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James Gambrell receives Paterson Award

Summary: Senior James Gambrell has received the 2007 Paterson Award in Psychology for Outstanding Senior Undergraduate Student in Minnesota. The award recognizes and encourages high achievement in psychology at the undergraduate level.

(April 24, 2007)-James Gambrell, a senior at the University of Minnesota, Morris, has received the 2007 Paterson Award in Psychology for Outstanding Senior Undergraduate Student in Minnesota. This award is given to the outstanding college senior planning a career in psychology. The purpose of award is to recognize and encourage high achievement in psychology at the undergraduate level. This award, sponsored by the Minnesota Psychological Association (MPA), is presented to only one psychology major statewide each year. Gambrell, who transferred to UMM from the University of Chattanooga in Tennessee and the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities campus, is a philosophy and statistics major in addition to his psychology major at UMM.

"I'm really surprised I won this," Gambrell said. "It's encouraging to know that you can win such a prestigious award not based solely on your GPA."

Eric Klinger, UMM professor emeritus of psychology and Gambrell's adviser, nominated Gambrell for the award. Gambrell submitted a copy of his grade transcript, three letters of recommendations and information on psychology-related research in which he has participated.

"James is one of the finest students I have encountered in 45 years of teaching in higher education," said Klinger in his letter of recommendation. "His University of Minnesota, Morris GPA is [very high] . . . and his GRE scores are excellent . . . He has been accepted with good financial offers by quantitative-methods programs in four departments of psychology or educational psychology. He has coauthored four official reports by [UMM's] Center for Small Towns and one poster that has been accepted for presentation at the Association for Psychological Science convention this May 2007. This is in addition to the unpublished report on the validity of social-capital indexes...he is one of the very best and most promising students that any of us has encountered."

Gambrell has worked with the Center for Small Towns at UMM for the past year, involved in research projects assigned to him there. He also worked with Klinger on his research involving a motivational questionnaire based on research done primarily in Europe.

"This award typically goes to nominees from good private colleges," said Klinger. "However, since about 1989 UMM has now won four times, or about one in five. Considering the competition, this is doing extremely well." Leslie Meek, another Klinger advisee and now professor of psychology at UMM, is a previous Paterson Award recipient (in 1989). Other Paterson recipients are Colleen Garbe (in 1993) and Erin Costanzo (in 2000).

Currently Gambrell is working on empirical investigations to complete his psychology major. His focus is on intentionality – whether or not people's judgments about actions are intentional. "I'm really glad I did the philosophy

major with the psychology major,” Gambrell said, “It’s really great to combine it with another major – it makes it more applicable than having it on its own.”

The board that reviews award applicants also asks for a list of graduate school offers that each applicant has received. Gambrell plans to attend graduate school at the University of Iowa next fall, hopefully entering into work in the area of moral testing.

Gambrell will be honored at the MPA's annual convention in Plymouth on April 28.

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