



## Sara Hovren

**Majors:** Public health, religion (pre-seminary)

**Activities:** Varsity swimming, Campus Ministries Leadership Team, Sigma Pi Delta sorority, Alumni Board (student member)

**Internships:** Live. Lead. Free. program with both Augustana's Upper Mississippi Center and the Scott County Health Department; nutrition intern at Metro Caring, Denver, Colo.

**Post-grad plans:** I will be an off-site coordinator for high school programming at Sky Ranch Lutheran Camp in Fort Collins, Colo. Then in August, I will start a year of service through Lutheran Volunteer Corps in Minneapolis, Minn.

“Sara’s dual majors in religion and public health enable her to see connections between spiritual, mental and bodily well-being. In her religion Senior Inquiry project, Sara reflected on her experiences participating in a religious pilgrimage and working at a Lutheran summer camp—two experiences that have sparked Sara’s passions for ministry and mentoring. Sara asks real questions and thinks them through to their core. I’m excited to watch her vocation take off!”

— Dr. Jason Mahn, associate professor, religion

## MORE THAN I IMAGINED 2018

SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

### Why Augustana?

I wanted to go to a smaller school, to be more than just another student in a class or another number to the registrars office. I wanted to build relationships with professors and be able to ask as many questions as I needed to.

I ended up applying to 12 schools and visiting a handful of them, and I chose Augie because it just felt right. Other schools that shared the academic challenge I was looking for seemed too stuck-up, whereas Augie had that same ‘push for excellence’ among their students, but was down-to-earth and genuine when presenting it.

I also wanted to travel everywhere, and Augie has the most realistic options to choose from. Doing a study abroad was not strange to students; it was sort of expected.

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

Yes and no. Coming to campus, I wanted to find my passions and what I wanted to do as a career. So yes, because I have found that I’m passionate about so many things, and I know I will do a lot of work in many fields.

Also, no I’m not where I thought I’d be because I never would have imagined I would swim on a college team after stopping in high school, nor thought that I would spend half a year in Colorado leading backpacking trips in the mountains, then teach people about nutrition in Denver.

I didn’t think I would travel around Europe for a month after hiking over 200 km in two weeks in northern Spain, then present a research paper I wrote about the experience, which many scholars keep asking to read. I never would have thought I was capable of doing all of these things.

### Who helped you get to where you are now?

For every impactful experience I’ve had in the last four years, I can distinctly think of a faculty member who has guided me to it, through it—and processed it after. Individuals in CORE helped me learn professionalism and navigate situations, first-year advisors and major advisors listened to my passions and asked hard questions, my swim coaches pushed me to never give up, the Campus Ministries Office encouraged me and constantly looked out for me—and all of the other faculty members who had a hand in my Augustana experience.

### Peak experience?

Presenting my senior religion project at the Midwest American Academy of Religion conference because I had been working on and thinking about this project for over a year; I was even finishing the paper while on the pool deck at our swim conference.

This project was more than just an assignment; it allowed me to really see how far I have come. I didn’t just feel like a student, I felt like a peer among the other scholars. It allowed me to realize that what I had to contribute to the world was important and valuable. It was also amazing to be there alongside three other incredibly intelligent young women who also presented.

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#### What surprised you?

I learned a lot about myself, like what I am good at, what does not come naturally to me, what makes me feel alive, how I react to stress, what is important to me, and that I can achieve a lot more than I think I can.

#### How did you use Augie Choice?

I did two study-away experiences, one was a term-long internship through the Wartburg West Program in Denver, Colo. There I worked full-time as a nutrition intern at Metro Caring, which is a hunger-prevention organization that meets people's immediate need for nutritious food while also sustainably addressing the root causes of hunger and poverty.

I also went on a religion pilgrimage called the Camino de Santiago with an Augie group, where we walked about 10-12 miles a day for two weeks. Before we left, we took a class on the history of the pilgrimage and discussed how it intersects with the psychology of religion. Both experiences were eligible for Augie Choice, but I used it on the Denver program.

#### What will you miss the most?

I will miss the community of Augustana and the incredibly interesting conversations inside and outside the classroom.

#### Advice for the Class of 2022?

Take advantage of the many opportunities and connections Augie has and get to know your professors! The years you spend here will be gone in a blink of an eye, but if you take the time to build the relationships, they will last well beyond your years here.