Christina Bloemen sighed and smiled Thursday afternoon. Her test in Russian language was her last final exam, ever.

So now what?

“It doesn’t feel real,” said Bloemen, who graduates Saturday morning in the University of Montana’s Class of 2014. “It feels like I should be doing homework or something.”

While the “now what” question is difficult for many college graduates to answer, Bloemen has no problem laying out her future.

The winner of a Fulbright scholarship, she leaves for Ukraine in September to teach English and serve as a cultural ambassador on behalf of the United States. Bloemen shares a fondness of old movies with her father, and will include film studies during her Fulbright service.

“The role of the Fulbright student is not only to teach English and work at the university there, but you’re also a cultural ambassador for the U.S.,” said Bloemen. “I thought film was a great way to show our culture, to look at it and critique it.”

Making the cut as a Fulbright scholar is no easy task, but Bloemen never took the easy route through college. At 21, her academic vitae already reads like a professional twice her age, starting with leadership roles in her sorority, Kappa Kappa Gamma.

At UM, she joined Model United Nations, where she was elected secretary-general and team president. She traveled to New York City with the program twice, and served as president of the Russian Club at UM.

Along the way, Bloemen managed to finish college in three years with a double major in Russian and political science, with a concentration in international relations and comparative politics.
“I really learned how valuable having a foreign language is,” Bloemen said of her experience on Model UN. “When we were there (New York), there were a ton of international students. This year, luckily my partner and I both spoke Russian, so we made a lot of friends that way.”

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**Originally from Fort Collins, Colo.,** Bloemen toyed with the idea of staying in-state and attending the University of Colorado in Boulder. Other schools were on the list as well, but with siblings close in age, paying for school became an issue.

The University of Montana emerged high on her list of choices. Looking to leave Colorado for an adventure, Bloemen pulled the trigger and set her sights on becoming a UM alumnus – a goal she will officially achieve after Saturday’s ceremonies.

“I was terrified when I first came here,” she said, thinking back over her years in Missoula. “I think I’ve grown a lot, accepted a lot about myself – my own fears and problems and what I want to work on.”

During her time at UM, Bloemen was bitten by the recreation bug. She started competing in triathlons and made a group of friends who are now like family. She jokes in saying her twin brother asks if she’ll ever “live in the country.”

For that, Bloemen doesn’t yet have an answer. She may apply for the U.S. Foreign Service when her time as a Fulbright scholar in Ukraine comes to a close. She also may consider pursuing an international law degree to work on human rights issues.

“This university has been an enriching experience for me,” she said. “You grow as you learn more about the world, its good and bad parts.”

As for Ukraine, she added, “It’s going to be a great career jump-start to be there and see the history being made. The Ukrainian culture is so rich, and I want to see how it’s being affected by the revolution.”