

# 2007

## Statistics and Actuarial Science Awards

The Department of Statistics and Actuarial Science is pleased to honor its students, staff, and faculty every year during our Annual Awards Reception. A full copy of all of the award winners is available on our web site at

<http://www.stat.sfu.ca/programs/awards.html>

The Department has 6 major awards:

- The Watson Wyatt Scholarship for students with high standing in Actuarial Science established by the Watson Wyatt Company.
- The Pacific Blue Cross Scholarship for students with high standing in Actuarial Science established by Pacific Blue Cross.
- The Statistical Society of Canada (SSC) award
- The Statistics and Actuarial Science Endowment Awards (three awards) funded by earnings on our departmental endowment fund.

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### Watson Wyatt Scholarship

**John Kowalik**

This scholarship is awarded annually to a student in an approved Actuarial Science program who has completed ACMA320. It is granted on the basis of academic performance.

John Kowalik writes:

Being awarded the Watson Wyatt Scholarship is a great achievement for me as I transition from school into the workplace. I have just completed my 5<sup>th</sup> year at Simon Fraser University and am now working at Hewitt on a co-op term. My experience at SFU has been amazing, which is part of the reason why I have been taking my sweet time to graduate. I have been enjoying a very happy lifestyle in the last 5 years, receiving many scholarships and awards for my hard studies, and treating myself to a couple 3-month vacations to Thailand. I'm really happy that I decided to pursue a career in the actuarial field and I'm very thankful for the great opportunities and rewards that have come to me. In September I will be moving to a co-op position at ICBC, which should be a great opportunity to try out the P&C side of the actuarial field. I have just written my fourth actuarial exam (SOA exam C) this May and am very motivated and determined to become a fellow in the near future. I would like to sincerely thank the people at Watson Wyatt for their generous support as I continue on my path to becoming an excellent actuary!

Thank you!!

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# Pacific Blue Cross Scholarship

**Yi Zhang**

One Pacific Blue Cross Scholarship in Actuarial Science will be made available in any semester, based on academic merit, to a 3rd or 4th year student with a declared major in Actuarial Science.

Yi Zhang writes:

Almost three years ago, I made a very important decision in my life and I left Beijing for Vancouver Canada with excitement, expecting to get a better education in a Canadian university.

I started my study at SFU in Jan. 2004. I surprisedly found that there are so many academic programs and courses at SFU for students to choose. However, at the very beginning, I was simply not sure which subject and program I should choose as my major. I liked Mathematics very much in both my junior and senior high school's studies and always got good grades. Therefore, having a rough idea that I should choose a major which is closely related to mathematics but also applicable in our daily life, I selected most of my courses in Math and Statistics.

The first time I heard about Actuarial Science was when a friend of mine showed me the web-site of "be an actuary.org" and the words "Career Without Boundaries" aroused my interest immediately. So I could not help looking into it in more details. The more I searched, the more I felt interested in it. And I finally realized that Actuarial Science was just what I was looking for. However, at first, I felt a little bit hesitated to apply to go into the Actuarial Program, because I had heard that the Actuarial Science Program at SFU is quite good, but very competitive. Particularly its ACMA courses are very challenging and difficult to learn. But still, my great interest in the subject pushed me forward. So I started to fill out all the required courses for Actuarial Science. Even though some of the courses are proved to be very difficult and tough, and sometimes even let me feel frustrated, I still strove for further progress and best result as possible.

In the spring semester 2006, I was accepted into Actuarial Major Program with an outstanding GPA. The actuarial science study has proved to be very challenging, fascinating and very fruitful to me. I really enjoy the academic discussions on material and difficult problems in my AMCM and STATS courses, which I should say benefited me a great deal.

I have been doing Teaching Assistant in the statistics workshop for Summer and Fall semester in 2006. Now, I am doing a 8-month Co-op at Mercer Human Resource Consulting, Toronto office. Along with my studies and those great experience in real industry, I am getting to have a clearer picture of how it is like to work as an actuary and I have found my interest in this profession increasing day by day.

Of course, I know Actuarial Science is by no means an easy major, it needs great diligence and devotion. And to become a qualified actuary, there is still a long way for me to go. I know I will have to face the increasing difficulty of the course materials and have to overcome a lot of difficulties in my future study and work. However, I firmly believe that as long as I continue to study and work hard, I shall finally reach my goal one day in future.

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# Statistical Society of Canada

## Feng Gao

The Statistical Society of Canada Award will be presented to an undergraduate student who is a declared major/honors in Statistics and/or Actuarial Science. The criteria for selection for the award are academic merit and a commitment to the mission of the SSC. The SSC is a national organization representing statisticians from across Canada. Its mission is to encourage the development and use of statistics and probability.

To achieve this, the Statistical Society of Canada:

- helps to develop a public awareness of the value of statistical thinking and the importance of statistics and statisticians in Canadian society;
- works to ensure that decisions affecting Canadian society are based on appropriate data and valid statistical interpretation;
- promotes the highest possible standards for statistical education and practice in Canada;
- promotes the development of statistical methodology;
- promotes a sense of community among all statisticians in Canada;
- provides a forum for the exchange of ideas between theoreticians and practitioners of statistics.

This award was generously endowed by the Statistical Society of Canada using proceeds of the net revenue from the SSC Annual Meeting held at Simon Fraser University in 2001.

The Statistical Society of Canada Award will be presented to an undergraduate student who is a declared major/honors in Statistics and/or Actuarial Science. The criteria for selection for the award are academic merit and a commitment to the mission of the SSC.

Feng Gao writes:

Two years ago, I made the decision to pursue my second bachelor's degree in actuarial science rather than seek a master's degree in computing science, which was the major of my first degree. The past two years turned out to be the most important period in my life; I have found not only where my strength is but also a career to which I can devote myself.

Along with being exposed to a number of subjects in actuarial science and statistics, I have also taken two Society of Actuary (SOA) exams, P and FM, and completed the economics and finance courses that satisfy the SOA's Validation of Education Experience (VEE) course requirements.

I have a strong intention to work toward a PH.D. degree in actuarial science after my graduation. In terms of a long term career goal, I would prefer doing research and teaching in an academic environment. In the fall of 2006, I was granted a teaching-assistant work term at Simon Fraser University, which helped me value this career goal more. I enjoyed the discussion with people on statistical issues. More important, I found out that teaching is not only about how to explain the concepts and theories but also based on the understanding of other people's thoughts.

While school has taken much of my time, I had been working as a part-time waiter and occasionally on a second job until the end of last year. That has enabled me to improve my time-management skills and provided valuable life experience. Also, for this spring semester, I have been doing a co-op work term in the Household Survey Methods Division at Statistics Canada, where I am familiarizing myself to the practical statistics tools and application and honing my interpersonal skills.

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## **Statistics and Actuarial Science Endowment Awards**

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

### **(Robbin) De Hu**

Many people thought I was crazy. I gave up a stable position in a successful family business, and immigrated to a new country without knowing how the future is going to unfold. But three years later, with a confident smile on my face, I can proudly say that this was the best decision that I have ever made. By rejecting everything that had been planned for me, I finally fulfilled what had been missing from my life: my desire for challenges and competitions.

Shortly after arriving in Canada, I decided to go back to school and was admitted to SFU. Knowing my strength and my interest had always been in working with numbers and logic, I took many mathematics courses during the first two semesters. Although I have been out of school for a very long time, all my hard work paid off and I maintained an "A" average. I continued to amaze myself because the more I was challenged, the better I performed. I became addicted and it was hard to quit. When I heard about the highly competitive Actuarial Science Program, which appeared to be an excellent area to apply one's mathematical knowledge, I immediately set another goal; I became a student in the Actuarial Science Program despite a matriculation ratio of 1 to 5.

Being probably the oldest student among the class, I again challenged my aging memory while fully exerting my capacity to learn. Even though some courses were known to be notoriously tough, I still strove to maintain an outstanding GPA in this highly selective program, and found my passion for the actuarial profession growing day after day.

Now that I am in the senior year of my undergraduate study, I will soon begin a new search. I look forward to applying my solid knowledge and excelling as an actuary. I know there is a long road ahead of me before I can become a fully qualified actuary. I also know that the challenge is only going to get more intense and the competition more fierce, but I am ready to face them without fear or hesitation.

## **Victoria Laan**

I was born and raised here in the Fraser Valley, in Maple Ridge, and educated within the public school system. I spent the majority of my high school years believing I would become a high school teacher, preferably in mathematics and English. Everyone agreed that it was a very unique combination, but I enjoyed the challenge available in mathematics and the ideas and creativity encouraged in English literature studies. I also carried with me a love of teaching and sharing ideas, which led naturally to the role of educator. However, as I neared graduation, my mathematics teacher mentioned a good friend who was an actuary, and described briefly what it was that they did. I was instantly hooked.

I went home to do some research, and the more I read, the more I loved the possibilities of the profession. My greatest interest in mathematics came from the probability, discrete math, and applied calculus problems; anything that had an immediate real-world answer and consequence fascinated me. The chance to pursue those types of solutions as a lifelong career, while working in a dynamic, team-oriented environment, had infinite appeal.

My journey through the actuarial program at SFU has pushed me far beyond what I thought I was capable of. I have met amazing people, many of whom are so intelligent and talented that I sometimes feel daunted just talking with them. I have made solid friends among my classmates, and spent many hours sharing ideas and celebrating personal triumphs, while constantly looking towards the next challenge (or three) on our agendas. The material itself, with the incredible attention to detail and depth of understanding required to be successful at it, never fails to captivate and demand excellence in me. I am a more disciplined and capable person because of this program.

Now that I look forward to graduation, I am excited to explore the opportunities available to me in the actuarial industry. After studying pension theory here at SFU, I am particularly interested in the areas of pension administration and life insurance. It is my hope to find employment in the North America and to continue to build on my skills through exams and practical experience. I have a long road and much study still ahead of me, but with the continued support of friends and family, and a good employer to help me grow, I know that I will succeed.

## **Shuo Lu**

Three years ago, I moved to Canada with my family for a better education opportunity and a better future. However, at that time, I didn't have a clear idea about my career.

At first, I thought that commerce is interesting and maybe a good major to choose. Without further concerns, I started at Langara College, where I finished most of my lower division courses. Since I am interested in economics and finance, I took a lot of econ and accounting courses at that time. One day, my statistics instructor talked about actuarial science in the lecture. Although I've heard about actuarial science before, that was the first time I began to get interested in this academic field, and I thought that being an actuary might be a good choice as well. I'm interested in economics and finance, and I'm good at mathematics, so why not to choose actuarial science which is related to both of the two areas. Since then, I set my career goal as being an actuary.

Last year, I took ACMA 210 and successfully got the admission of the actuarial science major program. Right now, I'm taking ACMA 320 and ACMA 315. Those courses are challenging, fascinating, and very helpful for preparing for the SOA exams. I passed Exam FM, and I'm going to write Exam P this May.

I know actuarial science is by no means an easy program; thus, to become an actuary, there is still a long way to go. Now, I am ready to face the challenges and to overcome any difficulties in my future study.

At last, I want to thank my parents who have been supporting me all the time and taking care of me so well. Moreover, I must express my gratitude to the professors in the department who provide tremendous help and support.

**Department of Statistics & Actuarial Science Awards Reception**  
**4:00 p.m., May 23, 2007, K9509**

**Undergraduate Awards**

**Undergraduate Open Scholarships:**

Jervyn Ang 1064,1067,1071  
(Sibil) Shu Man Chan 1064,1067,1071  
Leo Cheng 1067  
Raymond Chiang 1067,1071  
John Kowalik 1064,1067,1071  
Victoria Laan 1064,1067,1071  
Jessica Lee 1064,1067,1071  
Rong Li 1067  
Shuk Wong Li 1071  
Shuo Lu 1067,1071  
Suli Ma 1071  
Martin Yui Pui Mak 1067,1071  
Vicky Yen 1067,1071  
Yi Zhang 1064,1067

**Alumni Scholarship & Bursary Endowment**

**Fund:**

(Kevin) Kailiang Chen 1064,1071  
Raymond Chiang 1071  
(Robbin) De Hu 1067,1071  
(Genie) Jeonghee Lee 1067,1071  
Jessica Lee 1067  
Rong Li 1067  
Shuo Lu 1064,1067  
Gary Tse 1067

**Ken & Su Jang Scholarship for Women in Science:**

Yi Zhang

**Joe and Mary Merchant Scholarship:**

Yi Zhang

**Pacific Blue Cross Scholarship:**

Yi Zhang

**Statistics & Actuarial Science Endowment Award for excellent achievement in the Majors & Honors program:**

(Robbin) De Hu  
Victoria Laan  
Shuo Lu

**SSC Endowment Award:**

Feng Gao

**R. Bruce Coles Memorial Scholarship:**

(Genie) Jeonghee Lee  
(Miranda) Zhaoqing Zhu

**Watson Wyatt Scholarship in Actuarial Science:**

John Kowalik

**Graduate Awards**

**NSERC Industrial Postgraduate Scholarship:**

Carolyn Huston 1067-1074

**NSERC CGS M Scholarship:**

Feng Li 1067-1074

**Ellis R. Ott Scholarship in Industrial Statistics:**

Mark Wolters

**Faculty of Science Teaching Assistant Award:**

Dean Vrecko

**Presidents's PH.D. Research Stipend:**

Crystal Linkletter 1071  
Pritam Ranjan 1071

**PhD Graduate Fellowship:**

Ryan Lekivetz 1074  
Crystal Linkletter 1064  
Lihui Zhao 1074

**MSc Graduate Fellowship:**

Yunfeng Dai 1074  
Feng Li 1071  
Luyao Lin 1074  
Zhe Zhang 1074

**Faculty Awards**

**32<sup>nd</sup> President of the SSC & Burnaby Mountain Endowment Professorship**

Dr. Charmaine Dean

**NSERC University Faculty Award:**

Leilei Zeng