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Daniel received his B.A. in Mathematics from Universitatea "Al. I. Cuza" in Iași, Romania in 1990, and his Ph.D. in Applied Mathematics from University of Virginia in 1992. From 1992 until moving to Berkeley in 2001 he held a position at Northwestern University, with a brief interruption in Princeton, 1995-7.

For his work he was awarded the 1995 Gh. Țițeica Prize from the Romanian Academy of Science, as well as the 2001 Bôcher Prize from the American Mathematical Society. He was successively supported as a Miller Professor in 2010 and a Simons Fellow in 2012, and, since 2013, by a Simons Investigator Award. He is a Fellow of the American Mathematical Society and a member of the AAAS.