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macaulay profile:

Sofia Ahsanuddin ‘16

Brooklyn College

Sofia Ahsanuddin has a decidedly global focus, even though she’s stayed close to her home in Pelham in the Bronx while attending Brooklyn College. A finalist for the Rhodes Scholarship in 2015, Sofia served as one of three national coordinators of the 30,000 member, student-driven Americans for Informed Democracy, a group set up to bring the world home to Americans.

Sofia is also an aspiring physician, medical anthropologist, and public health specialist. She is currently the executive director of the MetaSUB consortium, a pioneering study of urban mass-transit systems and cities around the world, partially involving swabbing for DNA on these systems.

“We are attempting to create geospatial and forensic “maps” of the genetic material found in urban biomes in over 54 cities around the world. It is a huge, unprecedented endeavor and it would not have been possible without the enthusiasm and commitment on the part of dozens of other scientists around the world!”

Sofia also received the Brooklyn College Political Science Department Award for

Public Service and was awarded Departmental Honors. She even found time to work as editor of the Brooklyn College Honors Academy Newsletter. Sofia, whose family arrived in the U.S. from Hyderabad, India, is a Howard W. Goldsmith scholar at Macaulay, and was a speaker at TEDxCUNY in 2015.

“I am proud of being able to balance my passion for science and the social sciences. This “bilingualism” in two different disciplines will offer me a unique perspective on the world around me. I am a political scientist but I am also a metagenomicist. I am proud to be both.”

After graduation, Sofia will be working at the NYU Global Institute of Public Health and Weill Cornell Medicine, continuing her

work on the MetaSub study and is beginning another effort called the GoViral study.

She was raised Muslim, and first became very interested in the academic study of religion, political activism, and humanitarian work at Preston H.S., a Catholic, all-girls preparatory school. Her worldview has since grown and expanded at Macaulay.

“I like the fact that I am close to home and that I am able to visit my family often. I also like the emphasis Macaulay places on becoming a well-rounded individual. Macaulay promised to provide a holistic education and I have grown to appreciate the arts and humanities because of the courses I have taken as a part of the Macaulay curriculum.”