



Monica Wierzbicki

Major: Biology

Minor: Studio art

Activities: Viking Pups, Equestrian Club

Internships: Medical service-learning in Nicaragua; Texas Medical Center Summer Research Internship Program

Post-grad plans: Attend University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) to pursue a master's in biomedical visualization

“I have been extremely fortunate to have Monica as an advisee, a student and a friend these past four years. Her curiosity, enthusiasm, commitment and perseverance have resulted in opportunities and successes. Conversations with Monica are experiences I will never forget. I look forward to hearing about her next journey in life, completion of a master's in biomedical visualization at UIC. Monica has so much to look forward to in her future!”

— Dr. Kimberly Murphy, associate professor and chair, biology

MORE THAN I IMAGINED 2018

SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

Why Augustana?

Two of my cousins are Augustana alumni, and they both highly recommended the college when I was searching for schools. The small student-to-faculty ratio, Augustana's 3-4 veterinary program, extracurricular activities and scholarships were all factors that made me choose Augustana.

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

Not at all. When I first came, I was dead set on applying to veterinary school and was initially part of the pre-health track, which was all I focused on. My past self would never have thought that I would completely change my career path to become a medical illustrator and attend one of the three master's programs in the country for the profession. I don't regret my decision, and I'm very happy with how far I've gotten thus far.

Who helped you get to where you are now?

Dr. [Kimberly] Murphy, my major advisor, and my mentor Scott Weldon from my internship in Texas have both been a huge support and provided me with invaluable advice. Dr. Murphy has always made time to assist me with school-related subjects or to just talk about life. Scott has taught me valuable skills for my future career and provided me with the encouragement and guidance that I needed to inspire me to do something that I thought I couldn't or wasn't allowed to pursue. I honestly don't know where I would be at this point if it weren't for these two.

Peak experience?

My peak experience was participating in the Texas Medical Center program at Baylor College of Medicine. I met Scott Weldon and learned what it's like to be a medical illustrator. I realized that it was definitely something that I'd love to do, and the experience helped me decide to apply to grad school. I also traveled to numerous places while on this trip and met new friends that I still keep in touch with to this day.

What surprised you?

Being able to step out of my comfort zone and become more independent has allowed me to grow as a person.

How did you use Augie Choice?

I participated in the ACH00/JETS Nicaragua medical service-learning trip.

What will you miss the most?

The close student-and-faculty relationships and the friendly campus community.

Advice for the Class of 2022?

Don't be afraid of change; learn to embrace it. It's a normal part of life and an important skill to learn that will help you become successful in the future. It'll allow you to adapt to what life throws at you and help you grow as a person. As in my case, it may even provide you with opportunities you never thought were possible and can change your future for the better.