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## Melissa DeLury '10 Receives Fulbright Award to Conduct Research in India

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Saint Anselm College alumna **Melissa DeLury '10** has recently received a Fulbright Research Award to conduct research in Madhya Pradesh, India. This student grant will allow DeLury to evaluate the Indian Right to Education Act (RTE), and to discover the barriers that prevent children in the country's rural areas from attending school.

When the RTE was enacted in 2009, it stipulated that each child aged six to fourteen has the right to "full-time elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school which satisfies certain essential norms and standards," DeLury says in a March 2017 [history blog post](#). The responsibility for execution fell on the state governments; however, based on DeLury's observations, "hardly any monitoring and evaluating mechanisms exist in the region that could assess if current efforts are addressing the barriers to education in Madhya Pradesh's rural communities..."

In August, DeLury will depart for Indore, India, where she will travel to schools in rural areas within Madhya Pradesh to conduct interviews and focus groups with students, families, educators, and community-based organizations to evaluate the reform. For her nine-month stay, DeLury will collaborate with Dr. Nirmala Menon, assistant professor at the Indian Institute of Technology and former English professor at Saint Anselm College. DeLury hopes her work will contribute to education reform policy in India moving forward.

The [history](#) major first traveled to India after graduating from the Hilltop in 2010 to teach English at Indian orphanages and primary schools for four months. In the years that followed, she continued her volunteer work in schools and with the organizations No Peace Without Justice (NPWJ), and International Crisis Group. She advocated for international causes both at home and abroad, attending UN Security Council meetings, writing grants for USAID and the State Department, and coordinating communication strategies in NPWJ international offices, but DeLury always knew she wanted to return to India.

"Living and working alongside local communities in educational facilities enabled me to become more deeply connected to the population that I was serving," DeLury explains. "I saw that education was valued, because it was the means to improve livelihoods and create opportunities for success. I also found that rural areas did not always receive the same quality and access of education as other areas, which inspired my research in graduate school and this Fulbright project. I knew that I had to return."

In applying for her Fulbright Award, DeLury chose to work closely with her alma mater. Professor [Philip Pajakowski](#) of the history department recommended her to the program, while Professor [Kimberly Asbury](#) of the [Fine Arts](#) department guided her as the college's [Fulbright Program](#) advisor. Both professors along with the college's Fulbright Committee aided DeLury through the application process, helping her to develop her proposal.

DeLury received her master's degree in international peace studies from Trinity College Dublin in Ireland and presently works in higher education as a program assistant at Molloy College and the City University of New York's School of Professional Studies. Her dreams reach even further, however. "Eventually, I want to teach at the college level and also collaborate with leading non-government organizations and government agencies to evaluate our education programs overseas," she says.

The Fulbright Program offers a variety of grants for students, alumni, and professors. The Fulbright Program is the flagship international educational exchange program sponsored by the U.S. government, and is designed to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries. Recipients of Fulbright grants are selected on the basis of academic or professional achievement, as well as demonstrated leadership potential in their fields. The program operates in over 155 countries.

Story by [Jasmine Blais '17](#)

