

Thomas A. Steitz

Class of 1958

The work and science of Dr. Thomas Steitz are so transformative it is impossible to predict their ultimate impact. Dr. Steitz was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 2009. Having earned a Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1966, Dr. Steitz went on to do post-doctoral research at both Harvard and MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology in Cambridge, England. He is Sterling Professor of Molecular Biophysics and Biochemistry, Professor of Chemistry, and Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator at Yale University. Dr. Steitz has received nearly two dozen major awards but the Nobel is the most significant. It was awarded to Dr. Steitz and two co-recipients for their work “describing the structure and function of the ribosome.” These discoveries explain one of the most basic processes in all life forms, and are expected to lead to major breakthroughs in the treatment of bacterial infections. Yale President Richard C. Levin is quoted: “His work is a compelling example of how a quest to answer fundamental questions about life processes can lead to dramatic benefits for mankind.” In addition to being a stand out science student at Wauwatosia High School, TomSteitz was said to be a great saxophone player, sporting medals from State competitions on his band uniform.

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