

Statistics for Science, and More

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While growing up, I had imagined myself as a scientist devising experiments for the next great discovery. This childhood dream led me to enter college as a physics major. As is the case with most students, I changedmymajor while working on my undergraduate degree. I switched from physics to mathematics, then added statistics as another major. My interest in statistics began when I took a course in design of experiments during my junior year. I saw that statistics provided an opportunity to combine the skills learned from numerous math classes with my early love for science.

After graduate school, I accepted a position with Eastman Chemical Company as an industrial statistician. Initially, my job responsibilities involved consulting with engineers and scientists on experiments and analyzing the resulting data. However, over the past several years my job responsibilities have grown, and I have been involved with many different aspects of the company. I have applied statistics to problems in manufacturing, analytical (testing) services, customer service, research and development, human resources,marketing, engineering, communications, employee research, and customer satisfaction. For example, I currently manage the Employee Voice, a survey of our employees that allows management and employees themselves to track employee sentiment as our business environment changes. I divide employees into 12 similar groups, survey one group each month, and generate control charts and comparisons with 43 other large companies. Learning statistics has made me very versatile within the company and has opened many possible career paths.

I believe that, regardless of your field of study, having a good foundation of statistical knowledge will provide you with a tremendous advantage in your career. The skills gained from statistics can be applied to a wide range of industries and functions. You will also be able to have a significant impact on decision making by providing data that are accurate, useful, and comprehensible to people at various levels.