan of action, a Watson project adds a third dimension: personal significance. “A Watson project is the person, and the person is the project.” The final product that interests us is measured in personal terms.

Watson Foundation Requirements

Travel Warnings and Embargos

All Fellows must abide by U.S. State Department travel warnings (as opposed to advisories), CDC warning level 3, and Treasury embargoes. Travel warnings can be accessed through the website of the U.S. Department of State: www.travel.state.gov. Even if a travel warning applies only to a limited region, the entire country is still off limits for Watson purposes. Watson expects that project proposals will be designed with these restrictions in mind.

The “No Return” Rule

The rule that a Fellow not return to certain countries is twofold:

- **Returning to a country one has previously visited is not allowed without explicit written permission from Watson Headquarters.** Because the Watson encourages Fellows to have new experiences in new places, Fellows may not travel to countries in which they have significant previous experience. These “no-return” countries will be officially determined before departure, and the Fellow is expected to abide by our ruling.
- **A Fellow may not return to their home country or the USA during the fellowship year.** Watson is sensitive to personal emergencies and tragic circumstances and will work compassionately with any Fellow in such a situation. Such circumstances would include the death of an immediate family member (parent or sibling) or a serious medical situation. The Fellow should contact the Program Office before making a move. All such requests for compassionate leave are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Typically, returns are allowed only for a brief period—a week or less.

Visits

Parents, family, or friends may visit or travel with the Fellow for a short time. In the course of one’s year, such visits should not add up to more than two weeks.

Length of a “Watson Year”

Fellows are expected to pursue their Fellowship for at least a full year (twelve consecutive months) without returning to the United States (or their home country, if they are foreign nationals). They need to plan and budget for at least this duration. A Watson Year is NOT an “academic year;” it will include an entire summer, either at the beginning or end of the Fellowship period, or portions of both summers. Fellows can embark on their Fellowship immediately after graduation, but they must start their Fellowship no later than August 1. Extensions are not permitted, except in the case of a medical emergency or death of an immediate family member. This date allows for a full year in the field, before the scheduled (and required) “Returning Fellows Conference” in early August.

Reports and Financial Accounting

Fellows are required to provide three Quarterly Reports during the year, and a Final Report due by September 1st. Accompanying the Final Report, a financial accounting for the complete stipend must be provided.

Solo and “Independent” Study

Fellows are expected to undertake their year abroad independently, by themselves, except for approved married Fellows. Visits with family members, friends, boyfriends/girlfriends during the year should be limited to two weeks. Email, new media, mobile devices and other forms of fast, far-reaching communication abound. Watson strongly urges Fellows to wean themselves from communication that overly ties them to family and friends back home or disrupts their sense of place. For example, Fellows who frequently update their Facebook status or “need” to check their email are using them too much. We expect Fellows to be fully present in the place where they are resident, not electronically tethered to a place where they’re not.

Spouses or Personal Care Assistants

The Watson Foundation may provide an additional \$10,000 stipend supplement for married Fellows, when approved. Candidates who are married or plan to be married at the time of their departure should be prepared to speak to this issue in the campus

interview. It would also be appropriate to address this point in the application itself in the Personal Statement.