

For second straight year, MSU counseling student wins top state award

2005-03-22

By Robb Murray, Staff Writer

[*The Free Press*, Mankato, Minnesota, March 22, 2005]



Amanda Bomstad, a graduate student in the professional counseling program at Minnesota State University, was named the winner of the 2005 Potential School Counselor Scholarship, awarded annually to the top counseling program student in Minnesota. This is the second year in a row an MSU student has won the award. [Photo by John Cross, *The Free Press*]

MANKATO — The thrill of Amanda Bomstad's scholarship award was felt on several levels.

First and foremost, mom was proud. Second, Bomstad was proud of herself. And third ...

"(My adviser's) reaction was priceless," Bomstad said. "He started jumping up and down in his office."

It was announced recently that Bomstad is the winner of the Minnesota School Counselors Association's 2005 Potential School Counselor Scholarship. The scholarship is presented annually to an outstanding individual pursuing a master's degree in guidance and counseling, with an emphasis on school counseling.

The award is a great honor for Bomstad. And the \$500 that comes with it is cool, too. But program faculty say the award not only says a lot about Bomstad but also speaks volumes for the work being done in MSU's counseling program. There are about 40 full- and part-time students in the program.

This is the second year in a row the scholarship has been awarded to an MSU professional school counseling graduate student.

Toby Ackerman received the honor last year. Bomstad will receive her award at the Minnesota School Counselor Association's annual meeting in St. Cloud in May.

Walter Roberts was that adviser who was jumping up and down in his office.

"We think it says a lot about the quality of the students we have in the program," Roberts said. "We hope that it would also say something about the quality of education they're getting."

Roberts said the program at MSU is evolving and, in his opinion, doing something right, especially with the program's emphasis on mental health issues.

"I think we're a little bit ahead of the curve," he said. "We've always tried to stay ahead of the curve."

There's every indication in the feedback from practitioners in the field that we must have a better handle on mental health issues."

Because of that, the program recently was retooled and modernized.

For example, the newest faculty member hired, Richard Auger, has a background in childhood mental health issues.

Roberts said the department also has added new coursework that deals with childhood mental health issues and is requiring more mental health-based research and focus with their students than they did 15 years ago.

"This has been an evolution" Roberts said. "This is a shift we've wanted to move toward for over a decade, and it's the beginning of better things to come."

Bomstad, meanwhile, says her experience is proof of the program's quality.