



Riley Ferguson

Major: Religion (pre-seminary)

Minor: Greek for New Testament studies

Post-grad plans: Attend Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn., to obtain a Master of Divinity. This degree will serve as part of my candidacy process through the North West Synod of Wisconsin. My long-term goal is to be ordained as a minister of word and sacrament in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

“Riley entered Augustana intending to answer a call he discerned to become an ordained minister. He has been stretched and challenged in many ways, but continues to think carefully about his many gifts for ministry. Riley’s Senior Inquiry project argued that millennials need the church and that the church needs them. He is heading off to Luther Seminary not only with a full-ride scholarship, but also gifted and equipped for his vocation.”

— Dr. Jason Mahn, associate professor, religion

MORE THAN I IMAGINED 2018

SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

Why Augustana?

In competition with seven other small Lutheran colleges in the Midwest, I chose Augustana with a few things in mind. Augie was the only school to recruit me for track & field, both my uncle and my father graduated from Augustana, I fell in love with Augustana’s campus, and after an overnight, I found the people to be remarkably welcoming.

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

Not at all. I had not expected to get involved in the programs and clubs that have significantly impacted my life. I had no idea that I would join a social fraternity in which I have found many of my closest friends and roommates. I got involved with the admissions office, which helped me develop not only my character as a student worker but also my ability to work in different fields outside of my career path.

Who helped you get to where you are now?

First and foremost, I have to address the support from my parents—not only financially but their willingness to let me get an education seven hours away from home with full trust in my ability to live self-sufficiently. I have to thank my professors in the religion and Classics departments for pushing me academically and helping me throughout my education. My fraternity brothers for being there for me in every aspect of my life, and the admissions staff for always being supportive and amazing mentors.

Peak experience?

In my sophomore year, I spent six weeks in Holden Village in Northern Washington with 14 other students and three professors. In those six weeks without access to cell service, internet, Wi-Fi, television and electronics, I discovered a lot about who I am as a person and the direction my life was taking me. In the mountains, I not only made a significant change in my maturity, but also realized what I needed to do to get where I am today.

What surprised you?

Despite growing up in a very different environment from many of the other students at Augustana, I learned that there is much to be learned about each individual person. There is a lot of knowledge in the world, and each person has a different perspective that you can learn from. I am coming out of college with a much more open mind to the world than I had coming in. My beliefs, practices and ideologies were pushed to points that helped me grow further in understanding who I am.

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How did you use Augie Choice?

I used my Augie Choice the summer before my senior year on a trip to Rome with Dr. Lee and 34 other students for two weeks. Augie Choice covered the vast majority of the expenses of my trip, along with some of the expenses of the trip I took with my father afterwards. My father and I traveled from Rome to Istanbul and then on to Jerusalem for a week. While in Israel, I was able to see Bethlehem, Nazareth, Qumran, the Dead Sea and Tel Aviv. Without Augie Choice, I would not have been able to have this experience.

What will you miss the most?

I will miss the community the most. I have become accustomed to seeing my close friends every day and living in community with them.

Advice for the Class of 2022?

Enjoy the time you have ahead of you. These four years will go by faster than you think. Put your all into everything you do. Go out and have fun with your friends, make memories that you will remember for the rest of your life. Join clubs and go out of your way to make meaningful relationships.