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A Passion for Math

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Amanda Morel isn't a University of Dayton student yet, but her desire to ask big questions has already paid off.

As the grand-prize winner of the inaugural "Your Question, Your Mark" video competition, the aspiring high school math teacher secured a \$40,000 four-year scholarship to the University of Dayton to help her reach her dream.

And she gets \$2,500 and a video camera to research her question: "What factors promote long-term retention in the American high school's mathematics classroom?" She's interested in how the brain learns mathematics and how that can be applied to classroom learning.

"I really love math, but as I watched other students struggle, I really wanted to help them understand," said Morel, a senior at Solon High School in northeastern Ohio. "Math is so important because it applies to everything. I want to make a difference in the world, and I think I can do that by helping students understand math."

Finalists Katie Anderson of Powell, Ohio, and Nathan Steinbrunner of Versailles, Ohio, also receive \$2,500 each and video cameras. Anderson's research question focuses on how to protect coral reefs. Steinbrunner, a dedicated blood donor, wants to explore how donated blood goes from donor to recipient.

Kathy Harmon, assistant vice president and dean of admission and financial aid, said the contest invited prospective University of Dayton first-year students to create a video demonstrating their imagination and curiosity by outlining how they would approach finding an answer to a thought-provoking question — even before they start college.

"The contest was a way to invite and encourage students who are interested in the University of Dayton to express their creativity and curiosity — the kinds of qualities that make the best University of Dayton students," said Harmon. "It's been very exciting to see the passion and desire to make a difference these students will bring to the University."

The University's social media coordinator Kevin Schultz, who created the contest, said he wanted to provide opportunities for prospective students to creatively express the big questions they have about the world and how they would go about finding answers.

Schultz said the contest invited prospective students to create video to answer the question: "If you could search for the answer to one question before you begin college, what would it be?" and drew 36 entries from eight states. Students uploaded their entries to the contest website and were asked share their videos through Facebook, Twitter, email or word-of-mouth and encourage friends and family to vote for their submissions.

More than 13,000 votes were cast. Videos with the most votes were reviewed by a team of University faculty, students and staff who selected the top three entries and determined the grand-prizewinner.

"Amanda posed a really interesting question and responded to the challenge in a creative and engaging way," said Jason Pierce, chair of the University's political science department who served as a judge. "She clearly did her homework and is personally vested in a way that will really feed into her career at the University."

To view all the videos including the winners, visit http://www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=0A222589E1B34569 (url: http://www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=0A222589E1B34569).

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