



Sara Baugh

Majors: Environmental studies and geography

Activities: Jenny Lind Vocal Ensemble, Zeta Phi Kappa sorority, UNYK multicultural dance troupe, Sigma Gamma Epsilon earth sciences honor society, Reading/Writing Center tutor

Internships: Research assistant for the Bird Window Collision Project and research assistant for the High Arctic Institute

Post-grad plans: I will be working full-time at Republic Services in Scottsdale, Ariz., as a GIS technician. I have also been accepted into Arizona State University's master's certificate program for GIS.

“During her geography Senior Research project, Sara did a great job diving into the field data she helped collect in Greenland. She worked on pulling out complex patterns relating to changing weather conditions and juvenile bird mortality, and comparing it to similar studies at lower arctic latitudes. Sara embraced this challenge and contributed much to our larger research team's initiatives.”

— Dr. Jennifer Burnham, chair and associate professor, geography

MORE THAN I IMAGINED 2017

SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

Why Augustana?

One of the major factors that drew me to Augustana was the vast number of study abroad programs it offered and the potential to use Augie Choice money to help pay for those programs. I wanted to attend a school that gave me opportunities not only to explore and travel to other places, but also to do service and meaningful work while I was away. Many of the study abroad trips have some aspect of research, service or outreach to them, and that made Augustana stand out to me.

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

I had no idea where I would end up four years after I entered college. I started off at Augustana unsure of what to major in. I entertained the idea of majoring in English, biology, Classics and neuroscience, but none seemed like the right fit for me. In the end, I found my home within the geography department my sophomore year and have loved every minute of it.

Who helped you get to where you are now?

I am extremely grateful for all the geography faculty, including Dr. Reisner, Dr. Heine, Dr. Strunk, Dr. Fockler and Dr. Burnham. Dr. Burnham in particular has been an invaluable person during my Augustana experience. She has provided so much guidance, wisdom and opportunity for me, which has influenced not only who I am as a student, geographer and researcher, but as a person as well.

A peak experience?

My peak experience was the opportunity to be a research assistant in Thule, Greenland, with the geography department and the High Arctic Institute.

What surprised you?

I was a bit shocked to realize how resilient I can be. I won't lie... college can be very difficult, with the stress of classes and the many relationships that come and go. Even during times that were difficult, I feel that I came out on top, even when the cards appeared to be stacked against me.

How did you use Augie Choice?

I actually never needed to use my Augie Choice money. I was fortunate enough to have my research assistant position in Greenland paid for by the High Arctic Institute.

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What will you miss the most?

What I will miss most about Augustana are all of the opportunities that are presented to students. Outside of Augustana, I think it would be rare for me to be given the opportunity to go out caving on a whim, hike the Arctic tundra searching for falcons or perform in a large Bollywood dance number (all of which I have been able to do here).

Advice for the Class of 2021?

It seems cheesy to say "stay true to who you are," but I feel that this is one of the most important things to keep in mind when starting college at a new place. At a small school like this, things go by fast, and many opportunities may be presented to you, such as joining Greek life, musical ensembles, sports or different clubs. Never try to fit the molds of these types of organizations because I promise being who you are as a person is what makes your experience special, unique and meaningful.