



Irysa Boyer

High school: Geneseo High School

Hometown: Geneseo, Ill.

Major: Geology

Activities: Udden Club

Post-grad plans: I plan to continue to volunteer at Geneseo's Humane Society while working locally to save money so that I may pursue a master's in vertebrate paleontology.

"Irys grew so much as a geologist over the last three years. Extensive knowledge and interest in evolution and the animal kingdom coupled with intellectual curiosity, Irys was inspired by a hot-off-the-press scientific article questioning the long-held belief — are prehistoric dire wolves really wolves? To investigate these new findings, Irys 'hunted' down dire wolf fossils from museums across the country and delved into morphological comparisons of these iconic creatures to other canids, and ultimately teased out intriguing results about the evolutionary relationships of these prehistoric top dogs."

— Dr. Kelsey Arkle, assistant professor,
geology

Why Augustana?

I picked Augustana primarily because of the location and financial aid. As a commuter student, Augustana isn't a terrible drive from where I live, and I'm familiar with the location, which helped with anxiety. Augustana also helped me with financial aid, and I was awarded a few scholarships.

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

I am not. I am definitely a different person senior year than I was first year. I have grown more confident in myself and my abilities, and I'm just more willing overall to try new experiences.

Who helped you get to where you are now?

The entire geology department was incredibly helpful during my time at Augustana. They have offered their time and support countless of times to help, even with materials that don't initially scream "geology."

I will also forever be grateful to my main advisor, Dr. Kelsey Arkle. She has helped me not only with my Senior Inquiry, but also helped me improve my skills and abilities in the geological field. Even though I was interested in paleontology before we met, she has continued to foster that interest and has sparked strong curiosity in the fields of paleoecology and conservation.

I am also thankful for my first-year advisor, Dr. Kiki Kosnick. They made my first year at Augustana feel so much more inclusive and overall easier to navigate.

Peak experience?

I had a lot of neat experiences while I was here. If I had to choose, being able to travel to the Field Museum in Chicago for a part of my Senior Inquiry is something I don't think I'll ever forget.

Shortly after my last J-term, I traveled to Chicago by train with a friend who assisted me with data collection at the museum. While there, I was able to examine and collect data on several jackal cranium and mandible specimens.

What surprised you?

The strong support system from the geology department and the 2022 geology cohort. I didn't feel nearly as supported at my high school as I did here. I was surprised by how genuine and willing to help the faculty and others were.

MORE THAN I IMAGINED 2022

SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

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What will you miss the most?

With the geology department being on the smaller side, we were all fairly close. Because of that, I feel as if a lot of us had shared similar experiences and a strong sense of comradery. I definitely will miss that in the future.

Advice for the Class of 2026?

Don't be afraid to fail or make mistakes. That's something a lot of the professors will say, and it's true. Learn from what you did wrong and grow from it, and don't be afraid to ask for help, no matter what the issue is.