Ben Malin

As an undergrad at Iowa State University, Ben Malin was drawn to a major in math. But once he discovered economics, he says that a whole new world of connecting the practical to the theoretical opened up to him.

“Math provided me with a good technical background. But once I started to take courses in economics, I could see how theoretical research connected with data and policy. It was both rigorous and interesting to me,” he says. He points to the influential role that a course in macroeconomics with Joydeep Bhattacharya played in sparking his interest.

Malin graduated from ISU in 2000, with majors in economics and math, and a minor in stats. He then studied at Stanford University, receiving a PhD in economics in 2006. His continued interest in the connections between theory and policy led him to his first job with the Federal Reserve Board of Governors in Washington DC, where he says he “learned a lot about real world economics.”

Now working with the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis as a senior economist, Malin continues to pair data with real-world applications. Half of his time is devoted to research and publishing in academic journals, and the other to forecasting the economy and offering the pros and cons of various policy options to those making decisions at the Fed.

“There’s so much data that it helps to have a staff who can boil it down. The work is very interesting and a good synergy exists between research and policy questions,” he says.

He credits his time at ISU with giving him solid technical training to do well in graduate school. Professors like Harvey Lapan, he says, gave him opportunities to meet outside of class time to cover material at the graduate level.

“Without individual contacts like these, I don’t think I would be where I am today,” he says.