



Haylee E. Walker

Major: Communication studies

Minors: Graphic design, art

Certificate: Non Profit Leadership Development Certificate

Activities: Cheerleading, Student United Way, Non Profit Leadership Student Association, Phi Rho sorority

Internships: Gigi's Playhouse, United Way of the Quad Cities, Human Connections (Bucerias, Nayarit, Mexico), Davenport Parks and Recreation–AmeriCorps

Post-grad plans: I will finish my term of service with AmeriCorps in August and then find a job on the West Coast!

“Like many Augie students, Haylee had a life- and perspective-changing experience while studying abroad—in her case, on a study term in Greece. But Haylee stands out in the intentionality of her post-abroad experience. She continued learning from her time in Greece because she made it the breakaway, turning point in her own education. She devoted her entire senior year to a reflective practitioner Senior Inquiry focusing on responsible tourism, a project that became possible not because of her one major, but because of her whole liberal arts education. She's ready to take on the world.”
— Dr. Sharon Varallo, Violet M. Jaeke Chair of Family Life, communication studies

MORE THAN I IMAGINED 2017

SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

Why Augustana?

I chose Augustana because the Quad Cities are home for me, and I wasn't quite ready to “leave” home yet. I also loved the small class sizes and the overall size of the student body because it was bigger than my high school but still small so you can have meaningful friendships with a variety of people.

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

Absolutely not! Before coming to Augie, I didn't want to be in a sport, join a sorority or even live on campus, but I am doing the complete opposite. I did all those things, and then some. I am a leader on campus and take opportunities my past self would have never dreamed of. I went outside of my comfort zone and began to thrive and grow into an outgoing, responsible and respectable adult.

Who helped you get to where you are now?

I had some major help along the way. First would be my advisor, Sharon Varallo, who made me see the potential in myself that I never did. She constantly made me think, re-think and think again about anything I did, whether that was in class or when we discussed internship experiences in her office. She made me realize that I am capable of anything I want, and to follow my thirst for knowledge.

Next would be my beautiful Phi Rho sisters. Without their constant love and support, I would not be the woman I am today. I will forever be grateful for everything my sorority has given me over the years and will continue to give me in years to come.

A peak experience?

My peak experience would be my internship abroad during winter break of my senior year. I accepted an internship in Bucerias, Nayarit, Mexico, for three weeks during winter break. I traveled by myself to Mexico, which was a proud feat in itself, and spent my time on the coast of Bucerias with 12 other college students from across the United States.

We worked on consulting projects with local artisans and small business owners to strengthen their business models and help them compete in local markets. It was truly an amazing learning experience where we did real work that mattered and impacted lives. In the process, I met lifelong friends, made meaningful relationships with my supervisors and clients and also got to see some pretty cool sites.

What surprised you?

I've learned a lot about myself that has surprised me, such as taking that trek to Mexico by myself (still can't believe I did that) and becoming a leader on campus. I became the president of two service groups on campus and through these experiences, I have found that I am capable of a lot more than I think I am, and that if I truly want something, I can get it if I work hard enough. I've learned that I enjoy being a leader, which did kind of surprise me.

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How did you use Augie Choice?

I used my Augie Choice to help me get to Greece the summer of 2016 for one of Augustana's study abroad programs.

What will you miss the most?

What I will miss the most are the people and the atmosphere. Everyone here (students, faculty, staff) is always so helpful and want to see you succeed. You never feel alone; you always have someone or somewhere to go to for help or for celebration. It is such an encouraging and supportive place that I wish the rest of the world was like the Augie bubble!

Advice for the Class of 2021?

Trust yourself, dream big and find what sets your soul on fire and never stop chasing it. You are in the perfect environment to try, try harder and try again until you see the benefits you always imagined. So don't take anything for granted, try to experience as much as you can, and most of all, reflect on those experiences and share them.