Elaine Brunner, (’96)

Since graduating from Carleton in 1996, I've been working and studying to be an actuary. I currently work for an insurance company as a property-casualty actuary. I work for a fairly small company, so I get to do all kinds of actuarial work - pricing, reserving, and predictive modeling. It has been a great career, though I will admit that the exams were TOUGH. There are a series of nine exams, and each one requires hundreds of hours of study time in order to pass it (at least, that was the case for me!). Companies generally provide a study program, however, and that helps. I completed my last exam in 2005, and am now a Fellow of the Casualty Actuarial Society.

Being a math major at Carleton prepared me well for this career. It gave me the background necessary to start on the exams, and it also gave me the writing and critical thinking skills that I use every day. The best actuaries are the people who are not simply robot exam-takers, but who can combine mathematics chops with the ability to see all sides of an issue, work with others to find answers, and then communicate those answers to non-technical people.

My advice to current math majors would be to check out the actuarial career. It will be intense while you're taking exams, but what you end up with is a challenging and rewarding career that can have loads of flexibility (I currently work two days per week in the office and telecommute the other three). I would be happy to talk with anyone who has questions or would like more information.