



Chelsea Brandt

High school: Geneva High School

Hometown: Geneva, Ill.

Majors: Biology, Spanish for professional use

Minor: Biochemistry

Activities: Varsity swimming, Búhos Club (volunteer ESL lessons), Emergency Department volunteer at Trinity UnityPoint Health hospital, tutor, Phi Beta Kappa

Internships: Cardiovascular medicine internship with CVM; Sherwin B. Nuland Summer Institute in Bioethics at Yale University

Post-grad plans: Work and volunteer for a year while I apply to medical school.

“From the day I met her, Chelsea has always shown strength in her character. She views challenges as opportunities and actively seeks out new and valuable perspectives to reframe her goals of how she will contribute to the field of medicine. Her curiosity and confidence swelled as she excelled in the classroom, completed a competitive cardiology internship one summer and an intensive 7-week internship at a research institute in bioethics at Yale the next. With her grit and integrity, I’m excited to see how her story continues from here.”

— Brad Kennedy, instructor, biology

MORE THAN I IMAGINED 2020

SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

Why Augustana?

I chose Augustana because I received a good financial aid offer, and I was able to continue my swimming career here.

Are you where you thought you’d be when you first came to campus?

Yes and no. It has always been my plan to go to medical school, but I never dreamed I would have half the opportunities that I did. I never pictured myself shadowing in almost every department of a hospital or sitting in lecture halls at Yale University or speaking fluent Spanish with ESL students. The ability to tailor my pre-med experience to my interests has made my time at Augustana more fun and engaging in ways I never expected.

Who helped you get to where you are now?

Almost everyone I met at Augustana has helped me in some way. I have especially relied on my advisor Brad Kennedy to organize classes, out-of-classroom opportunities and post-grad plans. He has also been an invaluable person to talk to when I am stressed or just having a bad day. I cannot thank him enough for his help and support.

Additionally, all my professors have built my confidence by challenging me and helping me see that I am capable of succeeding in difficult classes. Thank you to all of my professors, especially Brad Kennedy, Dr. Boquin, Dr. Muir, Dr. Gehler, Dr. Scott, Dr. Koontz, Dr. Larson and Dr. Lee.

I have also formed close relationships with the doctors I interned with. Dr. Sanjeev Puri and Dr. Shimak Morton have each motivated me and helped me understand my desire to pursue medicine.

Finally, my immediate and extended family have given me their endless support. I am grateful for how they encourage me to dream big and work hard.

Peak experience?

This is a hard choice, but I would choose my cardiology internship as my peak experience. This internship gave me invaluable hours shadowing a cardiologist and his colleagues in cardiac electrophysiology, cardiothoracic surgery, the intensive care unit and emergency medicine. Meeting so many people in the hospital and seeing things like open heart surgery made me really excited to become a doctor and cemented my decision to go to medical school.

What surprised you?

I am surprised at how outgoing I have become. I have always been very shy, but my friends and professors here helped me break out of my shell. I am no longer afraid to ask for help or introduce myself to new people. I have learned that I love working with and talking to people, which is something I never thought I would say.

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How did you use your Augie Choice?

I used my Augie Choice to help pay for my experience at the Sherwin B. Nuland Summer Institute in Bioethics at Yale University. I studied and researched contemporary issues in medical ethics among a class of undergrads, graduates and working professionals from around the world.

What will you miss the most?

I will hands-down miss the people at Augustana the most. I will miss my best friends and sitting in Hanson or the library studying together. I will miss my teammates and spending countless hours with them at swim meets and over breaks at practices. And finally, I will miss the faculty here. My professors have become mentors and friends to me, and I will miss seeing them every day and joking around with them.

Advice for the Class of 2024?

Don't be so stressed about the future! Focus on working hard in your classes and enjoying your time at Augustana with friends and professors—it goes fast! If you put in consistent hard work and stay true to what you're passionate about, the future will take care of itself!