

2011-2012 Statistics & Actuarial Science Endowment Award

These awards are presented to students in the major/honor program with high academic standing.

Braden Rustand writes:

Ever since I began school, mathematics has been my favourite academic subject because of its logic. It was also one of my best subjects, and by grade eleven I was tutoring struggling math students. In grade twelve, the material became much more interesting, as I learned about mathematical applications to physics and chemistry, and discovered the incredible versatility of calculus. It was at this time that I decided I wanted to study mathematics of some form in university.

Even outside school I had a fascination with how statistics could be used to make scientific judgments about performance, in sports for instance. I was never satisfied when I heard announcers state their opinions of certain players based on their intangible qualities: I always wanted to see verifiable evidence of their performance, and make evaluations on the merits.

Before I transferred to SFU I could not decide between majoring in mathematics, statistics, or even economics. But one day I happened upon the actuarial science part of the SFU website. Upon further consideration and research, I was convinced of how much I would like to major in the subject. The idea of using the tools of mathematics and statistics to provide an indispensable product to consumers and ensure the solvency of the insurers that they rely on struck me as a topic I had to study.

ACMA 210, Interest Theory, was a course that confirmed my enthusiasm for actuarial science, as it gave me a more complete understanding of the financial news that I read so regularly in *The Economist*, a British newsmagazine. But it is ACMA 320, Life Contingency Mathematics, that has been the most interesting and challenging course I have ever taken, as it has required me to apply everything I have learned in previous mathematics and statistics courses, and to improve my programming abilities.

My efforts in actuarial science go beyond coursework. I am a proud member of the Numbers Club, which kindly introduced students to SAS. The workshop taught me a great deal, and I hope that there are many more such sessions in the future.

I am also studying for Society of Actuaries professional examinations. Using what I learned from ACMA 210 and extensive self-study of the remaining material I will write Financial Mathematics on February 18. I also feel well-prepared for Probability because of my success in STAT 270 and 285, and hopefully 330, which I am enrolled in now. My plan is to challenge Probability in July.

Happier I could not be with my decision to join this program. With the SFU actuarial program's high standing with the Society of Actuaries and my experience with professors thus far, I know I am in the right place to learn and pursue my goals. With such great support, I feel as confident and hopeful as ever that I will continue to succeed if I work as hard as I always have.