



Amanda Ico

Major: Biology (pre-optometry)

Minor: Public health

Activities: Phi Beta Kappa, Student Government Association, Phi Rho sorority, Office of Student Life and Leadership, Beta Beta Beta biology honor society

Post-grad plans: Attend the Illinois College of Optometry in Chicago to pursue my Doctor of Optometry

“I had Amanda in two of my classes (Human Anatomy and Neuroanatomy). In addition, because of the high quality of her work, I asked Amanda to work both as a lab proctor and tutor for my Human Anatomy class. Simply put, her classwork was *amazing!* She was a very hard working, inquisitive student, and an excellent writer. Equally important, Amanda was a *fun* student to have in class. Because of her academic abilities and accomplishments, Amanda was elected into Phi Beta Kappa as a graduating senior—an academic honor that is befitting of the quality and personality of this truly outstanding student. Getting to know students like Amanda in and out of class is one of the amazing perks of serving as a professor here at Augustana!”

— Dr. Bob Tallitsch, professor, biology

MORE THAN I IMAGINED 2017

SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

Why Augustana?

I chose Augustana because it felt like it was a place where I could see myself growing. The students I saw on my tour were the types of people I wanted to be: friendly, courteous, studious and passionate.

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

I'm definitely not where I thought I'd be—I'm far beyond it. I never imagined I would grow to have as much confidence as I do now, or that I would be as invested in the organizations I'm currently part of. I knew I wanted to have a fulfilling college experience, but four years ago, I had no idea that the experiences I've had would make my time at Augie as meaningful as they have.

Who helped you get to where you are now?

Dr. Dara Wegman-Geedey has been a huge source of support even before she became my academic advisor. She helped me during my first year to make sure I was as prepared as possible to tackle the course load and expectations that came with my intention to apply for optometry school. She has been one of the most helpful people I've ever met.

Dr. Bob Tallitsch is another professor who has pushed me to be who I am today. I think it's a wonderful, special thing when professors inspire students to not only succeed academically, but also to become better people, and that's what Bob has done for me.

A peak experience?

My peak experience was being a peer mentor my junior year. I was a mentor for a wonderful group of first-years who were so eager to jump into the Augie experience. Seeing them grow throughout Welcome Week and throughout their first year at college was really rewarding. I'm still in touch with a few of them today, and seeing how much success they've had over the past two years has made me feel like I contributed to something much bigger than myself. My hope is that they continue to grow into great leaders to inspire future Augie students to do the same.

What surprised you?

I learned that I am capable of more than I ever thought I would be. Between academics, extracurriculars, various jobs and other things, I've seen myself succeed in areas I had no idea I could. I've taken classes completely out of my comfort zone, taken on leadership positions and taken on roles I'd never have reached for on my own, and I have enjoyed just about everything.

I used to think that my success and experiences needed to be limited to a box of things dictated by my career path, but it's because I stepped out of that comfort zone of knowing exactly what I needed that I saw myself grow more than I ever thought I would.

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How did you use Augie Choice?

I went on the JETS/ACHOO Nicaragua trip during the summer of 2015. It was easily one of the most influential experiences of my life that I still think about to this day.

What will you miss the most?

I'll miss the relationships and atmosphere that Augie fosters. Everywhere you go, there are people saying hello to each other or encouraging one another that is just so genuine. I think it's because of the relationships I've had with my peers and professors, as well as seeing those relationships between others, that I grew to love Augustana so much.

Advice for the Class of 2021?

Always give back what you get. I've found myself doing that throughout my college experience and it has made it exponentially more meaningful to me. If you feel inspired by a professor, take their advice and share it with others. If you feel your passion for something grow because of how a leader of a group organizes and executes things, learn from them so that you might be able to do the same for another group. If an older student tutored you because they cared about your success, help out someone younger if you ever have the chance. Always do what you can to foster growth in others.