

# 2016-2017 Statistics & Actuarial Science Endowment Award

## Academic Merit Award

This award is offered to students who are registered honors or major students in Actuarial Science or Statistics. The primary criterion for selection is academic merit.

### **Nikola Surjanovic writes:**

The thought of studying statistics first came across my mind after a conversation with my older sister Sonja, who was an SFU statistics undergraduate student at the time. I was in my second year of high school, and my previous picture of “statistics” was that it involved drawing bar charts. Thankfully, my sister corrected this misconception and explained to me that the study of statistics went far beyond the idea of drawing and analyzing graphs, and was a science of its own which could be applied to almost any discipline. I later heard the words of John Tukey that “the best thing about being a statistician is that you get to play in everyone’s backyard.” At that point, I started to become quite attracted to the study of the subject, but I was still unsure as to whether I should study statistics or engineering.

Only a short time before starting to apply for university during high school did I firmly decide that I wanted to pursue statistics. I always had a passion for mathematics and problem-solving, and I felt that studying statistics could interest me in this way. At the same time, a sort of hunch told me to pursue statistics; I am now in my second year of studies, and I do not at all regret my decision. I feel that statistics offers a beautiful blend of theory and application. The mathematical side of me enjoys the problem-solving and theoretical aspect of statistics. At the same time, my eagerness to apply my knowledge in the world around me was also satisfied when I started to realize which kinds of problems the professors in our department and experts in the field are currently working on and solving.

In my first year of university I joined SASSA (the Statistics and Actuarial Science Student Association) where I met many people who shared two things in common with me: they liked to talk about mathematics, and they enjoyed the concept of free food. Needless to say, many of us became quite close friends. From the start of university, I also found many professors offering their guidance and advice, and the secretaries were also quick to lend a helping hand; the atmosphere of the department was great from the beginning, and my appreciation for the people who were part of it quickly grew.

Outside of school, I enjoy playing tennis and running. I was also involved as a volunteer math peer tutor in the Fall 2016 semester, where I helped students enrolled in first-year calculus courses, which I enjoyed very much.