

# Scholarship Recipient Studying Arabic Abroad

Recent graduate **Allison Tumas** was one of two Michigan State University students awarded a Boren Scholarship in 2016 to study languages abroad.

Boren Scholarships provide up to \$20,000 to U.S. undergraduate students studying in areas of the world that are critical to U.S. national security interests. This year, there were 165 awards nationwide from a pool of 820 applicants. And, since 1991, there have been only 36 Boren award recipients from Michigan State University.

“I have a passion for building cultural bridges, which has led me to pursue opportunities that increase my own global awareness,” said Tumas, who graduated from MSU in May with a BA in Arabic and a BA in Media and Information. “I feel honored to be a Boren scholar, and I am extremely grateful for the assistance in furthering my education and academic experiences abroad.

“After attending a Boren Convocation with other scholars and alumni, I realized how many networking, career, and academic opportunities this award provides, and I was in awe of the accomplishments of the Boren alumni. I hope to take advantage of these opportunities and continually work towards accomplishing my academic and career goals while living up to the Boren reputation of becoming an extraordinary global professional.”

Tumas is using her Boren scholarship to study Arabic in Morocco, where she spent this past summer and will remain for the 2016-17 academic year. She is studying with the Arabic Flagship Program in Meknes, Morocco, which is part of the Language Flagship Program, a national program that provides language learning tools and

study abroad opportunities for students studying languages that pertain to national security and economic competitiveness.

This is the second time Tumas is studying in Meknes. She first studied in the Moroccan city during the summer of 2015 in an intensive Flagship Arabic language program, the same program she is in now. However, now she is studying with the program for an entire year, the capstone year.

As part of the program, this past summer Tumas took classes in three different Arabic dialects: Modern Standard Arabic, Moroccan Colloquial Arabic, and Egyptian Colloquial Arabic. Throughout the fall and spring semesters, she will attend classes at the University of Moulay Ismail while also working as an intern with a local orphanage to improve her cultural awareness and her ability to speak the Moroccan dialect.

Tumas first joined the Language Flagship Program when she began studying Arabic her sophomore year at MSU. At the end of her sophomore year, she attended the Arabic Summer Intensive program at the University of Texas at Austin in the summer of 2014.

“Studying the Arabic language has allowed me to participate in multiple study abroad and intensive language programs,” Tumas said. “It also has pushed me to pursue research in Islamic studies and Middle Eastern and North African studies.”

Last year at MSU, Tumas worked as an Undergraduate Research Assistant for both Mohammad Khalil, Director of MSU’s Muslim Studies Program and Associate Professor of Religious Studies, and Salah Hassan, Associate Professor of English, where she



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helped organize a conference called “Global Halal,” which had speakers from different universities across the United States present on topics related to the idea of “halal” in Islam. With Khalil, she also researched historical communities of Muslims in the Midwest region.

“I hope to use my education to pursue career opportunities in public service that pertain to national security,” Tumas said.

Originally from Taylor, Michigan, Tumas hopes to some day be a counterintelligence threat analyst.