



Benjamin Bruster

Majors: History and geography

Minors: Biology and women's and gender studies

Activities: Sustained Dialogue, Rho Nu Delta fraternity

Internships: Intern with Augustana's Upper Mississippi Center—performing GIS, coordinating community outreach, and conducting internal and external home screenings—to address and assuage contributing factors towards Davenport, Iowa's lead poisoning crisis.

Post-grad plans: Most likely, I will serve a year through AmeriCorps or Lutheran Volunteer Corps. I also plan on attending grad school for cultural or historical geography sometime in the next few years.

“Ben Bruster knows that dreams don't become reality through magic; but by sweat, determination and hard work. I supervised Ben's senior history thesis. The first class meeting was Aug. 22, 2017, but Ben had been working in the archives for three months before that. The course ended Feb. 13, 2018, and a month later, Ben is talking about how to revise his essay for publication in a history journal. Ben knows that academic success isn't about jumping through hoops. It's about faith in yourself, hard work, perseverance, and most of all, love of what you're doing.”

— Dr. Lendol Calder, professor, history

MORE THAN I IMAGINED 2018

SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

Why Augustana?

I chose Augie for its small class sizes, great pre-med program, superior financial aid, and the people I met on my visits. Deciding on a school was really stressful, but I am grateful to have chosen as I did.

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

No, absolutely not! Coming out of high school, I was supposed to be the next great doctor. During my freshmen and sophomore years, I quickly learned that I am much more suited for the humanities and social sciences than the natural sciences. Thankfully, I discovered my love of history and geography about the same time. I have been so blessed with awesome mentors to help me along this path. Thank you all!

Who helped you get to where you are now?

Wow! I could write a book about this. Innumerable people have helped me along the way. Drs. Fockler, Strunk, Calder, Leech and Reisner have played perhaps the largest roles in shaping my academic and vocational trajectory. Others (friends, faculty and parents) have cheered me on, lifted me up and believed in me throughout this long and winding journey. I love you all!

Peak experience?

Probably climbing Mt. Fuji while on East Asia term or finishing my Senior Inquiry. It's truly hard to say since I have had so many highlights. Climbing Mt. Fuji—on my hands, knees, feet and with my arms—is my greatest physical feat. On the other hand, finishing my SI required a year of hard work, grit, and hundreds of hours of reading, researching and writing.

What surprised you?

I would say that I am most surprised by how tough I am. College can provide some of the most exciting moments and also some of the toughest ones. Sometimes I have surprised myself by what I have been able to overcome—of course with the help of friends, family, fraternity brothers, professors and others.

How did you use Augie Choice?

I used my Augie Choice for Fall 2016 East Asia term. As an aspiring geographer, I really enjoyed seeing and learning about new places (Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, China and Hawaii). This trip afforded some of my favorite Augustana memories—visiting Hiroshima, adventuring Hong Kong and skydiving in Hawaii—and allowed me to bond with some pretty cool Augie students!

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What will you miss the most?

Trite but true: I will miss all of the people. My friends, professors and members of the faculty have been my shoulder to lean on and base to grow from for the past four years. In particular, I could not imagine life at Augie without the awesome geography department; its adventurous field trips and lively professors have made for the most incredible two-and-a-half years.

Advice for the Class of 2022?

Understand that life is really hard. Yes, let that sink in. At times, life challenges everything within you, but this is uncommon. Please understand that most situations are better than you think. With help (from others) and the right mentality, you can accomplish more than previously imaginable. Try not to overthink, believe in yourself, and you will achieve great things.