Calculating Her Future

Marnie Hoefer, sophomore and STEM ambassador, came to the University of Northern Iowa knowing exactly what she wanted to do. She declared her major as Statistics and Actuarial Science. This is a field which involves gathering and making sense of data, as well as using math to predict risk.

After that, her classes only confirmed to her that she had made the right decision. She feels the mathematics department has an amazing faculty and community. “The faculty were so kind and so helpful to me whenever I needed anything,” she said. “I have also found some of my best friends through those [math] classes.”

It may have helped that she took Statistics her freshman year, which she looks back on fondly as her favorite class. “Any and all of my math classes have been extremely helpful to me thus far in my academic career. They have also prepared me for jobs,” she said. This is especially true for Statistics, which she believes will be useful in her field. Statistics is the branch of mathematics which deals with the gathering, organizing, and interpreting data, so it is linked closely with her major.

UNI itself, however, was not a school she had initially considered as an option. One last minute visit changed her mind. “I visited a bigger and also smaller school, but neither seemed like they were for me,” she explained. “Everyone there [at UNI] was so welcoming and kind, and it was really the perfect size for me.”

While at UNI, Marnie has enjoyed participating in several organizations and programs, but the Peer Mentor program has been one of her favorites so far. “I was a mentor for a class of new students here at UNI. I was there for them as a resource and gave them information to make their transition into college easier.”

The role of a peer mentor is to help ensure first year student success. Peer mentors enroll in a mentoring course where they attend a Cornerstone or first year only course each time it meets. They assist professors as needed with the course, lead short presentations on student success topics, hold office hours, and participate in activities with the students in the course. Peer mentors receive plenty of training and materials to help them succeed in this role. Marnie describes being a peer mentor as “really a great experience.”

In her free time, Marnie likes to exercise. She is avid about fitness, and sees working out as her time to relax and unwind.

Marnie has some advice for people considering pursuing a degree in a STEM field: “I think sometimes the STEM field can be a bit intimidating to people because they think it’s too hard for them to do, but welcome the challenge with open arms. I can assure you that it is extremely worth it and you will find some really great people within the field as well.”

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