

2023 Recipient:

Patricia Powers Thomson

Class of 1983



Patricia Powers Thomson is a successful public sector entrepreneur and leader. She founded and served as the first dean of The School of Public Service at the University of Juba in South Sudan, one of the world's newest and least developed countries. She also created The Leadership Crucible in South Sudan, where she directed a program to develop young women leaders. Prior to her work in South Sudan, she was part of the team that established the Department of Homeland Security, and she played an instrumental role in creating the Corporation for National and Community Service and its flagship program, AmeriCorps.

Thomson also served as Chief Operating Officer at the United States Institute of Peace, which promotes conflict prevention, peacemaking, and post-conflict peace-building in dozens of countries. During her tenure, the Institute focused on building tools for practitioners and on working more effectively in conflict zones, while also maintaining its position as a leading research institute. It also began construction of its new headquarters building on the National Mall in Washington, DC.

As a Senior Governance Advisor with the U.S. Department of State in Diyala, Iraq, Thomson supported successful elections and actively facilitated a peaceful transfer of power, as well as the formation of a unity government of Shia, Sunni, and Kurds. She received the Expeditionary Service Award from the Secretary of State for her work in Iraq.

Earlier in her career, as an Associate Partner with the preeminent consulting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers Consulting, Thomson played leadership roles in several important homeland security efforts, including: the creation of the Bureau of Customs and Immigration Services (CIS) and the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at the Department of Homeland Security; the mobilization of the 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund; and the redesign of the country's naturalization process.

Thomson also served as an advisor to Vice President Gore's task force on reinventing government where she worked with federal agencies to implement significant reforms related to planning and performance-based budgeting. She collaborated successfully with cabinet secretaries to develop performance contracts that were signed by the President.

Thomson was an officer in the United States Navy Civil Engineer Corps and is a member of the American Legion. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Engineering from the University of Pennsylvania and a Master of Public Policy from Harvard University. She attended Emily Brittain Elementary School.