

Michael Murrell (M.S. Mathematics, 2012)



Michael Murrell's initials are M. M., and some of his life-long interests are also Ms: Mathematics and Music. He was able to continue to pursue both of those after deciding to attend Emporia State University.

Murrell decided to come to ESU to pursue a Master of Science degree in Mathematics after graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics and a Minor in Music from Friends University in Wichita in 2010. It was natural for the 2006 Andover High School graduate to come up the turnpike to pursue a master's degree—especially when ESU offered him a mathematics TA position.

“When I was getting close to earning my bachelor's at Friends University I didn't know what I wanted to do for a career,” Murrell said. “Someone suggested applying for a Teaching Assistant position so I could get paid to earn my master's while I figure out my career. I learned that ESU had TA positions. I applied and was fortunate to be offered one.”

He said no particular class stood out to him that prepared him specifically for the actuarial career field he eventually chose to pursue after graduating, but he feels his statistics-related classes provided him with lots of foundational knowledge.

“Sometimes actuarial work involves analyzing small details and perhaps working through proof classes helped me develop an ability to explore various approaches to tackle problems,” Murrell said. “I enjoyed regression analysis and all the opportunities to model real-world phenomenon. While I appreciate the more ‘pure mathematics’ subjects and often find them interesting, I felt like statistics and math modeling were more tangible and practical.”

He said he fondly remembers study sessions he would hold with his friends before exams. One in particular was held in conjunction with some fun food preparation. “We made a delicious pizza from scratch and ate it while trying to work out some proofs,” he said.

Murrell took advantage of ESU's Music program as well. He has played an instrument since he picked up the clarinet in the 5th grade and the tenor sax in 7th grade. However, it was his interest in the flute that he started to pursue at Friends University—and his desire to continue to excel at it—that lead him to his future wife at ESU.

“I picked up the alto sax for jazz band at ESU,” Murrell said. “And I wanted to get more serious about the flute, so I joined the ESU flute choir the second semester I was there. It was there that I actually met Danielle. We also happened to be in

marching band and wind ensemble, but it wasn't until after we were both in flute choir that we actually had any conversations."

He soon found out that Danielle had played the flute since 4th grade. She also sang, performing in the community choir while at ESU. The two had a great time performing together while at ESU in marching band, pep band, wind ensembles and performances at the Kansas Music Educators Association Conference.

Murrell said he even earned an additional scholarship after placing second at an Honor's Recital. He also took the opportunity to publish a clarinet quartet arrangement while at ESU.

The two got married after they both graduated. Danielle earned her music education degree from ESU.

Initially Murrell worked as an adjunct instructor at ESU, but he also taught at Neosho County Community College, Flint Hills Technical College and Kansas Wesleyan University before he decided to start taking his actuarial exams to go into that profession. After he passed his second exam, he started to apply to companies. Security Benefit, an insurance company, hired him soon after and he has quickly moved his way up in the company. He is currently a Senior Actuarial Associate for the company.

Murrell said he doesn't have a typical day at Security Benefit. "No one day is typical, but there are a few things that can fill any given day," he said. "Some days I spend most of the day doing one thing. On other days I spend maybe an hour or two on several things."

Most of the time he is doing one of the following:

- Creating or updating reporting spreadsheets
- Pricing
- Visual Basic for Application Programing
- Studying for future exams—(there are still a few he needs to pass to keep moving up in the company.)

Murrell currently lives in Lawrence with Danielle and their three daughters: Olivia, 5; Erica, 2 ½ ; and Claire 9 months. Michael also enjoys playing video games and Danielle is into digital drawing. Olivia enjoys learning about everything at preschool. Erica enjoys playing with Olivia; and Claire enjoys eating, playing and napping right now.

Michael and Danielle still enjoy playing music together when they can.

"We still play at home for fun," said Murrell. "She and I play flute duets, inspiring our girls to dance around the living room as we play."

Murrell said anyone interested in becoming an actuary or just learning more about the profession should go online to: www.beanactuary.org. He also said he would be happy to answer any questions about becoming an actuary including how to get started in the profession. You can contact him at: michael.murrell@securitybenefit.com or mmurrell@g.emporia.edu.

