



Doctoral student wins scholarship for work in applied statistics

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When Christopher Bilder, doctoral student and graduate teaching assistant in statistics, returned from his summer internship he had a nice surprise waiting for him in the mail.

Bilder received notification that he was the recipient of the Ellis R. Ott Scholarship for Applied Statistics and Quality Management.

The scholarship is awarded to students who are in a graduate-level program with an applied statistics or quality management background and who have at least a 3.25 grade point average.

Bilder applied for the scholarship on the Internet and wrote a one-page essay on his career goals and activities. He received letters of recommendation from Thomas Loughin, assistant professor of statistics and Bilder's master's report supervisor; and James Higgins, professor of statistics.

Loughin said Bilder is more than just a good student.

"I always said that statistics is both an art and a science. You can teach science but not art," Loughin said.

Loughin said Bilder has a lot of creativity and an ability to look into problems. That ability is best illustrated by Bilder's master's report called "It's Good" -- which shows the probability of success for making field goals of varying distances.

Loughin said Bilder would spend every Monday browsing the NFL World Wide Web page and going through the play-by-plays to determine the weather conditions, the score when the field goal was attempted and the distance of the actual attempt. Bilder studied these factors and came up with a probability.

The finished report included a poem modeled after "Casey at the Bat" and has been accepted into "Chance," a popular statistical

journal, pending revisions.

Bilder will write his dissertation on bootstrapping, which is the application of the confidence interval on random samples and the assumptions made about the population from these confidence intervals.

Bilder finished his bachelor's in math at the University of Nebraska in Omaha. He didn't take a statistics course until he was a junior in college. Until that time, he wanted to be an actuary -- a person who sets insurance rates.

"You don't want to tamper with that," Loughin said. "You also don't want to temper the enthusiasm by asking him to take it easy."

Chris Malone, graduate teaching assistant in statistics, started in the program at the same time Bilder did. They both attend weekly meetings and said the graduate assistants share a lot of ideas about the approach to teaching.

"Chris is a strong asset to the statistics department," Malone said. "He is a high-quality graduate student. Somebody you want to have in your program."

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