

North Central College student Maria Gommel honored as 2012 Lincoln Laureate

News Release

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NAPERVILLE, Ill. (Oct. 19, 2012)—Maria Gommel has been named North Central College’s 2012 Lincoln Laureate.

Gommel is a senior from Malta, Ill., who is double-majoring in actuarial science and mathematics and minoring in economics. She intends to pursue a doctorate in mathematics after graduation.

She is a participant in North Central’s College Scholars Honors Program for high-achieving undergraduates. She spent a year working with two other students and mathematics professor Linda Gao on mathematical modeling research in epidemiology.

“Maria exemplifies the integrative, interdisciplinary approach that is an essential part of North Central’s mission and also integral to the way mathematics researchers work today,” says Jonathan Visick, associate professor of biology at North Central College.

A committee of North Central College faculty that selected this year's Lincoln Laureate noted that Gommel has performed excellent work at the interface of public health and mathematics with her modeling of the impact of vaccinations. This work has theoretical value as well as the practical benefit of helping to determine the effects of a vaccine on the incidence of a disease such as shingles. In addition to learning the mathematical methods needed for her research, she had to acquire a good understanding of epidemiology and infectious disease—fields outside her majors.

She presented her research at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) and at North Central College's Rall Symposium for Undergraduate Research. In recognition of her accomplishments, Gommel was named a 2012 Goldwater Scholar, the highest national undergraduate award for achievement in mathematics, science and engineering.

During summer 2012, Gommel conducted research in mathematical logic at the University of California, Los Angeles as part of the UCLA Undergraduate Summer School in Logic program. She is an active member of North Central College's Blue Key Honor Society chapter. She has worked as a tutor in the College's Math Resource Center and has served as treasurer and co-president of the Math Club/Pi Mu Epsilon. She is a four-year member of the College's String Ensemble and has played in the orchestra for musicals on campus as well as in the Pep Band.

The student Lincoln Laureate is an annual award by The Lincoln Academy of Illinois that honors outstanding seniors at four-year degree-granting institutions in Illinois. Gov. Pat Quinn will present Gommel and other 2012 honorees with a medallion, certificate of achievement and a check for \$500 during a ceremony on Saturday, Nov. 3, at the Old State Capitol in the House of Representatives Chamber in Springfield. Student laureates will be honored during a luncheon in the Governor's Executive Mansion immediately following the ceremony. Visit thelincolnacademyofillinois.org to learn more.

Founded in 1861, North Central College is an independent, comprehensive college of the liberal arts and sciences that offers more than 55 undergraduate majors and graduate programming in seven areas. Located in the Historic District of Naperville, Illinois—rated by Money magazine as among the nation's "Best Places to Live"—North Central College is just 30 minutes from Chicago's Loop. With more than 3,000 undergraduate and graduate students, North Central College is committed to academic excellence, a climate that emphasizes leadership, ethics, values and service, a curriculum that balances job-related knowledge with a liberal arts foundation and a caring environment with small classes. Visit northcentralcollege.edu to learn more.

View this article online at <http://bit.ly/UagpRe>. A high-resolution image of Maria Gommel is available upon request.