



Kelsey West

Majors: Psychology and religion

Minor: Sociology

Activities: Sigma Pi Delta sorority, Habitat for Humanity

Internships: Australia Study Abroad Program—Odyssey House in Sydney, Australia (drug rehabilitation program), Robert Young Community Mental Health, Bettendorf Outreach Program

Post-grad plans: Attend Loyola University in Chicago this fall for its dual-degree program for a master's in social work and a master's in women's studies and gender studies

“Kelsey’s Senior Inquiry project demonstrates that critical treatments of biblical narratives about rape (specifically, the stories of Hagar in the book of Genesis) can be used to affirm the experiences of rape survivors and to support their recovery. It’s a profound expression of her critical insight, her compassion, and the moral engine that drives her work in the classroom and in the community, where she works with rape and abuse survivors.”

— Dr. Christopher Jones, Bergendoff Visiting Fellow in Hebrew Bible and Judaism

MORE THAN I IMAGINED 2017

SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

Why Augustana?

I visited a handful of schools, but every one I went to I compared to Augie. I know it sounds cliché, but there was just something about being on campus for visit days and whatnot that felt like I was meant to be here. I also have a lot of family in the area, so that was a pulling factor for me as well.

Are you where you thought you’d be four years ago?

Absolutely not. I never would have thought that I would become so passionate about the issues I have been involved in, that I would have a leadership position in a sorority, present at an academic conference or go on right after Augustana to get a master’s.

Who helped you get to where you are now?

My grandparents live about five minutes from campus, and I talk to my gram multiple times a week, as well as have Sunday night dinners at their house. They have been incredible to me in ways that they may not even know because they have supported me in everything I’ve done, helped me when I got homesick, and have provided some very important home-cooked meals. The friends I’ve made on campus and through my internships, as well as professors that I’ve connected with have helped when I’ve struggled with where I want to go in the future or just when I’ve gotten overwhelmed with things. It’s great to have a handful of people I know I can go to in any situation.

A peak experience?

Going to Australia for my study abroad internship was definitely one of the best things I have done in my life. I never would have thought I would leave the country and live on my own for three months. It showed me that I am capable of being independent and gave me a newfound love for travel because I had never really done much before.

What surprised you?

I learned that I can do a lot more than I thought I could. Coming into college, I knew I was interested in psychology and wanted to be a counselor, and that has stayed somewhat the same. But now I know more of exactly whom I want to be working with. I took the advice of my freshman year psych advisor, Fen, and did the victim advocacy class at the beginning of my sophomore year. I completed the training to be a domestic violence and sexual assault advocate and truly found my passion in a place I probably never would have looked on my own.

Working with survivors and other populations that I’ve been able to experience through internships over the past few years has shown me that I’m definitely on the right career track, and that I have a passion for working with people who are struggling in a variety of different ways. It surprised me how much I could love working in such a tough field, but I definitely wouldn’t have wanted my Augie experience to be any different!

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How did you use Augie Choice?

I used my Augie Choice for the Australia study abroad program.

What will you miss the most?

I'm really going to miss the Augie community as a whole. I've made so many friends here and met so many genuinely incredible people that it's going to be so weird not to be walking on campus next year and participating in all of our Augie traditions all year long.

Advice for the Class of 2021?

Listen to the advice that professors or others give you—you might end up finding something you enjoy!