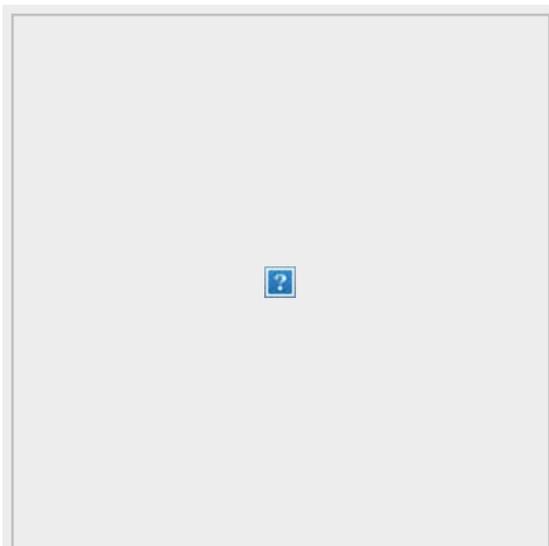




## UNH Senior Lands National Volunteer Role On Obama Panel

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Erin Thesing, UNH senior and community organizer, with candidate Barack Obama at a UNH event.

DURHAM, N.H. –Erin Thesing, a senior majoring in anthropology at the University of New Hampshire, has been selected for a national role as an Organizing for America volunteer on a small panel of judges that includes top celebrities, entertainers and leaders of the Democratic National Committee.

The 15-member national panel of experts will judge the Health Reform Video Challenge and includes David Plouffe, campaign manager for Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign; Tim Kaine, governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia and the chairman of the Democratic National Committee; will.i.am, the front man and producer of the multi-platinum musical group the Black Eyed Peas; Kate Walsh, television and film actress currently starring on the ABC drama "Private Practice"; Dulé Hill, actor who starred on the NBC drama television series "The West Wing"; and Olivia Wilde, actress best-known for her roles on Fox's

medical drama "House" and "The O.C."

Thesing was studying in the UNH Dimond Library when she received an email telling her about her inclusion on the panel. "I was in the library so I was trying to quiet my excitement," she said.

The Health Reform Video Challenge asks Americans to submit their best 30-second video that makes the case for passing health insurance reform in 2009. For more information on the challenge, visit <http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/hrvchome/>.

A resident of Hopkinton, Thesing was selected to be a member of the national panel following her exceptional volunteer effort with Organizing for America, the successor organization to Obama for America, and the Obama campaign. Her work was so noteworthy that she was selected as a New Hampshire delegate to the 2008 Democratic National Convention.

Inspired by candidate Barack Obama at the UNH field house in February 2007, Thesing helped form Students for Barack Obama. Throughout the primary season, Thesing volunteered — canvassing, phone banking, and registering voters — first in New Hampshire, then in Maine, Massachusetts, and Oregon. After attracting the attention of Obama's staff, Thesing was invited in May 2008 by the campaign to work as a community organizer in Flint, Michigan.

After a month of working in Flint, Thesing's parents wanted her to come home, go back to school so she could finish her degree on time, and "calm down."

Meanwhile, offers to work for the campaign poured in from Pennsylvania, Ohio, New Hampshire, and Michigan asking Thesing to work for them. But by now, as Thesing put it: "even though at face value my story is not relatable to those from Flint," she had learned how to tell her story and connect effectively with many potential volunteers. She had gained their trust, and she was beginning to forge a relationship with the devastated community.

When Thesing secured a political science internship, it allowed her to meet both her parents' and UNH's requirements. She chose to stay in Flint to work as a field organizer in three wards of the city as well as Flint Township.

In addition to giving her unforgettable experiences, Thesing's volunteer work had the unexpected effect of spurring her parents to become actively involved in politics for the first time. As independent New Hampshire voters, Thesing said her folks kept their political views to themselves, never discussing politics or who they voted for.

However, as Thesing became more involved, her parents became more inquisitive about her activities. Then, in the bone-chilling days of January 2008, Thesing's mother started canvassing with her. Soon, her father and brother were out canvassing, too. Then her mother volunteered to organize the phone bank campaign in Hopkinton. And in the summer of 2008, her parents hosted an Obama field organizer for five months, moving him into Thesing's bedroom while she was in Michigan.

"Overall, it became this fantastic family experience. I think that speaks to the power of what this campaign did," she said.

Following graduation next May, Thesing hopes to join Teach for America. Eventually she would like to work in education policy and research in secondary education, but as she says, she wants classroom experience so she can "walk the walk." Eventually she plans to attend graduate school. Thesing believes that this work will give her a unique perspective that will enable her to formulate practical policy that will better support teachers and provide better education for students.

She already has started working toward her career goals. Last summer Thesing began a yearlong research project on adolescent refugees in a New Hampshire high school. She hopes her work will help New Hampshire's English Language Learning teachers and the school community to better serve the needs of those students. She sees this research as a way to further develop the skills she learned in Michigan.

She currently heads the College Democrats and the UNH chapter of Organizing for America. She also is president of UNH Ecological Advocates, a student group that works to engage UNH students in environmentally sustainable behaviors in order to foster an atmosphere of increased sustainability awareness, thinking, and living among on-campus residents.

For someone who was never involved in politics, Thesing's volunteer work with the Obama campaign has been transformational. "Had I not been at UNH, I never would have gotten involved in this campaign. Being a UNH student and being in New Hampshire during the primary has been the most fantastic experience I could ever have," she said.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university,

UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling more than 12,200 undergraduate and 2,200 graduate students.

**PHOTO**

Erin Thesing, UNH senior and community organizer, with candidate Barack Obama at a UNH event.

<http://www.unh.edu/news/img/erinthesing.gif>

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