

Mathematical Merit

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MATHEMATICAL MERIT

Math major lands prestigious five-year NSF fellowship

Anika Homan, a senior mathematics major from Appleton, Wisconsin, recently received the National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowship (GRFP). The five-year fellowship provides three years of financial support, including an annual stipend of \$37,000.

This is a significant fellowship: of the approximately 12,000 students who apply, the NSF GRFP is awarded to only 2,000 students annually.

Homan says the most encouraging part of receiving the GRFP is “simply, that I was selected.”

“When I think about all the people who applied—many with far loftier accomplishments than my own—it’s hard to believe that the reviewers would have chosen me. Yet they did,” she says. “They looked at who I am and what I’m striving for, and they saw potential and value in it. All I can respond with is awe and gratitude. God has been so good to me, and I am beyond thankful for all the relationships and opportunities he has blessed me with that made this possible.”

Homan has been productive and focused while studying at Dordt, says Dr. Mike Janssen, professor of mathematics. “She’s participated in four research projects—two on campus, one at Grand Valley State University in Michigan, and one at The Ohio State University—and has taken every math course we offer,” he says. “She is focused, hardworking, and independent. She is not afraid of a challenge, and she loves asking questions.”

Homan plans to pursue a Ph.D. in mathematical logic at University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana this fall. Receiving the fellowship provides Homan with freedom as a researcher. “Because I now have guaranteed funding that I can take to any program, I have

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— Anika Homan, mathematics major

access to research opportunities that were previously out of reach,” she says.

“Anika has consistently done top level work as a scholar and researcher in mathematics, and it is a joy for us to see her excellent work recognized in this way,” says Dr. Leah Zuidema ('96), vice president for academic affairs. “It also has been rewarding to hear her share about

the support of faculty members such as Dr. Mike Janssen, whom Anika credits as a teacher and mentor with having had significant impact for her learning and achievements in mathematics.”

When Homan felt “hopelessly underqualified” for the NSF GRFP and was unsure if she should apply, she was grateful that “Dr. Janssen encouraged me to still apply, if nothing else for the experience of reflecting on my goals and learning to articulate them clearly.”

Looking back, Homan sees Janssen’s suggestion as very sound advice. “Of course, it’s wonderful that I was awarded the fellowship, but I also appreciated the opportunity to think about what is motivating my research and the impact I hope to have as a researcher.”

SARAH MOSS ('10)

JAMIN VER VELDE ('99)



Anika Homan has been inspired in part by her undergraduate professors, who are passionate about their subject area as well as mentoring students.