

# A Chat with Annmarie Amatulli

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT, ACTUARIAL SCIENCE, OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

*Michigan Agent has been talking to students who recently graduated, or are in the midst of programs and internships focused on insurance careers.*

## What led you to pursue an education and career in the insurance industry?

I've always loved learning. My mom taught science for 20 years and is a public-school librarian. My dad works in the metrology field, calibrating machines for different manufacturing companies. I learned from my parents that a lot goes into making and providing a product or service – including research.

It took me a couple years to figure out what I wanted to study in college. I was taking general education courses and reflecting on what I liked. In my first math class, there was a problem on the final exam that involved choosing resources to maximize saving lives after a natural disaster. That exercise really sat with me, and I knew then that I wanted to pursue mathematics and help people recover from unexpected disasters.

I transferred from Oakland Community College to Oakland University and started their actuarial science program. I like how precise the science is. You simply can't argue with numbers! I've always liked math. It feels like an art to me. I'm an introvert, so I feel I can really excel applying my math skills and perceptions to actuarial science. I

feel, too, that the career field will allow me to have a much bigger impact since insurance affects so much of the economy and helps so many people.

## Does your college program include an internship?

I'm into my third year of my program and have been working as an intern for a Fortune 500 automotive supplier in Auburn Hills. I'm interning at the propulsion technical center of BorgWarner in the data analytics area. I'm looking forward to providing analysis and synthesis of data to help them make good business decisions. I like the idea that what I do helps businesses and people. In the case of the automotive industry, I'm applying my skills to assess the efficiency and safety of parts and products used by people. It's a way I can help make the world a better and safer place.

## Are you involved in any clubs or volunteer activities?

At the community college, I used to volunteer at blood drives through the American Red Cross. I also worked student orientation and served as an aid to new students. Here at Oakland, I'm a member of the Society of Actuarial Science student organization. We've organized food drives around holiday times like Thanksgiving and packaged and delivered food to families in need.



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It was always instilled in me to give back to others, and it's one of my fundamental values. When you volunteer, you see the direct impact you have on others. I'm a firm believer in life being about the little things. I love seeing the smiles on people's faces when you provide the assurance and help they need.

## Where do you see yourself going in the business?

So far, I know I would like to work as an actuary. Risk is everywhere, and that's what I like the most: assessing risk using math. I love tackling the challenge and I feel like mathematics is the best way to go about solving those challenges. It's foolproof.

## What perceptions do you want to dispel about insurance careers?

I recently had the opportunity to visit Auto-Owners Insurance in Lansing as part of my program at Oakland, and to live "a day in the life of an actuary." I saw how actuaries work together with others in the business. It's not a job you do all by yourself. People are always communicating and bouncing ideas off each other. It

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# Thinking of Hiring an Intern?

Chris VanAbel, CFO/COO of VAST in Marquette, says there are great reasons to do so



wasn't at all what I pictured where you're crunching numbers inside a cubicle and never talking to anyone. I found it exciting.

Insurance is different because you're in the business of providing an intangible object. Everyone is paying into something and not seeing it. But once they do see what they are pay for, they see that it's a lifesaver.

Another thing I like about insurance is that every day is different. You could be working with a new client, or you might be assessing a business risk arising from new technology – like self-driving cars, for instance. In a sense, you're always working on the future. And when I think of the future, I think of how I will help make the world a better place and help others through this career. ●



*Ann Kammerer is a freelance writer living in East Lansing. She has written extensively about business people,*

*educators, artists and everyday citizens doing good things.*

*We talked with Chris VanAbel about her agency's long-term practice of hiring interns from local high schools and colleges. Chris is CFO and COO of VAST in Marquette. Here's what she had to say about a practice that contributes to developing young talent within the insurance industry.*

## How long has your agency been hiring interns? How many have you had over the years?

I never thought of it before, but essentially, I'm the very first "intern" that VAST hired and introduced to a career in insurance way back when. I started as a file clerk in the summer of 1969 when I was 16. I worked part-time during the school year, and when I graduated, VAST asked if I wanted to stay on in a full-time position. Since then, I've sat in just about every chair that was available, including file clerk, front desk, account manager and sales. I've simply loved the business and derive great satisfaction from taking care of our clients, and our team.

At VAST, we have hired interns for 20-plus years, and have trained 22 students during that time. I think my experience of starting out and working my way up helped me understand the value of internships. Few things compare to on-the-job learning when you're deciding whether a particular industry, company or line of work is right for you.

## Do your interns work year-round? Or is it just a summer program?

Our interns work all year. We typically have two – one from the area high school and another

from Northern Michigan University. We keep college interns on as long as we can or until they graduate. The same goes for our high school interns. They usually start when they are juniors. When these students graduate and go away to college, we sometimes have them come back during breaks or over the summer.

## Have you permanently hired any or your interns? Do you know of any who have gone on to work in the industry?

We are a mid-size agency with more than 50 employees. Some work part-time, some full-time, and some work remotely. We're



From left: VAST Business Development Coordinator Christie White with college intern Nolan Lukasik and high school intern Ally O'Neill.

always on-the-lookout for people to join our team and have hired several interns as full-time employees over the years. Three still work here. Some have left to pursue other options when they experience a life-changing event like getting married or relocating with their family or spouse. A couple of our interns also landed positions at different agencies in Michigan or

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