



Rachel Buenaobra

Majors: Biology (pre-physician assistant), French

Minor: Public health

Activities: Office of Student Life-Greek Council, Student Government Association, Zeta Phi Kappa sorority, Young Life, Habitat for Humanity, Students for Life, Campus Ministries, Augie Catholic, French Club, Biology Club, ACHOO/AS-MRC, IM Leagues, Global Connections

Internships: NICL Laboratories in Northbrook, Ill., and service learning in Nicaragua through the JETS program

Post-grad plans: Take a gap year to work and gain more direct patient contact hours and more specialized healthcare experience; hoping to teach in France with the TAPIF program, and eventually go to graduate school for a physician assistant program

“Rachel is one of the most genuine and driven students I have had the opportunity to work with at Augustana. From the first time we met, she stood out to me as someone who is willing to ask difficult questions. I have appreciated the depth and breadth of Rachel’s engagement on campus and her countless contributions to the creation of co-curricular and social events for her peers. I will miss her unique, multidisciplinary perspectives and seemingly boundless energy.”

— Dr. Kristina (kiki) Kosnick, assistant professor, French

MORE THAN I IMAGINED 2018

SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

Why Augustana?

A family friend was a senior here while I was a senior in high school. I had no idea what I wanted in a college, and she said this was the best decision she ever made. Also, I visited campus for the first time to go to the Scholarship Competition, and my tour guide really solidified my experience. I found out that both of these women were in the sorority I would later join.

Additionally, the gorgeous sprawling campus, variety of opportunities to network and develop professional skills, competitive studies, study abroad, Augie Choice, financial aid, and a close-knit community are reasons I’d choose Augustana all over again.

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

I’m graduating with a major in biology that has a focus on medicine and healthcare, as I intended to, but everything else leading to this point has been an unforeseen part of the journey. Never did I imagine that I would take up French classes, let alone pursue a major in the language. I didn’t even need to take a language course in college! I was simply inspired the summer I first registered for classes, and the rest is history.

Throughout my time here, I’ve been challenged and encouraged to tap into potential I didn’t know I was capable of—both inside and outside of the classroom. Never did I imagine being as involved as I have been through pursuing various studies and student groups.

Because I’ve kept an open mind, I pursued a major in French, a language completely new to me before coming to Augie, minored in public health and have quite a few psychology classes under my belt in addition to the original biology major. This combination of studies in addition to pursuing passions through leadership positions and student activities that piqued my interest rounded out my Augie experience.

Who helped you get to where you are now?

Where do I even begin? My family and friends, undoubtedly, for encouraging me to pursue things that weren’t always easy.

My advisors for my majors: Dr. Tierney Brosius for her wisdom, her encouragement, and her conversation and Professor Gillian Lederman for mentoring me, listening to me whenever I felt unsure of my French capabilities, and helping me realize my potential in the French major that carries into every aspect of my life.

My advisors for my Senior Inquiry projects: Dr. Scott Gehler for his patience and guidance throughout the research process in writing my paper and creating my presentation and Dr. Taddy Kalas for pushing me harder than I thought possible in my French abilities to make having this major completely worth striving for. The departments of biology, French, public health and psychology for being the main studies that shaped my degree, but also I’m thankful for being fostered within the liberal arts environment for giving me the opportunity to have a truly interdisciplinary education. Lastly, Dr. Bob Tallitsch, Dr. Jessica Schultz, Dr. Kiki Kosnick, Dr. Jessica Nodulman and Dr. Emily Cranford, among many other mentors I have had throughout college, who checked in with my well being, encouraged me and genuinely cared about me.

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Peak experience?

Studying abroad not once, but twice. Spending half my summer in Dijon, France, to take language and cultural classes and spending two weeks working with rural communities, with little to no healthcare access, in Nicaragua are two of my most valuable and eye-opening experiences. I don't think I could've found a place other than Augie to do that.

What surprised you?

I've discovered untapped potential that carries into my leadership through various student organizations and into the classroom. I've realized that strength is beautiful and respect is earned.

I'm surprised by many of my experiences here because some of my closest passions that define who I am now are studies and organizations that I was never involved in before Augie.

How did you use Augie Choice?

I used it for my first study abroad experience—the summer program in Dijon, France!

What will you miss the most?

The community here is unlike anything I've experienced elsewhere. Some of the most inclusive, open-minded, determined and deeply caring people in this world exist within Augustana; I'm so grateful to have met them! I've found my niche. This place is truly my home. I'll miss the people I've grown with these past four years, the new people I still manage to meet on a smaller campus, the professors who can't wait to be invested in your life and hear about your day, the atmosphere of inclusion—for me, missing something about Augie can't just be one thing. It's everything.

Advice for the Class of 2022?

They say friends are here for a reason, a season and a lifetime—well, I can almost guarantee that you will meet people at Augie who will impact your life even after you leave!

Be driven and work hard, but don't lose yourself in the process. Be kind and take care of yourself—not everything you pursue will be the best thing you've ever done. Your path here isn't linear and don't expect it to be. Embrace the adventure before you! It's humbling and freeing to know that you don't need to have everything figured out.