

2008-2009 April Allen Undergraduate Memorial Scholarship

This scholarship is awarded annually to students within their first year of being admitted into one of the Actuarial Sciences programs who demonstrate excellence in academic performance and exhibit potential for success in the actuarial science field. Preference is given to students who have personally been affected by cancer and/or have demonstrated leadership and/or service to an organization involved in cancer research and care. It was established by D.A. Townley & Associates to honor the spirit of April Allen.

Tommy Yip

My name is Tommy Yip and I am honored to be a recipient of the April Allen Memorial Scholarship. I am starting my third year at Simon Fraser University and I have completed my first year of actuarial science courses. It has been my goal to enter SFU's prestigious Actuarial Science Program since I was in grade nine after I first heard about the possibilities of a career as an actuary. With the ambition of one day becoming an actuary, I strengthened my mathematical background all throughout high school, while in the mean time researched more into this profession.

As I browse through the internet in search of more information about actuarial science, I realized that not only do actuaries enjoy math, but the majority of them possess solid communication skills. With the desire to enrich my social skills, I have been establishing programs for youth with disabilities and work with social workers in my community since grade ten. Through volunteering, I have become more comfortable in working with others, and the interaction experiences I acquired have aided me with school and my interpersonal relationships. In my community involvement activities, I usually tend to focus in helping high school teenagers in developing their leadership skills and their various assets. Recently, I wrote a proposal and founded a community project called *Citizens of Change*; it is a ten week program involving around thirteen youth from my local high schools. My project is funded by the Millennium Excellence Grant Program and is jointly supported by Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House, a non-profit organization. In the program, I was in the position to facilitate and to lead the youth into planning activities which could help or enrich the community. The group decided to investigate the pervasive issue of homelessness and for this cause, the group did a bottle drive and collected about 1200 cans and bottles to raise money for the food bank; they also spent a day going to the food bank to help out with distributing the food. As well, social workers were invited to speak and to provide a better understanding to the group of the issue in our immediate city. Some, in hope to raise more awareness, later went on to a march for homelessness. Working with others is a huge part of me.

I would describe the Actuarial Science program at SFU as a tribe. In a small program with around 20 to 25 students admitted each year, it fosters an environment in which everyone would quickly become familiar with each other. In such an environment, a variety of groups are formed. There are those who learn best in a group, and there are also those who learn better on their own but enjoy meeting up to discuss. I believe I am of the former. What I found most enjoyable when working with others are the teamwork and team spirit that arise in overcoming challenges. I find it exciting to discuss and dissect with others the course material, the exam questions the professor may give, and sometimes even life in general. I feel that this is incredible because I have never been exposed to such a concentrated group of people who are all so immensely capable. Not to mention that we all share a sense of humour for statistical jokes.

I sincerely appreciate the wealth of intelligence that envelops me in this program. I think it is truly wonderful how the actuarial science program is set up and organized because the atmosphere formed from this group of academic 'outliers' is not of competitiveness, instead, it is closer to the form of brotherhood—the feeling of belonging. Though everyone came from a different background, they respect each other; furthermore, each individual views another as equal—there exists a form of trust. I think it is because we realize the similarity in each of ourselves—the passion for learning. I must acknowledge that the capability and the approachability of the staffs in the program play an important role in fostering such a respectable environment.

Finally, it has been a great pleasure to receive the opportunity to share my thoughts. Thank you.